

## **Final Report**

# **Governance of educational Trajectories in Europe Access, Coping and Relevance of Education for Young People in European Knowledge Societies in Comparative Perspective**

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# 1. Final publishable summary report

## 1.1 Executive Summary

The project Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe (GOETE) analysed how educational trajectories of young people in *Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom* are being regulated and how decisions are taken at individual, school and policy level. The study combined a *life course* with a *governance* perspective which was applied to the dimensions of access to education, young people's coping with education and the relevance different actors ascribe to education. The complex interactions between social structure and individual agency were analysed by a *mix-methods design* integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods.

With regard to the meaning and *relevance* of education, across all actors from teachers and teacher trainers, school principals and policy makers, counsellors and social workers, employers and civil society representatives, parents and students, an instrumental view of education as a means of securing employability and life chances based on employment prevailed. Meanings of education as personal development as well as relevancies connected to young people's everyday lives remain hidden by this discourse which is also reflected by the recent EU policy agenda on education and training.

This relates to the increasing role of transnational discourses such as Knowledge Society, Lifelong Learning, Employability or Disadvantage in the *governance* of education. The ways in which educational trajectories are shaped occur more and more indirectly and insensibly through a complex interaction of multiple actors and increasingly less through top-down state policies. A new vertical and horizontal division of labour in educational governance has emerged contributing to different 'opportunity structures' produced at different scales by different actors, institutions and processes of governance. In this framework, parents and students are expected to take responsibility for their own education. Yet, possibilities of participation in decision-making at school are limited.

A key area of governance analysed in GOETE has been the regulation and negotiation of *access* to education and training which points to social inequalities and disadvantage or to phenomena such as early school leaving. Access reflects socio-economic factors such as class, gender and ethnicity as well as the social context of schools and depends on the stratification inherent to the institutional structure of education and training. Differences occur especially between high-level standardised and comprehensive systems (Finland, Slovenia) and high-level standardised differentiated systems (France, Germany, the Netherlands). Yet, findings revealed also that access needs to be expanded by *accessibility*, thus referring to individuals' subjective interpretation and realisation of access. Apart from this, also the discretionary practice of teachers and other professionals contributed to different degrees of accessibility of education and training.

Unequal accessibility is also related to different abilities and resources for *coping* with educational demands. GOETE investigated how students, especially those from deprived social backgrounds, cope with educational demands and the *support* they receive for it. Evidence of a powerful discourse of individualism was found putting students under pressure. They believe to be alone responsible for success or failure in their educational trajectories. They feel especially burdened with decision-making at transition points which implies that more and better guidance and counselling are needed. However, formal support measures suffer from little trust by students. Four times more students refer to informal sources of support in case of school or transition problems than to teachers or other professionals. Informal support in turn suffers from a lack of recognition from institutional actors. In fact, findings reveal a "blaming game" between school and parents.

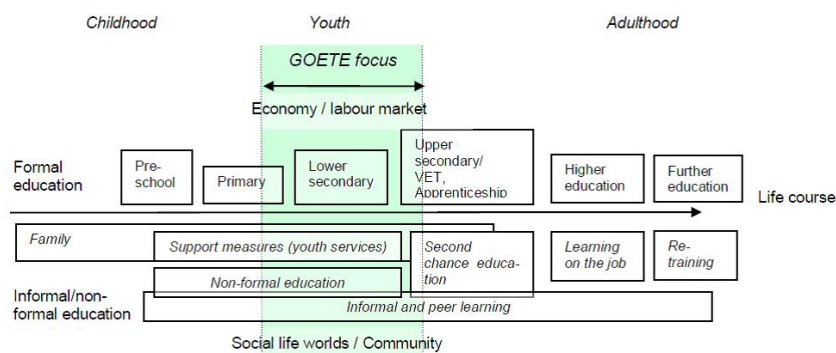
The complexity of dimensions, actors and levels involved in the emergence of individual educational trajectories reveals that the relationship between education and the *life course* results from interaction and negotiation. Educational decisions, especially at transition points, are neither made by students and their parents alone nor are automatically determined by the education system. The analysis of processes of "doing transitions" reveals that educational trajectories of so-called disadvantaged students are much more diverse than homogenising images suggest. The analysis identified different patterns of educational trajectories as well as different constellations of decision-making which reveal

different biographical dynamics while also being significantly structured by the institutional structures of education systems and the availability of support.

## 1.2 Summary description of the project context, main objectives and design

The discourse on the *knowledge society* implies that education has an ever more important role in the integration of modern societies. Education is thus no longer merely a meritocratic principle of allocation of status positions, but also often decides about inclusion or exclusion in society. Against this background, the GOETE project aims at re-conceptualising education in terms of life-long learning by combining a life course and a governance perspective in *Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom*.

In European knowledge societies, education means balancing individual, social, and economic aspects. Analysis requires exploring how educational institutions conceptualise and organise individual educational trajectories. The GOETE project covers the period from transition into lower secondary education to transition into upper secondary education/vocational education and training, i.e. the age group between 10 and 16 years (see figure 1).



**Figure 1: The focus of GOETE with regard to lifelong educational trajectories**

The GOETE project combines a life course perspective with a governance perspective. The concept of *life course*, enables analysing the adequacy of education for social integration in modern societies. Education was introduced to prepare children for the demands of adulthood (employment, family and citizenship), on-going differentiation and de-standardisation of life courses have extended the perspective of school learning towards lifelong learning. The second perspective – *governance* – in the GOETE project involves analysis of mechanisms of governance with regard to the actors and administrative levels involved, communication and cooperation, the voices of the individual students and their parents as well as in terms of current discourses and reforms on school entry and progression, organisation of support, teaching and curriculum development or funding of education point. In the GOETE project, the relationship between these two perspectives has been operationalised along three key dimensions: access to, coping with, and relevance of education.

- Is education *accessible* throughout the life course?
- Can education be *coped* with (is it manageable for all)?
- Is education *relevant* subjectively for the individuals as well as systemically for societal functioning?

The category of *access* points to social inequalities in educational trajectories. GOETE analyses what schools do to prevent early school leaving and to what extent they provide boys and girls, and young people from different social and ethnic backgrounds, equal access to education, especially at transition points within their educational trajectories.

Unequal access and early school leaving are also related to different abilities and resources for *coping* with educational demands. GOETE investigates how students, especially those from deprived social backgrounds cope with educational demands. It analyses measures of active inclusion through formal

and informal support inside and outside school and how formal, non-formal and informal learning are related within education systems in general and in educational trajectories in particular.

Individual decisions to invest in education depend on the *relevance* learners ascribe to education for their subjective life plans. GOETE assesses what skills and competencies are held relevant for “satisfying and successful lives” in late modern knowledge societies from the perspectives of employers, policy makers, trade unions and other agencies of the civil society, teachers, educational professionals outside schools as well as pupils and parents.

*Comparative analysis* in GOETE aimed at identifying and understanding different constellations of *governing educational trajectories* in the context of different *transition regimes*. It studies interactions between socio-economic, institutional and cultural factors which are inherent in current educational policy and practice, in relationships between education and welfare, in dominant discourses as well as in individual decisions and biographical orientations. The project also explores how supra-national, especially European discourses, are taken up at local and national level.

On a *scientific level*, the comparison of the regulation of educational trajectories involves re-conceptualising the social aspects of learning and education under conditions of late modern knowledge societies. It reflects the need for formal education to be embedded in social life worlds, enabled by social support, and complemented by informal and non-formal learning.

On a *practice and policy level*, the project will provide information about alternative means of providing children and young people with access to education; of supporting them in coping with education and ensuring the relevance of education by communication and cooperation between school, labour market, other educational actors, students and parents.

The communication of findings includes criteria of dialogic educational policy planning and of (further) training for teachers and out-of-school educators at local level which have resulted from experiences with dissemination preliminary research findings at local level.

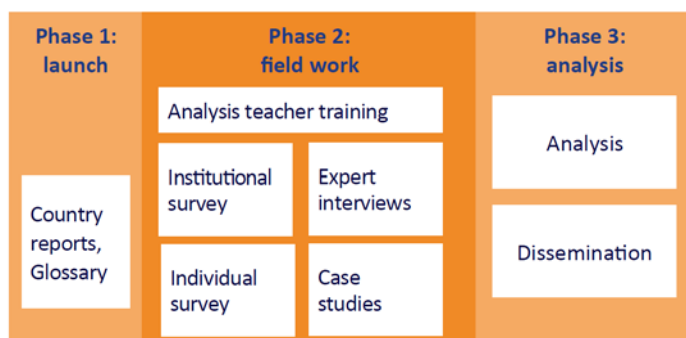
### ***Methodology and Research Programme***

In order to be able to examine the complex dynamics that exert influence on the governance of educational trajectories GOETE adopted a multi-level approach to analysis. This approach allowed us to analytically distinguish different levels and actors’ perspectives as well as different types of interaction between macro-, meso- and micro-level, i.e., interactions between social structure and individual agency, between a variety of actors, and between local, regional, national and European levels. According to this model, analysis requires first that the different studies are analysed separately, nationally and comparatively, and that, second, thematic analyses (along life course, governance, access, coping and relevance) are conducted that cross-cut different data sets and bring the different levels together focussing on the bridges and connection points. The focus of interest lies, however, on the relationships among the different levels represented by the arrows in the figure 2 below.

The countries selected for study were chosen on the basis of two international comparative typologies. The *first* classification focuses on the organization of education systems while at the same time linking them to labour market outcomes; countries are classified along the two dimensions of stratification and standardization in the national organization of education and training (Allmendinger, 1989). The *second* typology distinguishes different regime types according to young people’s access to welfare, the responsibility for Vocational Education and Training between school and companies, the structures of labour market entry, gender relationships on the labour market, structures of youth policy as well as cultural meanings of youth in general and disadvantaged youth in particular (Walther & Pohl, 2005). The eight countries under research represent thus quite different social contexts – that is, different constellations of socio-economic, institutional and cultural factors – that exert influence on the educational trajectories of children and youth. Wherever possible and meaningful these typologies were used as contextual information in the interpretation of the findings.

The GOETE project concentrates on deprived areas and schools and pupils who could be defined as disadvantaged according to socio-economic characteristics. Data were collected in three contrasting urban areas per country, including schools from disadvantaged, average and affluent neighbourhoods.

GOETE research was designed as a non-representative mixed-method study. We used *quantitative* methods to assess the general structures of educational trajectories and *qualitative* methods to provide an in-depth insight into how these structures evolve and how they interact with the individual agency of children and young people, their parents, teachers and other educational professionals. The research programme of GOETE consisted altogether of three main phases – a preparatory phase, a field work phase and an analysis and dissemination phase (see figure 2 below).



**Figure 2: GOETE research programme**

During the *first* preparation phase, country reports on institutional, socio-economic and cultural contexts of educational trajectories based on statistical data and recent educational research produced. The findings served to prepare the empirical field work (see: Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011). The *second* phase of field work was used to conduct several surveys in three different regions in each country. The sub-studies included:

- *comparative analysis of teacher training* through document analysis of teacher training curricula (N=118) and expert interviews (N = 65) in selected higher education institutions (see: Cramer et al., 2012);
- *individual survey* with *students* in their last year of lower secondary education (N=6390) and their *parents* (N=3290) on progression through education, problems and support, teaching and individual learning, future plans for education, training and employment (see: Aro et al., 2012);
- *institutional survey* with headmasters on key challenges, social contexts of schools, living conditions and future life chances of pupils and students, problems and available support, curricula and standards, links with other actors (N=984) (McDowell et al., 2012);
- *qualitative local case studies* on ‘local school spaces’ in socially deprived areas (3 cases per country, N=24) including views of students during (N=195) and after lower secondary school (N=109), parents (N=109) as well as professionals and experts (teachers, headmasters, counsellors, external experts; N=208) on interactions at the transition from lower to upper secondary education and training (see: du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012);
- *expert interviews* with high-level policy makers and stakeholders (N=95) and *critical discourse analysis* at national level on current policy reforms and discourses (see: Dale et al., 2012).

The *third phase* consisted of comparative and thematic analyses as well as dissemination activities. As for the *comparative analysis*, all the different empirical sub-studies were analysed nationally and cross-nationally. *Thematic analysis* was conducted along the five themes of GOETE: life course, access, coping, relevance and governance and five thematic working papers produced. The *dissemination* of the research findings started already during the project and targeted in particular the local contexts in which the research was carried out. Dissemination activities pursued two main objectives: *first*, to disseminate GOETE findings to policy and practice actors interested in children’s and young people’s educational trajectories. *Second*, to initiate a dialogue between research, policy and practice by activating, coordinating and evaluating processes of dialogic educational planning at the local level, where local case study findings and contextualised findings and recommendations emerging from the comparative analysis were fed into the local process. In total, 37 sessions of dissemination took place in the 8 countries. The number of participants varied from session to session and stake-holders group from small groups to hundreds of representatives. As a result of this dialogic process of dissemination, recommendations for future training of teachers and other educational

professionals as well as recommendations for policy makers elaborated and circulated through a European policy brief.

## 2. Description of the main S & T results/foregrounds

In the following sections, the main findings of the GOETE will be presented. As far as possible the presentation differentiates between actor perspectives and between the individual and the institutional level as well as the dimension of interaction. Where appropriate and possible, also findings from comparative analysis are presented. This presentation of findings is structured according to the five main thematic areas. It starts with reflections of the meaning and relevance of education from the perspective of different actors. Thereby readers get also acquainted with the different actor perspectives analysed in the project. The next section refers to the ways in which different actors and levels of individual or institutional agency are involved and interacting in the governance of education. A central issue in current debates and policy reforms is the dimension of access to or the accessibility of education with regard to so-called disadvantaged youth. This includes analysing structures and practices of differentiation contributing to different educational aspirations and unequal opportunities among young people. Inequalities are also reflected by different resources students have to cope with the demands of education. This includes the availability of support, both formal and informal, and its use by students. Interpretations of the meaning of education, forms of governance, structures of access and negotiation of accessibility, forms coping and mobilisation of support finally are reflected by the processes of decision-making at transition points in young people's educational trajectories.

As a reading note, it should be taken into consideration that the format of this report requires a condensed and aggregated form of presentation. Interested readers may refer to the five thematic reports which provide a much more detailed presentation and discussion of the GOETE findings (cf. Cuconato & Walther, 2013; Parreira do Amaral & Dale, 2013; Koşar Altinyelken & Julkunen, 2013; Litau et al., 2013; Stauber & Parreira do Amaral, 2013a).<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Meanings and Relevancies of Education in Knowledge Societies. A Multi-Actor View

The objective of the GOETE project has been to reflect the changed relationship between education and social integration in contemporary knowledge societies. The discourse of knowledge society implies that education and knowledge have become the main factors of both social reproduction and social integration. This objective has been formulated also based on the observation that, compared to the Fordist period characterised by a bureaucratic top-down model of education (Brown & Lauder, 1998), nowadays responsibilities with regard to the governance of education have become diversified and fragmented between multiple actors – as have the expectations towards and meanings of education (Young, 2007). The focus of this chapter will therefore lie in introducing and presenting what education means for the main actors whose views have been collected and analysed in the GOETE project: teachers and school principals; teacher trainers; local experts like social workers, counsellors or mentors supporting students in and outside school as well as representatives of local and regional authorities or of the local economy; high-level experts such as representatives of national governments or stakeholders from economy, civil society and research.

However, before the actor perspectives are presented, at least three different theoretical understandings of education shall be introduced:

- *Personal development*: The German concept of 'Bildung' or Dewey's pragmatistic concept of education by experience refer to education as a process of personal development. Individuals realise their human potential and become subjective agents by actively appropriating the material and social world (e.g. Dewey, 1938; Klafki, 1964; Humboldt, 1986; Heydorn, 2004; Koller, 2011).
- *Social practice*: Social learning theories have raised the attention to the fact that educational processes are embedded in and result from social interaction. The meaning of education as well as what makes education relevant therefore cannot be separated from the social practices and contexts in which active learners are situated (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

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<sup>1</sup> These reports were submitted to the European Commission as Deliverable 23 (WP8).

- *Social reproduction:* Educational sociology has developed a more functional understanding of education as a resource of social integration or as a form of cultural capital. This perspective focuses on the qualifications and competencies that individuals acquire primarily in formal education and the effects of this for both, the social positioning of individuals and the process of social and cultural reproduction (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

These perspectives have emerged from theoretical reflection and empirical analysis in different historical, cultural and disciplinary contexts. They do not exclude each other but refer to different dimensions of processes referred to as education highlighting different actor perspectives.

In the analysis of the GOETE project the understanding of education has been reconstructed for different actor perspectives. This has been much more difficult than expected, especially with regard to the dimensions of social practice and personal development data lack depth and differentiation. One reason for this may be the ideological dominance of a functional or meritocratic understanding of education in knowledge societies whereby other relevancies are more and more difficult to express and address. Rather than seeking to classify the similarities and differences between meanings of education and of what makes it relevant, the expressions and interpretations of actors are related to particular ‘contexts of contexts’, that specify how education is conceptualised and endowed with particular meaning in different social positions as well as within particular national education systems.

*Students:* The relevance students assign to education can directly affect their motivation to remain in school and/or to continue to use other opportunities of lifelong learning (Walther, 2009). To gain a general idea of the importance attributed to educations and the reasons for these students were asked in the survey about their future plans and what they expected to do at the end of compulsory education. Three out of four planned to stay in full time education or training, yet with slight variations reflecting the structures of education systems.

Examining students’ perspectives as to why they felt education was important, revealed most of all they understood and accepted the functionality of education for future life chances, especially with regard to the labour market. At the same time, and this reveals that most of them are well informed and oriented, students in all countries highlighted the perceived contradiction between the dominant belief that good education may lead to secure and attractive careers and the actual destinations of older peers in their communities characterised by unemployment and precariousness. Apart from the permeability of education systems table 1 reveals that labour market dynamics have a clear effect on the functionality students ascribe to education for their futures.

**Table 1: Summed Overall Score PALS Scepticism about School and Work Scale (Higher score=more scepticism) by country**

	IT	FI	FR	DE	NL	PL	SI	UK	Total
<i>Mean</i>	11,64	12,12	13,02	12,57	12,99	14,86	12,81	12,07	12,75
<i>N</i>	781	756	756	788	761	744	766	770	6123

The high scepticism of Polish students about the links of education to work and future success reflects the high unemployment in their country A concern about not getting a job despite working hard at school was a common theme for many students throughout the countries. This may prove to have a negative impact on the instrumental motivation of students for education ‘to help me get a good job’. The more students ascribe only functional relevance to education, the lower their motivation to achieve as enjoyment is seen key for deep level learning (cf. Wenger, 1998).

Students’ perceptions of the relevance of education were also influenced by their parental role models inasmuch as scepticism for the relevance of education for future careers was closely related to parental employment situation social status and education level. A significant association was also found between parent’s educational level and students’ plans to continue towards upper secondary fulltime and eventually higher education (see below).

Behind the dominance of functional relevance of education for future careers, education is also relevant with regard to their present everyday lives. This level of relevance and meaning however was

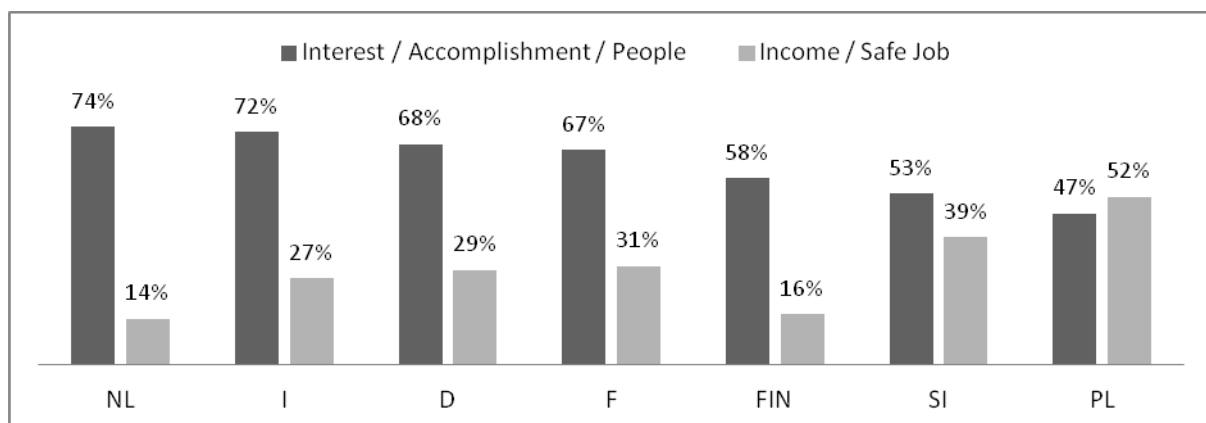
difficult to grasp during research but emerged from essays students wrote in the context of case studies. These essays reveal that school implies reducing the identities of young people to their role as students. Other dimensions of educational relevance behind hegemonic views become visible: education as context of friendship or bullying, of fun or boredom, and also a place assessed according to the qualities of space and even food:

*Whenever I say the word 'education' a school arises in front of me, the school where first friendships are made, first time when we fall in love. It is a place of meetings anyway and studying most of all.*

Especially for those not believing in education to secure them a future, this alienation undermined their motivation to accept school demands:

*School is shit and boring. So, what's the point of it? Most teachers are incompetent for this profession. Usually, one is labelled very quickly. Either one is a model student or a problem child, if one has screwed things up, once. So what is useful of this?*

*Parents:* The majority of parents regarded education as very relevant and decisive for the future lives of their children. In their view education is crucial not only for the opportunities and access to the (insecure and rapidly changing) labour market, but also a vital component of subjective satisfaction in life which in turn they associate with fulfilment in work. In the parents' survey, intrinsic aspects of education were related with self-oriented aspects of work such as accomplishment or interest. However, again labour market situations make a difference with the highest instrumental orientations in Poland and Slovenia (see figure 3).



**Figure 3: Parental reasons for child's educational level (country\*)?**

\*\*Sig. < 0.000, Cramer's V 0.238 (N = 3154)

Many parents, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, expressed the hope that their children would improve their socio-economic position through education. This accounts especially for families with a migration background.

More than 60% of parents would like their children to achieve a tertiary level of education. Especially in Slovenia and the Netherlands parents seem to see university studies as precondition for upward mobility and a good position in society. In contrast, in France and Germany a majority of parents would like their child to achieve secondary education. This reflects the combination of differentiated school systems and standardized vocational education or training in these countries (the Netherlands are an exception in this respect).

Not surprisingly, socio-demographic analysis reveals that parents with more socio-economic and cultural capital express considerably higher educational aspirations. 81% of parents with tertiary education compared to 42% of parents with basic education would like their children to achieve tertiary education. However, also parents expressed considerable scepticism about the link between education and job possibilities for their children. At the same time, qualitative data show that parents' ambitious educational aspirations go along with concerns about their children's well-being in school and the pressure to which they are exposed.

*Teachers and teacher trainers:* The relevance that education can have for students is mediated through teachers. Teachers and teacher trainers interpret education first of all in terms of knowledge which however is not limited to subject-related knowledge but also to personal development:

*“School is a gym for life, for training the citizens of tomorrow, learning to interact with all kinds of people, representing different cultures and ways of thinking” (Teacher, Italy)*

*“Education is more than just exams ... It’s to raise the aspirations of young people in terms of what they can do in the future, that nothing is above or beyond them ..., to give them the confidence and the self-esteem.” (Teacher, UK)*

However, most of them see the functional relevance of education. Therefore they accept that education includes social aspects of upbringing and helping students in coping with their transitions into training and further education.

*“Some [teachers] consider they only have to teach and not to educate, for me I don't know how it is possible to teach without educating” (Teacher, France).*

*“The biggest challenge for me is to integrate the class as a team to make students function well and cooperate with us, this is the most important and then we can start to think about some values.” (Teacher, Poland)*

However, in all countries heavy complains that parents are not supporting their children as much as they should have been encountered, especially with regard to socially disadvantaged families. Teachers complain that a lot of their time is “lost” on upbringing tasks in order to create an atmosphere in which teaching is possible.

*“We are doing more social work than normal lessons at the moment ... But actually I am a conveyor of knowledge. Of course it’s also upbringing but at the moment it’s sometimes the other way round ... and we are not qualified for that.” (Teacher, Germany)*

Teachers complain that teacher training does not provide them with the necessary tools to deal with socially disadvantaged students. This means that they often do not know how to instill the relevance of education in their students. However, while teachers stress the meaning of education in terms of participation in society, they appear to know little about students’ out-of-school lives.

The lack of social aspects and social skills in teacher training has been also confirmed by interviewed teacher trainers who pointed to the need of a diversification of teacher training programmes. New challenges included including migrants and students from different training or professional backgrounds but also skills related to counselling and vocational orientation.

*Local experts:* Local experts interviewed included representatives of local authorities or the economy as well as professionals concerned with supporting students in and outside school. While local policy makers are concerned with distributing students in available educational institutions and the local economy with expecting qualified human capital, social workers, counsellors and mentors refer more to the demands that education implies for young people and what is needed to achieve a positive social integration as well as well-rounded development of their personality. For this reason, experts perceive a hierarchical concept of educational relevance, more precisely of different levels of education with different aims and meanings, which causes stress for all actors involved in the system. Local experts often stressed the point that socialization and achievement of disciplinary skills have to be considered together.

*“To be able to communicate; to be able to get on with people; to be interested in the world; to be numerate – regardless of what’s happening in the economy, even if it was boom or bust. Whatever happens, those things are things that young people should have. The question of whether the economic situation has an effect on that washes over me quite frankly because I think being well educated is so fundamental to young people’s lives, that the economic situation is largely irrelevant to that.” (Expert 1, UK)*

All categories of experts agree in the need of making education more relevant for socially disadvantaged young people. In their views, the highest relevance of education relates to securing social integration.

*“Education is more and more seen as a factor which gives the chance to compensate for social inequalities. So there is hope to compensate social imbalances by strengthening educational requirements.” (Local expert, Germany).*

Due to the complexity of social aspects of education, for many of the experts the goals of education cannot be achieved in traditional ways, and they underline the importance of a self-contained learning process and of a positive link between school, family and community.

Experts who work closely with students acknowledge that out-of-school contexts may be very important for giving young people a sense of the relevance of education for students. In the UK, Italy and Germany experts were involved in stimulating learning motivation is through non-formal courses and extra-curricular activities in youth or community work:

*High-level experts:* Also according to high-level experts such as representatives of national governments or stakeholders from economy, civil society and research, reducing or compensating for social inequalities is the most relevant aspect of education. This applied especially for increasing the qualifications among students with a migration background. At the same time, notions of social inclusion at this level were mostly associated with the societal costs of educational failure.

High-level experts such as national governments are not directly involved in educational activities as these are mediated through other levels of governance, but they set goals and influence the chances of their attainment in various ways. A crucial feature of the multilevel nature of governance is that both discursive and institutional opportunity structures may vary at different levels of governance and cause considerable confusion regarding what interpretations of educational governance become effective. There is evidence that policies of teacher training were rarely connected to reflections and interpretations of the relevance of education. In some ways, ensuring the relevance of education was seen as the most important challenge to high-level governance.

If one compares the perspectives of different actors, similarities and differences can be found. Across different perspectives an instrumental view of education prevails associated with the relevance of education for the future life chances of students – although the majority of respondents are well aware that education is no guarantee for a successful and secure position in a flexible labour market. Differences relate to the meaning and motives for such an instrumental view and the reference to other relevancies of education.

For students and parents, education appeared as a relevant means to secure options for choice and social mobility for their own future lives. Correspondingly, scepticism towards the relevance of education increases – and motivation decreases – with the degree to which education is perceived as not securing life chances. Only in these instances, the relevancies of education connected with young people’s everyday life appear behind the functional consensus.

Teachers emphasize the twofold character of education as transfer of both knowledge and social or life skills. Yet, the latter is often being externalised to families or other professionals as teachers do not feel prepared for this.

For local experts, the functionality of education lies on a meta-level with regard to social cohesion and social disadvantage, e.g. preventing unemployment. Education is referred to as a factor to compensate and reduce social inequalities and teaching and support are assessed by their adequacy for reaching disadvantaged students. Also stakeholders at the higher and/or national levels of governance referred to the functionality of education at society level, yet often in economic terms.

Cross-cutting similarities and differences between actor perspectives, national differences across Europe are noticeable. In countries with well-developed apprenticeship or work placement training (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands), relevance of education is more interpreted in terms of matching standardized occupational routes. In countries without reliable training systems (Italy, Poland, Slovenia and partly the UK) staying in full-time education as long as possible is seen as the only

option for keeping options for choice open. Only in Finland, also vocational routes provide reliable and recognized routes into higher education and high status occupations.

Apart from this, different ways of organizing support in and related to school reflects different interpretations of the relevance of education. While in the Finnish system counselling is primarily interpreted as means of enhancing the choice of students – and thus reflecting a meaning of education as personal development alongside functional aspects – in countries like France, Germany, or the Netherlands it is primarily oriented towards channelling students in certain educational and occupational routes.

## 2.2 The Polyphonic Voices of the Governance of Young Peoples’ Educational Trajectories

The adoption of the governance perspective in the GOETE project aimed at accounting for the different levels of analysis as well as for the activities and actors/institutions involved in decision-making throughout educational trajectories (see: Dale et al., 2012). The high-level governance of educational trajectories has been examined in GOETE along three main *scales of governance*, i.e., three different levels at which policy is made that frames, orients, sets the challenges and shapes the parameters and possibilities of local contexts and practices related to educational trajectories. Here, the governance of education may be discussed – both in analytical and empirical terms – at the *supra -or international- level, at the national level, and/or at the sub-national level*. We also distinguished among the *activities of governing – funding, provision, regulation and ownership* – and among the *actors and institutions made responsible for carrying them out (for the sake of parsimony – state, market, community and household)*, whilst acknowledging that typically responsibility will be taken by hybrid groups of actors, such as state *and* community collaboration in provision, or public-private partnerships in funding, for instance.

GOETE, however, did not follow every possible combination of these elements or attempted an exhaustive examination of all scales, activities, and actors/institutions in the governance of education. Rather, it examined selected issues and focused on particular levels or interactions between levels. Following operationalisation of governance presented below, GOETE research focused on the scales at which governance is exerted, on the discourses that traverse all these scales as well as the interrelation of actors at the local level, namely parents/students and schools.

The adopted conceptualisation of governance as our research object may be in itself considered as one major contribution to research in the governance of education. This framework adds to the conceptual and analytical repertoire of researchers, allowing for a more differentiated view of governance that distinguishes scales, activities, and actors/institutions of governance, thus opening up issues to theoretical and empirical analyses (see figure 4 below).

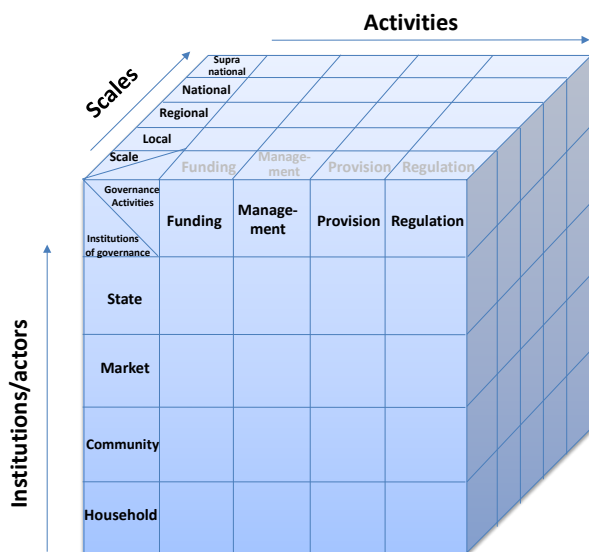


Figure 4: Activities, Institutions and Scales in the Governance of Education

*There is a new vertical and horizontal division of the labour of education governance*

A key finding of GOETE is that educational governance across all GOETE countries is undergoing deep scalar changes, and these changes become visible in places (schools, cities, regions, ...), where all levels conflate into concrete practices. The changes are not just vertical but also horizontal. In other words, there is a new vertical – who does what? – and horizontal – which activities? – division of the labour of education governance. This means that dominant discourses have been scaled up to the European level and filter downward. In other words, the ‘discursive opportunity structures’ have been rescaled upward, acting as a frame through which education activity and its governing is to take place.

*The nature of educational governance in Europe, and the relations between governance and the contexts in which it operates, is changing rapidly*

GOETE discussed the changing nature of educational governance in Europe, and the relations between governance and the contexts in which it operates. These changes, broadly similar across GOETE countries, have quite different consequences for the processes and outcomes of educational trajectories. Our study was based on the assumption that both the nature of governance itself, and its application in the particular case of educational trajectories and transitions, are changing in ways that have not yet been fully acknowledged. Our analyses show that both the relations between the component elements of governance and the contexts in which they operate have been changing radically and rapidly in recent times. Recognising and registering the sources and impacts of what are referred to as the changing ‘contexts of context’ of governance, and their consequences, has been a key challenge and focus for GOETE research (see: Dale et al., 2012). The—increasingly varied and complex—forms, outputs and outcomes of governance result from and impact on the activities of many different people, working at many different levels, carrying out a multiplicity of activities and tasks related to governance. Governance ‘works’ through all these levels, activities, and people without being reducible to any of them; all are essential and none are separately sufficiently decisive to determine outcomes.

*The ‘governance’ of educational trajectories is experienced almost wholly indirectly and insensibly through the ways it shapes opportunity structures available to students and teachers, parents and social workers, school principals and teachers*

In a very real sense, the whole of the GOETE project has addressed the question of the governance of educational trajectories and transitions of socially disadvantaged young people. Each of the other thematic fields of GOETE—Access, Coping, Life course and Relevance—is to a considerable degree framed by the forms of governance that both create opportunities (and perhaps requirements) for, and set limits to, the ways that they are defined and practised. This means that the ‘governance’ of educational trajectories is experienced almost wholly indirectly and insensibly through the ways it shapes opportunity structures available to students and teachers, parents and social workers, school principals and teachers. This does not reduce, but rather enhances, the central importance of the forms taken by governance arrangements and processes, in that it is through their operation, rather than wholly by accident, or through ‘fate’, that the likelihood of the emergence of particular varieties, distributions, and outcomes, of educational trajectories and transitions are shaped (Parreira do Amaral & Dale, 2013).

*At the different scales, the actors, institutions and activities of governance produce different ‘opportunity structures’ – institutional and discursive – which frame the educational trajectories of young people*

A fundamental aim and objective of GOETE has been to reveal the wider contexts through which conceptions and practices of governance are framed. It is through the actors, institutions and activities

of governance – operating at the different scales – that different ‘opportunity structures’ are produced which framed the educational trajectories of young people. This becomes visible at both transition points focused on in GOETE. For instance, GOETE shows that the difference between comprehensive and selective access to secondary education appears to create distinctly different educational opportunities for those following them, which we denominate ‘*Institutional Opportunity Structures*’ (see also section on Access above). Moreover, while all our countries have policies that are nationally distinctive and hence somewhat different from each other, their policies are all broadly framed by a common set of discourses – among others, Knowledge-based Economy, Lifelong Learning and ‘new governance’. This, in essence, constitutes the *Discursive Opportunity Structures* within which all countries operate (see Dale et al., 2012; Kazepov et al., 2013).

*Educational governance in Europe is being influenced by common discursive frameworks, in particular the Knowledge-based Economy, Lifelong Learning, and New Public Management*

While policies in all GOETE countries are far from uniform and vary according to the different political-institutional arrangements and levels of decision-making, they are at the same time influenced by common discursive frameworks – such as the Knowledge-based Economy (KBE), Lifelong Learning (LLL), and New Public Management. The impact of these common discourses is that all GOETE countries governance reforms have attempted which aimed, though to differing degrees, to optimize the coordination and the outputs of education, thus better preparing pupils for a putative knowledge-based economy through lifelong learning.

One main insight from GOETE is that these discourses fundamentally set the limits to what the aims and objectives of national policies could be (see: Parreira do Amaral et al., 2013). To be sure, these discourses do not determine policies, but they do set common limitations on their stated purposes and objectives providing powerful *discursive opportunity structures* that operate *proscriptively* and on a basis of *exclusion* rather than inclusion, i.e., to rule out policies that do not conform to the KBE/LLL discourse, rather than to prescribe particular policies. Though these policies may be contested, at national and other levels, the contestation takes place *within* the opportunity structure provided by the discourse itself, rather than providing alternatives, and while national variations may be substantial, and lead to rather different conceptions, framings and implementations affecting access, coping, relevance and life course, these variations remain broadly within the common discursive opportunity structure. Those dominant discourses have the effect of concentrating governing activities predominantly around issues of access to the labour market, though we recognize that while the discourse appears homogeneous, the particular ‘labour markets’ confronting individual schools and their students are unique and complex in their specificity, while still conforming broadly with the transnational discourse.

Related to the discourse on new public management or new governance, all of the GOETE countries adopted forms of economic principles of efficiency, and this affects schools, their students, teachers and parents in a range of ways. It places pressures on schools for more output measures, for instance. The marketization of education also leads to new segregation lines between schools (“black” and “white” schools; private schools) which are in turn experienced by students in real and visceral ways. New selection mechanisms enforce justifications for the fine categorizing of students and sorting of specific groups of students (the unmotivated; those with language difficulties; those with behavioural problems, etc.), in turn reworking the spatial organisation of schools (Kazepov et al., 2013).

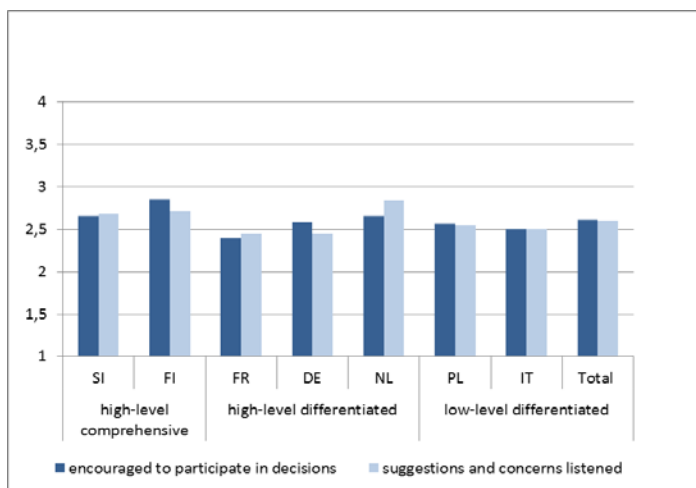
Also, GOETE identified a dominant discourse centred on the idea of ‘school autonomy’ which is a widespread policy in Europe (see: Aro et al., 2012). Rhetorically, this discourse promises to guarantee teaching freedom, to strengthen local school democracy, and to complete the process of decentralisation. However, in reality, there has been a reallocation of governing activity to a range of new actors, including non-state actors. These new arrangements become concrete at the local level. For instance, the new roles for networks of actors, and the cooperation with actors outside the educational sphere, vary substantially across countries, showing the ways in which *institutional opportunity structures* place limits on new developments because of their histories, path dependencies and so on. As a result, in most countries cooperation is rather weak, and there are few synergies activated with external actors. The perception of principals to be collaborating or competing with other

(neighbouring) schools has arguably an influence on the governance of access, relevance and support to education for children. Especially in the context of free school choice, which is in fact one precondition for competition, the later may have the effect that schools start sorting pupils or building specific profiles (music and arts, natural sciences, etc.). The literature on the pros and cons of free school choice shows an ambiguous picture and several authors argue that the negative side-effects outweigh the positive (Mons, 2007; Ravitch, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Thus, what is intended as an improvement of service delivery and as helping pupils to cope with educational disadvantage becomes a missed opportunity. And despite the fact that decentralisation and school autonomy might appear to offer greater opportunities for parental participation in the governing of schools and in supporting children, there is a very low level of involvement (see: Loncle et al., 2013; see also below). Rather, the new governance arrangements at the local level are still seen to fall within the realm of specialized professionals or voluntary organizations, rather than of parents on an individual basis.

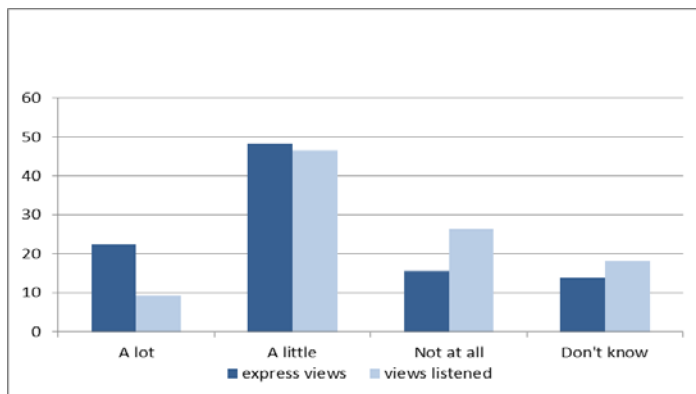
*Parents and students have limited possibilities of participation in decision-making at school: education systems in GOETE countries claim to increasingly giving more voice to parents and students. However, the relationship between school and parents is asymmetric and influence is limited to marginal issues*

The country data shows that parents feel most encouraged to participate in decision making at schools in Finland (2,85), followed by Slovenia and the Netherlands (both 2,66), while parents in France (2,40) feel least encouraged to do so. Furthermore, parents in the Netherlands most agree that school takes account of their decisions and concerns (2,84), followed by Finland (2,71) and Slovenia (2,68), while parents in France and Germany least agree (both 2,45) (see: graph 1 below). Data thus suggest that parents in Finland, the Netherlands and Slovenia have the most decision making power in schools in terms of governance issues, however, it has to be noted that the differences between the countries are not substantial. Moreover, especially because differences for these two variables are not statistically significant in terms of the level of deprivation of the school sample, but are significant in terms of the educational level of parents, these data suggests that the characteristics of the educational systems and the organization of schools do not have decisive effect over how much influence parents have over the actual organization and life in schools in practice, but that these power/influence is much more related to the socio-economic and cultural capital of parents.



**Graph 1: Parents' perceptions of possibilities of participation in school, (1 –strongly agree ... 4 strongly disagree)**

Also, students' perception of possibilities to express views on, and of being listened, in school are rather low. As suggested in graph 2 below, almost 50% of students report that they have only 'a little' possibilities to raise issues in school or to have their views listened to (McDowell et al., 2012).



**Graph 2: Students' perceptions of possibilities to express views and being listened in school, in %**

*Educational governance affects the processes of educational trajectories – in terms Access, Coping, Relevance and Life Course – and has to be seen in relation to the levels at which this takes place and the outcomes it produces*

How educational trajectories and transitions are governed is the product of activities and actors at a range of different scales, from the global to the local school. The links between national and local governance are rarely clear, and frequently perceived as ineffective, while a common finding on GOETE points to various forms of *disjuncture* between national and more local levels. The metaphor of “polyphonic voices” used above may well illustrate the situation: all actors and stake-holders seem to speak simultaneously, which prevents that a meaningful and reasonable conversation emerges in which references to one another are possible and coordinated. However, there are ‘louder’ (or ‘powerful’) voices that can make themselves heard – far more than the silent ones.

Rather than continuity between levels of governance, it may be that *different discourses and practices at different levels of governance may carry different messages, aimed at different audiences*. This appears in many cases to be a consequence of different sets of policy priorities and forms of support at national and sub-national levels. This leads to what is referred to as forms of ‘*passive subsidiarity*’, where national policy proclamations are not accompanied by any form of support for local implementation. It also reflects the changing nature and place of national policy making in an era dominated by the transnational discourses of Knowledge-based Economy and Lifelong Learning. These take different forms in different countries, and at different levels of education systems, from national to regional and local, where, for instance, the responses to the transnational discourses at the level of national education systems have remained to a notable degree within the set of assumptions that surround the ‘old’ national economy discourse.

When this comes down to the level of the relationship between forms of educational governance and the possibilities they open up—or not—for students and parents to be involved in the governance of transitions of which they are the most immediate beneficiaries or casualties, we found a range of formal and non-formal relationships between parents, students and schools. Overall, while there is strong support from international organisations for student representation in the governance of schools and many references to this being a consultative role, there is both a range of understandings of what this may mean and entail, and considerable gaps between the perceptions and the reality on the ground.

It is a somewhat similar picture in respect of parents becoming involved, or having some say, in transition processes and arrangements. In particular, two aspects of this may be highlighted: the nature and extent of schools’ accountability to parents, and the possibility of parents making some form of input to, or having some form of involvement in, the practices of transition as they affect their children. In terms of the former, such accountability is often reduced to a single number in a ranking list; if the position it signals is an ‘improvement’, the school is doing well; if it signals a decline, the school needs to take steps, but only of a kind that will improve the number. In terms of the latter, and especially with respect to the transition into lower secondary school, which in many countries—and

not just those with a selective system—it is seen as the decisive moment in the child’s school trajectory, and as such it becomes an all-important issue for parents. However, once again, the volume of social capital is a decisive factor, as middle and upper class parents appear as not only the most active, but also as most of to make the most of what opportunities they have. One problem with this is that, especially in places where there is competition for places in what are seen as the most desirable schools, this can become a zero sum game, i.e., what one parent wins for her/his child, another loses. Beyond this, there is a widespread understanding that ‘parental involvement in schools’ is frequently only formally implemented as a form of ‘symbolic policy’.

GOETE also focused on how the various ‘moments’ of educational governance—practice, policy and politics—individually and collectively shape the *outcomes* of the process—simply put, who gets what out of it, which is what is after all, the forms of governance are intended ultimately to affect. Not surprisingly after all that has gone before, it can be concluded that the dominant discourse of outcomes, generated and implemented through the governance of educational transitions and trajectories, is largely that of individual labour market outcomes, and of the outputs from educational institutions that are directly concerned with achieving them. It thus represents the double hegemony of the Knowledge-based Economy and Lifelong Learning, with the former framing what is to count as education, and the latter picking up the challenge of the inevitable failure of everyone to join the labour market, by offering them a lifetime of opportunities to extend their labour market-related learning (see: Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2013).

### **2.3 Access and Education - Inequality and Diversity**

A key issue in current discourses and policy reforms is the aim of increasing participation in education and training and raising levels of qualification requiring. Consequently, debates relate to need of widening access to postsecondary and higher education or to lifelong learning, in particular in relation to gender, socio-economic status, and ethnicity. Thus, access is closely related to a perspective that sees education as either reproducing or mitigating social inequalities/disadvantage in and through educational institutions. In the current context of lifelong learning in European knowledge societies, access to education is not only related to securing and improving competitiveness, but it is to a greater degree an issue of social inclusion, participation and justice. Access is thus closely related to the structural and institutional arrangements in the provision and delivery of education, to organisational arrangements within schools and other educational institutions such as entrance and progression regulations, selection by ability, etc. but also to sectoral policies (school choice, policies targeting particular groups, etc. (Parreira do Amaral & Barberis, 2013; Biggard & Järvinen, 2013). In these perspectives, the subjective perspective of individuals is mostly missing. However, relying on an understanding of social structure and individual agency as interrelated (cf. Giddens, 1984; Emirbayr & Mische, 1998), structural access to education requires that individuals also perceive and interpret it as accessible (Bourdieu, 1984; Fenstermaker & West 1995).

*The notion of access to education has to be expanded by the idea of accessibility of education, thus highlighting the subjective dimension of access*

Obviously the existence of formal rights such as normative provisions (e.g. the right to “education for all” irrespective of origin, abilities or orientation) and of access structures (e.g., compulsory education/schooling regulations) are necessary but not sufficient preconditions for successful participation in education. As long as there are complex and subtle barriers to obtaining effective access such as those referred to as “institutional and structural discrimination”, to which dominant discourses and complex interactions belong within and around institutions, with their often discouraging and excluding effects, the issue of access to education cannot be said to be tackled, let alone solved (cf.: Stauber & Parreira do Amaral, 2013b). One important insight from GOETE investigation was that the apparently ‘simple technical’ issue of access must be enlarged by an understanding of ‘accessibility’ in order to bring to the fore the complexity of ‘getting’ access.

*Accessibility offers an integrative perspective on how educational trajectories are governed*

The notion of *accessibility* aims *first* at highlighting young people’s subjective experiences during their educational trajectories, e.g., experiences of social disregard which lead to negative self-descriptions and corresponding defensive coping strategies. These perpetuating effects of disregard can be observed especially among students from lower secondary schools and their families, thus affecting access issues. *Second*, access is not to be seen as a simple resource that can be “tapped into and transferred”, but obviously needs more complex efforts and processes – both in policy and practice – in order to be effectively installed. Importantly, it needs to attract much more attention for the existing discrimination taking place in educational settings, for the social orders of exclusion and selective inclusion which structure the experiences of those young people who are classified as being ‘disadvantaged’ and their parents, and not least for the specific use professionals make of discretionary power at their disposal. *Third*, accessibility operates on a similar level of theorising as the discourses on capabilities, by emphasizing the complex preconditions necessary for people *to make use of them*, in order to *realise* access to basic needs such as education. *Fourth*, the interacting dimension of ‘doing access’ is highlighted by the term accessibility, which in turn points to the scope, or the discretionary power, of educational professionals. Accessibility, *fifth*, is a concept deployed in a critical perspective with regard to powerful social orders and hegemonic discourses. *Finally*, there is also a normative layer in the use of accessibility, as far as it points to a common responsibility of all actors involved to actively create access to education, and also to gainful employment (which are both being increasingly decoupled in the current economic crisis). Instead of being a merely descriptive-analytic category it is a term that refers to (a lack of) social justice and to the (mal-) distribution of social recognition (see: Stauber & Parreira do Amaral, 2013b).

The complex and multi-layered issue of access and accessibility to education calls for a methodology that takes into account these different levels on which *accessibility* can be created (or hindered), and their interrelations. We therefore developed and applied, as far as possible, a multilevel analysis that relates the empirical findings of the GOETE sub-studies at three different levels: the (micro) level of individuals, the meso-level of institutions and professional interactions as well as the macro level of society. Related to this approach our research strategy also drew from insights into the *intersectionality of social differentiation* to discuss and analyse issues of interrelatedness and reciprocities of gender, race/ethnic origin and class as well as other social categories, which are set as being ‘relevant’ in a specific context. The following paragraphs present and discuss further GOETE findings along the several levels.

*Different types of education systems provide varying levels of access and accessibility and display differing degrees of selectivity*

Focusing the macro and meso-level of analysis, GOETE suggested distinguishing among different types of education systems<sup>2</sup> in terms of their structural and institutional dimensions—which is a useful way of highlighting our findings in comparative perspective (cf. Parreira do Amaral & Barberis, 2013):

- In *high-level-standardized and comprehensive* systems (FI, SI) organisational differentiation and degree of selectivity is low and no transitions in compulsory education exist. Thus the degree to which students are selected and grouped according to individual or group characteristics (e.g., level of achievement, language proficiency, etc.) is by definition (and also in practice) substantially lower. This type of system has the most potential for effectively providing access to education and mitigating inequalities;
- In *low-level-standardized and differentiated* systems (UK, IT, PL) there is a medium degree of organisational differentiation, a low degree of selectivity and the existing transitions are ‘smoother’. This, however, has to be seen in the context of the level of support pupils receive to cope with transitions: all three countries provide only little institutionalised (state) support. While pupils consequently have to count predominantly on the support of the family (often reproducing social inequalities), they also experience less ‘cooling out’ processes;

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction was elaborated drawing from Allmendinger’s (1989) typology of education systems and from Walther’s (2006) typology of transition regimes (cf. Parreira do Amaral & Barberis, 2013).

- In *high-level-standardized and differentiated systems* (FR, DE, NL) there is a substantial organisational differentiation, a medium to high degree of selectivity and transitions exist which represent a medium to high threshold from one education level to the next. The systems have inherent highly selective ‘bottlenecks’ and early decision-making points that have the potential to reinforce social and educational inequalities and disadvantage, thus offering less potential for providing effective access and mitigating inequalities.

These macro frameworks of institutional and organisational regulation exert influence and structure the educational trajectories of young people. Yet, at the same time these frameworks do not completely determine individual trajectories, but rather provide varying levels of accessibility at the individual-subjective dimension. These different levels of accessibility are reflected, for instance, in parents’ estimations with regard to access to education, pointing to how systemic issues, every-day experience and consequently also the estimations of individuals correspond with each other (see also: Biggart & Järvinen, 2013).

*There is a correlation of likelihood of a student changing secondary schools and the type of education system, with implications for overall happiness with school, school context and educational system.*

Focusing findings at the *individual level*, GOETE research shows how access within educational trajectories is impacted by these different institutional arrangements. For instance, students were asked to note whether they had ever moved school at either primary or secondary level. Those in *low-level-standardized and differentiated systems* educational systems (UK, Italy, Poland) were more likely to have remained in the same primary school than those in the *high-level-standardized and comprehensive* group (Finland, Slovenia) or the *high-level-standardized and differentiated* group (Germany, Netherlands, France). Out of those who had changed primary schools, students in the *high-level-standardized and differentiated* cluster reported to have made the most transitions overall with nearly a third of students having changed school at least once (29%). Further analysis of the level of disadvantage of the school did not indicate any significant differences between school context and school changes, with around three-quarters of students from disadvantage, affluent and average schools overall remaining in the same school throughout their primary school years (cf. McDowell et al., 2012).

The correlation between system type and changing schools is also found in secondary level. Students within *high-level-standardized and comprehensive* systems are significantly less likely to have changed school than *high-level-standardized and differentiated* and *low-level-standardized and differentiated* students. Only 6 per cent had moved among the former group, compared to nearly one in four in the high-level-standardized and comprehensive group (24%), which is likely to be explained by switching between the different types or strata in school within the more differentiated school systems (McDowell et al., 2012; see also section on Life Course below).

Changing schools represents a serious rupture for many students; changing to a preferred school may impact on the overall happiness with school, school context and educational system (see also the section on Coping as well as Life Course below). In the GOETE survey, the vast majority – nine out of ten students – reported that they got a place in the secondary school that they wished to attend (90%). For the 10% who did not, they were asked to explain why their current school was not their first choice. The top reason as to why students did not want to attend their current school was due to peer relationships; all their friends were attending a different school (34%). Further exploration of these results revealed significant differences between students’ overall happiness with their school, school context and educational system. Eight out of ten of students from the affluent school group reported to be ‘*pleased to have gone to this school*’ in comparison to around seven in ten among those attending schools classed as disadvantaged or average. Students in *high-level-standardized comprehensive* education systems overall were most satisfied with the lower secondary school which they had attended, students from *high-level-standardized differentiated* systems the least. Among the high-level-standardized and differentiated group, three in ten students wished they could have attended a different school (31%). Out of all students who selected they would have ‘preferred to go to different school’, high-level-standardized and differentiated group students formed the majority among this category (57%).

**Table 2: What do you think of move from primary to secondary school by education system typology\***

	% within high-level-standardized comprehensive (FI, SLO)	% within low-level-standardized differentiated systems (IT, PL, UK)	% within high-level-standardized and differentiated (DE, FR, NL) <sup>3</sup>	Total
Pleased have gone to this school	78	82	68	74
School is OK, might have got on better at different school	17	15	19	18
Preferred to go to different school	6	3	12	8
Total (N)	(2363)	(779)	(2357)	(5499)

\*p.value= <.001; Cramer's V .105

Further, at the macro dimension another aspect influencing access and accessibility of education may be seen in the school context. In our survey it showed to be a good predictor of educational aspirations, with students in disadvantaged schools much less likely to aspire to a university education. While nearly two-third of students from disadvantaged did not want to go to university over half of those (61%) from affluent schools did, with the average schools falling somewhere in-between (Stauber & Parreira do Amaral, 2013; see also: Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Stockè, 2007; OECD, 2010). Also, disadvantaged school contexts exert impact on the organisation and processes within schools, thus influencing school attainment (See: Danic & De Luigi, 2013; Lupton, 2004).

At the European level there is a relative balance between students in vocational and general education, nevertheless high variations exist between individual countries. In some countries vocational education is oftentimes viewed as low status and academic pathways are seen to be more prestigious especially amongst more affluent families. The overall public discourse on the need of higher educational credentials in the 'knowledge society' may reinforce this situation, which may help explain the differences in attitudes toward attending university between disadvantaged and affluent schools. Furthermore, students who graduate from these vocational schools may not view university as a future goal as they are aware of the stratified system in which they are in, and that access to university is therefore not an option. Highly stratified systems may prevent students from even acknowledging University as a possibility (cf. McDowell et al., 2012).

**Table 3: Students who want to go onto University by school context**

School context*				
	% within disadvantaged	% within average	% within affluent	Total
Does not want to go to University	63	53	39	52
Wants to go to university	37	47	61	48
(N)	(2057)	(2045)	(2063)	(6165)

\*p.value= <.001; Cramer's V .193

<sup>3</sup> In country level data, Germany has the lowest amount of students who are *pleased to have gone to this school* in comparison to the other countries in this high-level-standardized and differentiated group (DE 58%, NL 73%, FR 75%) and thus lowers the overall average score for that grouping.

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\*p.value= <.001; Cramer's V .193

*Access/ibility derives from the interaction between the institutional and the individual level of practices as well as the level of overall societal discourses and social/spatial orders.*

The interaction between *institutional and individual levels* may be best studied by means of the analysis of the discretionary power of professional staff charged with decision-making at the local level. There is no simple homology between educational structures and the practices of educational professionals. Discretion has been identified as a fundamental part of social work and the educational professions; and, the structuring of the macro institutional frame proved highly influential on how this discretion is deployed. GOETE research focused on a pedagogical field of work that is only little regulated, namely on the role of educational professionals in supporting access and transition *after* or *outside* their scheduled teaching hours. Extracurricular, afternoon, and out-of-class activities aimed at easing access and transitions was studied by triangulating the points of view of students, parents, teachers and internal and external experts in order to reveal how they may be relevant to successful or unsuccessful transitions. Analysis of case studies showed the existence, to differing degrees, of different types of discretion in all countries that can be used in different directions, proactively increasing access/ibility and defensively, closing doors and diminishing access/ibility for students. According to the literature on the topic, we typified them as: *Discretion within the rule; discretion among the rules; discretion without rule; discretion against the rule* (Barberis & Buchowicz, 2013; Lipsky, 2010). It is however important to think of the concept of discretion as not being *per se* positive or negative, but which, depending on its *use in context*, can have beneficial effects or detrimental effects both for users and educational organizations. This *use in context* of street-level-bureaucracy again points to the fact that accounts of teachers and social workers either represent instances of intersecting “doing difference” (West & Fenstermaker, 1995), or have to be read as critical statements and/or attempts to explicitly enlarge accessibility in specific cases – even against the institutional logics (cf. Barberis & Buchowicz, 2003; see also: Julkunen & Walther, 2014, forthcoming).

At the intersection of *individual practices and overall societal discourses*, GOETE findings from interview analysis with teachers, principals, social workers and also students themselves showed that a core idea with respect to the representation of ‘target groups’ is that these are depicted as having to cope with cumulating problems, for which the metaphor of a ‘back-pack’ has often been used. Problematically, this ‘back-pack’ full of complex – structural, institutional as well as individual – problems is all too often turned into individual properties of the groups themselves, thus naturalizing and individualizing social problems. These are practices of gendering as well as ethnicizing ascriptions, often coupled with instances of ‘blaming the victims’. Also, *spatial orders* also have to be considered. The analysis of our interviews has clearly shown that processes of doing difference go along with school choices within and outside of neighbourhoods, and the stigmatization effects this spatial segregation has for those who are still living in deprived areas. This local-spatial segregation is based on doing ethnicity in extremely sharp ways in the Netherlands (“white flight”) or in Poland and Slovenia, with racialised spacing or even ghettoisation (Roma), interwoven with social class as the other core line of discrimination.

A ‘pedagogization of social problems’ can be observed, often crudely shifting structural problems to the individual level

Further, in systems in which secondary education is differentiated into tracks with different social status (i.e., socially hierarchical, such as Hauptschule in Germany, or vocational education in the Netherlands), a *normalizing* discourse of stigmatisation can be found among all groups of interviewees, including the students themselves. Ascribing additional problems and individual deficits to those students coming from the lower secondary school as compared to those other types of school was revealed as a ubiquitous practice. Here, there is a clear reference of individuals’ practices and orientations to discriminating discourses – and of course also to discriminating structures (cf. Stauber & Parreira do Amaral, 2013a).

In conclusion, GOETE countries provide different levels of access and accessibility to education to their children and young people. Currently, we see most of the answers to the problem of a lack of accessibility caused by structural problems being redefined as individual problems. The most striking examples are to be found in the ‘blaming game’ among professionals and also in the interactive procedures between teachers and students (Koşar Altinyelken, Boron & Demozzi, 2013). There is also a widespread trend among professionals who claim the need to “render students (choices) more realistic” as to their educational and professional aspirations, which can be read as a refusal of professionals to fight for better accessibility and instead undertake all efforts to hold students back. This causes double binding effects on the side of students and parents, who often willingly accept the dominant public discourse that the most important thing is to achieve the highest educational credentials possible. This has always been a myth, but it is becoming even greater with the current crisis which now has started to show its effects on youth labour markets.

Against this background it seems crucial to focus on the need to find *structural* solutions for *structural* problems instead of attempting to shift them to the individual level. And this hints to the necessary change of power orders in the interaction of education institutions and families. This strategy of tackling structural issues at the individual level has been discussed in the literature as the ‘pedagogization of social problems’ (Proske, 2001; Herrmann, 1984). It points to the fact that modern societies often handle their political and social problems by means of educational and not political, legal or economic strategies and options, thus, resorting to pedagogical strategies – mostly at the individual level. Thereby inequalities of access and accessibility are being de-thematized.

## 2.4 Coping and Support in Educational Transitions

Coping describes the process of dealing with challenges in different spheres of interaction throughout the life course. The concept of coping has been developed in the context of psychology of stress in order to understand how individuals maintain control and agency under conditions of critical life events (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). It has been developed and applied with regard to everyday life and biography under conditions of de-standardised life courses and uncertain biographies (Böhnisch 2005), especially with regard to young people’s transitions from school to employment (Walther et al., 2006). Relating education and coping provides a key to understanding young people’s actions and decisions in and with regard to education as expressions of the interaction between available resources – provided by life conditions and school environment – and young people’s subjective biographies and relevances. Consequently, all action of young people carried out in or with regard to school needs to be interpreted as forms of coping. This refers to effort and compliance as much as to refusal, disengagement, early school leaving or other forms of non-conformist behaviour such as bullying.

GOETE focused on how students *cope* with educational demands and on the *support* they receive for it. *Support* refers to all social practices and resources – formal and informal – aimed at strengthening and enabling individuals to cope with social and mental challenges.

*At the macro level of society*, the general societal/economic/cultural contexts provide the frame to understand some of the challenges education systems and thus also students are facing. The context of increasing globalisation, internationalisation and competitive knowledge societies is currently shaping much of the demands towards the education system and individuals. Given demographic

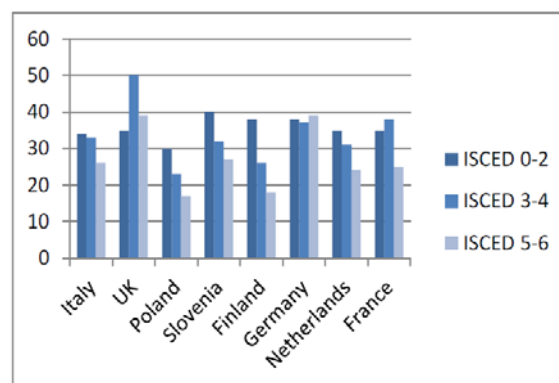
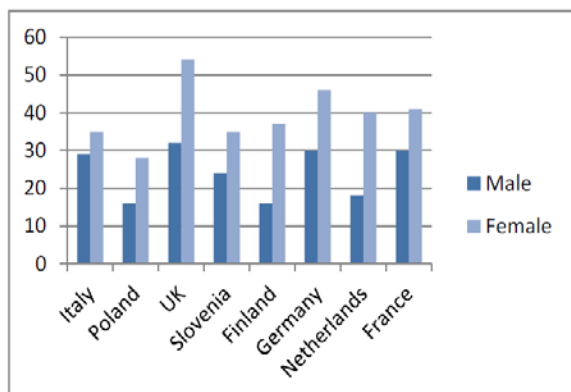
developments confront societies with the demand of a qualified workforce and therefore integrating those with little educational achievements and without sufficient training. There is also the challenge of strengthening the ability of young learners to participate in social and cultural spheres, and the ability to lead a self-determined life facing the demanding challenges of mobility, complexity and acceleration of information and knowledge. In knowledge societies, knowledge and skills are subject to rapid change – with direct consequences for education.

At the *institutional level*, demands and challenges encompass the necessity for cooperation among institutions within the education system (e.g., different school types/levels), out-of-school services (such as social work, psychological and psychiatric counselling) and parent homes. In order to organize support and to strengthen individual coping strategies, the demands of creating a sustainable school-culture have to be taken into account. The challenges are to a) secure a welcoming climate for every child; b) counter instances of bullying, mobbing or racism; c) develop constructive ways to solve and mediate conflicts (also in peer-to-peer mediation); d) ensure a high level of parental participation and an atmosphere of solidarity and support.

*Third, at the individual level*, formal and non-formal support needs to be integrated and oriented towards the resources and capabilities of the students. In analogy to the concept of accessibility discussed above it is crucial to empower children and youth and ensure students are able to effectively use them both within and outside of school. In this context, the individual has to be considered in terms of their social background, their capacities, and deficits in their coping abilities. It is important to take account of students from families regarded as having a lack of resources to overcome structural barriers and difficulties that are connected with individual situations.

*Each individual student is confronted by a specific set of challenges he/she has to cope with*

*Meeting academic demands* emerged as a most important challenge encountered by students in various researched school contexts. Exam periods, and more specifically ‘leaving’ exams (administered at the end of lower secondary in some countries, e.g. the Netherlands, Germany) are considered very stressful. Some students contend that they felt more challenged by specific subjects, and they often named mathematics and language classes as being the most difficult ones. Responding well to academic demands was an important challenge and taken seriously by many, since educational performance at lower secondary level has important consequences for future educational and occupational careers. Most students appear to be conscious of the fact that success or failure at lower secondary might open up or close down some opportunities at later stages of their lives (McDowell et al., 2012). And indeed, from the institutional perspective, school principals name, grade point average was named as one of the most important criterion of pupil selection (especially in Poland and Slovenia) (Aro et al., 2012). Graph 3 below compares the proportions of students who say they always or frequently worry about doing badly at school. Gender differences are clearly apparent where across all national contexts girls worry significantly more compared to the boys (see graph 3). The differences between the sexes are widest in the samples from the UK, Finland and the Netherlands. While a significant proportion of boys in many of the national contexts also state they always or frequently worry about doing well, the results suggest that young people in schools in Europe feel under considerable pressure to attain (McDowell et al., 2012).



**Graph 3: % of students who always or frequently worry about doing badly at school by gender**

**Graph 4: % of students who always or frequently worry about doing badly at school by highest parental education**

Across all countries it is those from the highest educational parental backgrounds who seem to have the least concerns about doing badly at school. In Poland, Slovenia and Finland it is those with the least well educated parents who worry most about educational failure (see graph 4). In the more open comprehensive systems young people from lower educated family backgrounds following a common curriculum within the same schools appear to feel the consequences of potential educational failure more acutely than countries with highly differentiated tracks. In general, those from the most well educated parental backgrounds tended to worry less about doing badly at school, likely reflecting their higher levels of school achievement relative to their peers. In this respect the German context appeared an outlier, and although levels of worry are generally high there was little differentiation according to parental educational levels. In this respect concerns about educational failure may be formed by young people's relative position within stratified tracks.

*Disadvantaged family background* – According to several teachers and experts involved in our study, various educational challenges of students originate from or are reinforced by their family resp. social background. In GOETE the focus on disadvantaged family background included different categories: children with special needs; students misbehaving; children from migrant backgrounds; and families from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The term 'disadvantaged family background' aims at capturing these aspects. It is important to note that disadvantage is the result of processes of social differentiation and not to be seen as attributes of the individuals/families themselves. It also has a spatial dimension because social differentiation operates in political and practical ways (policies, urban planning, investment, buildings, etc.) which produce socially marked spaces and places.

GOETE confirms that socio-economic background of students has an important influence on students' achievement at school (see OECD, 2010). Financial, social and cultural resources play an important role in educational trajectories. Related to this, the level of education of the parents has an influence on educational aspiration. Answering to the question "are you satisfied with your child's academic achievement so far?", 48.6% of mothers with basic education answered yes – against 64.9% or mothers with tertiary education (McDowell et al., 2012, p. 82). There is also evidence that socio-economically disadvantaged parents understand schooling differently: many of them seem to regard education of their offspring as a family project for upward mobility, which consequently increases the pressure on their children to succeed in school, mainly to earn qualifications. Among working-class families, for instance in France, especially, the value of education is more connected to the social status it confers, rather than the knowledge and abilities it helps develop (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012, p. 178). Despite the fact that a majority of parents believe education is very important for their child's future disadvantaged families face the greatest difficulties when supporting their child (McDowell et al., 2012, p. 95).

*Migration background* – Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between students from migrant backgrounds and disadvantage in education in various country contexts. Students from migrant backgrounds can be seen as one of the most disadvantaged groups. Language proficiency is one of the most important aspects reported by educational staff and one many children and youth have to cope with. In countries like France or Germany, teachers, principals and experts interviewed for the GOETE project suggested that difficulties with language of instruction can be ascribed to the use of the families' mother tongue at home. Also, several experts and teachers argued that parents from migrant background have less interest in supporting their children and rate education as less relevant. That contradicts not only former findings about on average higher educational expectations of parents with migration background but also statements of high motivated and committed parents from migrant background interviewed for our study.

There is also an interactive dimension involved here, since often disadvantaged family background is attributed to students by educational staff. Parents are said not to be prepared for their role and provide inadequate support to their children. According to the majority of teachers and experts, this is

especially the case among families from migration backgrounds, and those who have a low socio-economic and/or low educational status. School principals name ‘problems in the family’ and ‘behaviour problems’ as the two most important factors affecting coping and learning (Aro et al., 2012, p. 69f.).

*Students have to cope with issues of stigmatization related to the type of school they attend, especially those enrolled in lower levels and/or vocational education*

Although most actors interviewed in GOETE see education as a key to break out of the cycle of disadvantage, the study also shows that in many cases the reproduction of social and economic inequalities as well as stigmatization are still important issues for students to cope with. For instance, issues of institutional discrimination of students from migrant background or welfare dependant families have been reported by several interviewees, as the quotation below illustrates:

“That are the kids in the families where unemployment is inherited from generations and they are brought up by social welfare system.” (external expert, Poland)

There is evidence of spatial segregation of students from migrant background in particular schools and school types (‘black’ schools in the Netherlands, ‘Hauptschule’ in Germany, Roma children in Slovenia). School segregation emerges as “white” parents try to avoid school with high rates of migrant pupils. Further, there are also experiences of discrimination and ‘othering’. Many students from migrant or Roma families are exposed to discourses and practices of “othering” in school, including differentiated and hierarchized treatment and exclusion from ‘in’ groups. In several countries, teachers and other educational staff made generalizations about students and families who are different from mainstream, this is especially common with reference to some migrant groups (Turkish in Germany and the Netherlands, Northern Africans in France, Roma in Slovenia), as this student expressed:

“For nine years, I have been attending this school, I feel all right here, just some teachers are rude to us. They behave in a different manner to others than to us (Roma students). And concerning school marks too” (Rihanna, female student, Slovenia).

In GOETE countries, given the structural and institutional arrangements in upper secondary education, students with a migration background are over-represented in vocational educational pathways. While in Slovenia and France vocational education per se is attributed low status, this differentiates according to specific training routes and professional branches in the Netherland, Germany, the UK and Poland. In educational systems characterized by early selection, such as Germany and the Netherlands, especially pre-vocational education stigmatisation is most intense. These segregated educational pathways reinforce a gap between students from migrant and native backgrounds, sometimes creating feelings of alienation.

*Coping in the context of a powerful discourse on individualism – students believe they alone are responsible for their own careers and success*

It is a characteristic of educational research that the perspectives of those with negative experiences and expectations, especially early school leavers, are little represented. This applies also for the GOETE study. This means that primarily coping strategies have come into focus. An important finding is that students are viewed as responsible for their own career and success by most actors – and also by themselves. By implication, lack of success is perceived primarily as individual failure rather than effect of the system or resulting from other kinds of social relations/structures. The discourse of individualism, and the consequent responsibility for their educational trajectories and careers, is powerful – and one that also works against the system because it does not challenge the system to generate sufficient support for learners and to address structural inequalities (see also section on Life Course).

*Coping by mobilising support – formally and informally*

The most widespread coping strategy students referred to was looking for and using support mechanisms, both formal ones provided in schools as well as by out-of-school actors and informal ones. As regards provision of formal support, Table 4 below distinguishes the types of school-related formal support found in the GOETE countries according to whether they address school problems in a direct or indirect way and whether they are delivered within or outside schools (see: Aro et al., 2013).

**Table 4: Types of formal support available to students**

		<i>Location in relation to school</i>	
		<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
<i>Relationship to learning</i>	<i>Direct</i>	1) Remedial instruction Special education classes Part-time special education Preparatory education for immigrants Homework classes	3) Private tutoring
	<i>Indirect</i>	2) Student welfare team School social worker School nurse School psychologist Use of support pupils	4) Municipal social work Youth work Youth psychiatry Employment service Work experience periods

There was a clear evidence that differences in welfare state regimes are reflected by differences in the supply of support for students in school with a higher coverage and accessibility of support in high-level standardised and comprehensive education systems (Finland and Slovenia) and a significantly lower level of support in low-level standardised and differentiated systems (Italy, Poland and UK). In high-level standardised and differentiated systems (France, Germany, Netherlands) provision of support varied but was often connected to conditional access and stigmatisation. These clusters reveal that – apart from the standardisation and stratification of education and training (Allmendinger, 1989) – also structures of welfare addressing children and young people have an impact on their educational trajectories; as more comprehensive typologies referring to “life course regimes” or “transition regimes” do suggest (cf. Mayer 1997; 2005; Walther, 2006; 2011). In all countries, however, some kind of gap between the demands of formal support and its availability to students in terms of coverage or a lack of flexibility was found. This applies also to educational and vocational guidance for students in their transition to education and training beyond lower secondary school.

*Children and youth feel burdened by decision-making at transition points. Career guidance has become a crucial form of support in educational trajectories*

There are different traditions and practices in career guidance across Europe. Empirical evidence makes clear that transitions are decisive in shaping the ongoing trajectories of students. Nevertheless, career guidance is covered in teacher training only weakly in almost all GOETE countries, except for the Netherlands where it is covered in depth. Also, education systems with streaming and tracking mechanisms in place tend to have more highly developed guidance systems, but as a general finding GOETE found evidence of a lack of coordination and coherence in guidance systems. When focusing on how guidance is organised within schools, three different models emerged (i) the “class teacher” or the integrated model; (ii) more specialized forms of “school specialised practitioners”; and (iii) “out-of-school specialised practitioners”. Further, there is no systematic relation between training and the roles of practitioners in career guidance, which implies a varied quality of career guidance systems (Mellotée & Julkunen, 2013) (see table 5).

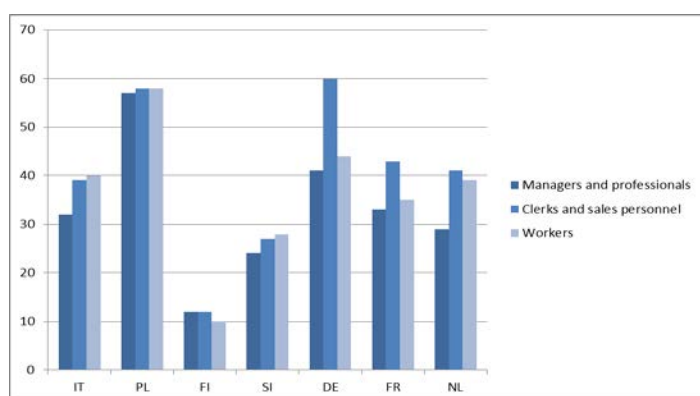
**Table 5: Organizational forms of career guidance in GOETE countries**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Class teacher	France (mixed) the Netherlands Germany Italy	A teacher is responsible for guidance in addition to subjects teaching

School specialised practitioners	Slovenia Finland France (mixed)	Within the school a professional with dedicated training is in charge of guidance and counselling
Out-of-school specialised practitioners	Poland United Kingdom	Outside the school a professional with dedicated training is in charge of guidance and counselling

Traditionally, career guidance in schools has been viewed largely as an individualised service provided punctually at key decision points, and a support to the curriculum rather than part of it. It has mainly been delivered through personal interviews and sometimes supported by psychometric testing. This type of guidance is rather expensive and not feasible to be provided to large numbers of pupils, which limits its availability. The focus has tended to be almost exclusively on immediate educational decision-making, and often only little attention was paid to the occupational and longer-term career choices that flow from particular educational pathways. In particular, where career guidance services are wholly school-based, links with the labour market are usually weak. GOETE evidence also shows that in recent years there has been a trend for this more individualized career guidance to be supplemented with a curriculum-based approach. An emphasis upon lifelong learning and sustained employability greatly enhances the case for such an approach.

Cooperation between schools and out-of-school services, such as social work or psychological counselling, is an important source. Likewise, self-organized support obtained by parents helps to fill gaps in the network of public support measures. Here, parents have various ways of helping their children in their school work, particularly if the resources of the school are deemed insufficient with regard to the child’s needs or objectives. Our local case studies revealed (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012) that one of the most common ways for parents to help their children cope with the educational demands was to offer private tutoring. While the use of this type of support is related to the ability to pay for it; results from the pupils and of the parental survey also showed that a third of all parents employed private tutoring to their child; pupils reported slightly higher levels of tutoring (see graph 3 below). There are also statistically significant differences according to the school sample: parents from affluent schools have used this resource most often (34.0%), followed by parents from average schools (30.1%) and least often parents from disadvantaged schools (25.7%). These proportions are not surprising as we can presume that this option is less available to the parents from disadvantaged schools. If we look at the education of parents – here illustrated by occupational status – we see that employing a tutor was more used by low educated parents (32.6%) and least often by the most educated ones (27.1%) (McDowell et al., 2012). See graph 5 below:



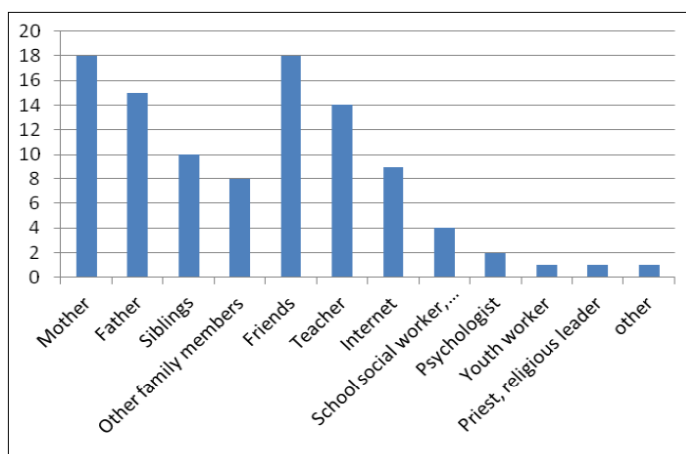
**Graph 5: Proportion of pupils who had a private tutor, according to country and parents occupational status (%), data not available for UK**

One insight is the different levels of access to, and usage of, private tutoring – with Poland and Germany featuring quite high on usage, and Finland quite low. However, what is interesting here is that this seems to be linked to trust in the quality of schooling, and therefore that students in the system will be properly attended to. The differences in the prevalence of private tutoring may be linked, firstly, to the status of school and the (dis)trust of the parents in the capabilities of teachers to provide the pupils with the necessary tutoring and support. Secondly, the prevalence of private tutoring may be fuelled by competition and by the needs of the high-achievers, which seems to be

related to having final examinations at the end of lower secondary education, which naturally increases competition among pupils.

*Students have little trust in formal support. Four times more students refer primarily to informal sources of support*

Although formal support mechanisms are increasing, they seem not to reach out to young people. Four times more young people refer primarily to informal sources of support (family and friends) than to formal support (e.g., pedagogical staff) when asked to whom they turn to for school related support. This suggests that support may mean something different than what providers of formal support do intend. While formal support and guidance focus on information and educational standards, young people look for recognition of their subjective wishes and encouragement. They find these qualities in their parents and peers and are much more sceptical with regard to school related support offered by teachers, counsellors or social workers (cf. McDowell et al., 2012; see also Eggens et al., 2008) (see graph 6).



**Graph 6: Relevant sources of support in case of school problems, % of positive answers**

The results of the parental survey also confirm these findings. According to parents (mostly mothers), children are more likely to seek support and advice from mothers (95.8%), fathers (76.9%), friends (82.6%), teacher (34.4%) and youth worker (14.2%) (McDowell et al., 2012).

*Responsibility and competence for supporting children and youth is not always mutually recognized and a “blaming game” between school and family becomes evident*

There is evidence of a continuing “blaming-game” and misunderstanding between families and school professionals that undermines potentials of existing support measures. Parents, especially those families from migrant background, do not feel taken seriously by school representatives and often feel disrespected in their efforts related to the upbringing of their children.

*“Teachers should change their method: sometimes it is too schematic and too much based on the assumption that pupils are part of general categories. They should try to see pupils according to their way of expressing themselves, individuality and potential.” (parent, Italy)*

*“Why are all these children put into the same waste bag and beaten? This is unfair. (...) My son is accused to be not educated. And this I don’t allow school to tell me. On the contrary, my education is failing at school, and not the other way around” (mother, Germany).*

*“Parents should sometimes be more present, sometimes less.”(school principal, Italy)*

Although GOETE findings indicate a high commitment from parents, including those from families from migrant background, teachers blame parents for not being supportive. This might be caused by an understanding of support that differs from the way parents provide it to their children. The

perceived value of building bridges between home and school has resulted in major efforts by education systems and educators. Yet, much of the research documents major gaps in being able to develop active and productive relationships, particularly with families who are alienated from the norms that dominate schooling environments and schooling expertise. The GOETE study documented ambivalent results; on the one hand, many practices were highly sympathetic to the needs of parents, including meetings on weekends, the use of formal representation structures, and the use of digital platforms. On the other hand, GOETE findings highlight the disappointment of teachers that parents were significantly more passive than they would have them and that indeed that the efforts of schools and teachers were often unrecognized.

Teachers often report cooperation with migrant parents as a demanding task. Findings show that difficult communication due to parents' language proficiency is actually not the crucial problem. In reality, difficult cooperation often lays on differences in terms of values and ideas about how education should be developed at school and at home. Some parents, in fact, show a 'non-interventionist' approach to school life and focus their whole commitment in helping their children at home (e.g., homework, private tutoring). Teachers often read this attitude in terms of unwillingness to cooperate, disinterest and, quite frequently, customer behaviour (school 'as a service').

Given the declared commitment both from parents and teachers in order to cooperate for the good of pupils, school-home cooperation often seems to meet a sort of 'short-circuit' due to a high charge of self-responsibility and stress. Parents (and children) struggle to get as much as possible out of education for the future (and sometimes this ends to be quite ambitious compared to real opportunities) and teachers constantly face the challenges to prepare pupils for an unequal society (bringing them back to their real possibilities). We highlight here a prevailing discourse on individualization of responsibility rather than a much more sensitive view on structural reasons of failure and disadvantage.

*Coping and support depend not only on individual agency, but have always to be seen in relation to a set of structuring conditions*

In conclusion, both coping and support must be located in ways that recognize the importance, not just of the agent, and the active negotiator and strategist, but that these actions are always in relation to a set of structuring conditions. What is most striking about the field of coping and support is that conceptually and practically it is dominated by psychological approaches which in turn tend to favour more agentic and individualized accounts of problems, strategies and solutions. Moreover, focus on coping and support usually highlights decisions or lack thereof at particular points in educational trajectories (e.g., transition points); in order to enable pupils to cope with education and help them succeed a stronger focus *on the processes* and the interactions among those involved therein seem necessary (see also: Robertson, 2013).

## **2.5 Life Course – ‘Doing Transitions’ in Young People’s Educational Trajectories**

In the previous sections, findings with regard to the relevance of education, the governance of education, access and accessibility as well as with to coping and support have revealed the complexity of factors and their interaction involved in the emergence – or better: the social construction – of young people’s individual educational trajectories. The term educational trajectory combines the concepts of education and life course. In mainstream educational research these perspectives tend to be separated into educational outcomes allocating individuals to different (unequal) life course trajectories and the (earlier) life course affecting educational achievement. GOETE started from the assumption and demonstrated that – in contrast to this – education is an integral part of the life course which constantly needs to be integrated and reconciled with other life course dimensions – by individuals in negotiation with other actors.

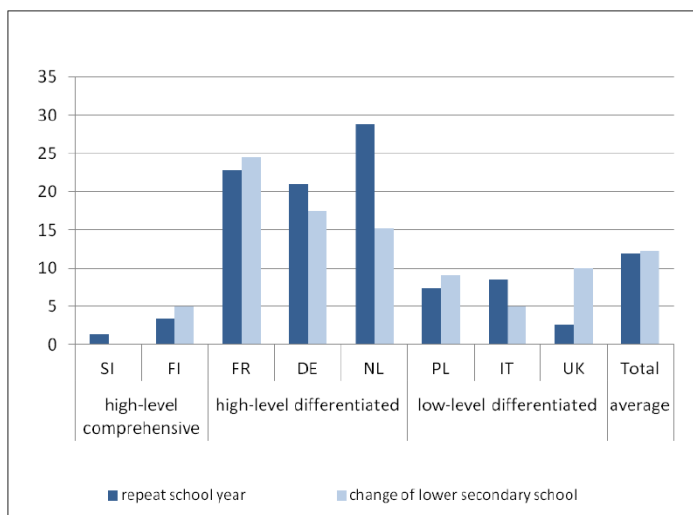
*Life course and education imply the integration of functional and subjective aspects*

Such a perspective implies an analytical distinction between the life course in terms of the institutionalised sequence of life ages (especially stages such as school, training, military/civil service, work, welfare etc.; cf. Kohli, 1985; Elder, 1994; Leisering & Leibfried, 1999; Blossfeld et al., 2005; Heinz et al., 2009). The same applies for education: while the *functional* meaning of education refers to qualifications legitimising unequal status positions and life course trajectories an understanding as personal development refers to individual learning biographies (cf. Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000) and processes of transformation of the relationship between the self and the world. Rather than standing in opposition, these two perspectives are interrelated through social practice and constant interaction (see above).

Social practices involving face-to-face negotiation between young people and other actors (parents, teachers, counsellors, peers, social workers etc.) are specific forms of interaction in which individual agency is embedded in, and related to existing social structures. Against this theoretical background GOETE focused on how decisions are made in young people's educational trajectories at the end of lower secondary school. All actors involved see the transition to upper secondary education or training as one of the most crucial transitions in the life course and highlight the relevance of decision-making in this respect. According to the interactive concept of education in life course and biography, decision-making is understood neither as isolated rational choices of self-responsible individuals nor as determined by social structure but as negotiated and processual (cf. Hodkinsons & Sparkes, 1997; Hansson, 2005).

*There is a great diversity of educational trajectories of so-called disadvantaged young people*

Starting at the micro level of the individual trajectories of young people through education, the analysis has identified considerable diversity of educational trajectories; even among so-called disadvantaged youth who – in hegemonic discourse (see above) – tend to be addressed as a homogeneous category (cf. Walther et al., 2006). Key dimensions of analysis were ruptures or smoothness, choice or constraint and the destinations young people take after lower secondary education. Quantitative analysis suggests that already during lower secondary education experiences of ruptures as well as the expectations regarding future destinations and the choice they will have, are structured by the socio-economic background of the family (34% of students from disadvantaged family backgrounds and 57% from migrant background experienced unexpected school changes compared to 27% from privileged families), the socio-spatial context of the school and the structure of the education system (see graph 5 below). Students from countries with differentiated education systems are also less pleased with the lower secondary school they attended. Compared to 18% of students in Finland and Slovenia, 31% in Germany, France and the Netherlands would have preferred a different lower secondary school but their prior achievements were not sufficient. Regarding their expectations for the future, girls (59%) worry significantly more than boys (46%), while the fact that young Dutch and young Finns worry less may result from better labour market prospects and reliable welfare mechanisms (see graph 7).



**Graph 7: Ruptures in educational trajectories (school change and repetition of school year), in % acc. to type of education system**

From the qualitative analysis of interviews with students right after their transition from lower secondary school (all schools in this sample were located in disadvantaged areas), five patterns of educational trajectories have been elaborated (cf.: Cuconato et al., 2013a):

- *smooth academic*: linear progression into general upper secondary school without ruptures and in correspondence with one's own preference;
- *smooth vocational*: linear progression into vocational upper secondary education or training without ruptures and in correspondence with own one's preference;
- *discontinuous academic*: trajectory into general upper secondary education after earlier ruptures and/or requiring compromising one's own preferences;
- *discontinuous vocational*: trajectory into vocational upper secondary education or training after earlier ruptures and/or requiring compromising one's own preferences;
- *intermediate or remedial*: trajectory leading into pre-vocational schemes or preparatory courses after previous ruptures and against one's own preference.

Despite the non-representativeness of the sample, it becomes obvious that patterns are partly structured by the type of education systems. In comprehensive school systems, also students from disadvantaged backgrounds display smooth trajectories into upper general or vocational education. Discontinuous patterns involving low status vocational or pre-vocational routes are closely related to the selection mechanisms in differentiated systems, especially in France, Germany and the Netherlands (see: Cuconato & Walther, 2013). However, these structural mechanisms were filtered and mediated by intervening actors, most importantly – yet in different ways – parents and teachers (see also the section on Coping and Support above).

*Educational trajectories and the decision-making processes therein are filtered and mediated by intervening actors, most importantly – yet in different ways – parents and teachers.*

There were only very few cases in our sample in which young people were in clear opposition to their parents when it came to making decisions at the end of lower secondary education. The quality of parents as 'significant others' resulted either from the fact that parents accepted and supported their children's preferences ("it's his life") or through direct intervention in the transition process, directing their children into a 'safe' course of further education/vocation. Their children interpreted such parental intervention in terms of help rather than of coercion – which contrasted with their experiences of teachers' attempts at adapting them to "realistic orientations"). Parental views about the education of their children were driven by hopes for social mobility and options for choice, concerns about the well-being of their children and often disappointment with insufficient support from the schools. Their views reflect their socio-economic backgrounds, own levels of education and present structures of education and training: in comprehensive systems the discrepancy of parents' wishes and expectations regarding their children's educational future was marginal compared to parents in Germany, France or the Netherlands, where almost 90% wished their children to continue in upper secondary education while less than 80% expected them to do so. Parental views need to be understood as an integral part of their children's own biographical life projects. Across the countries parents appear torn between accepting and rejecting the increasing individualisation of responsibility with regard to young people's life course trajectories (McDowell et al., 2012).

Students and parents see teachers mainly as institutional 'gate-keepers', regulating their positions in unequal societies. Teachers, for their part, refer to their professional identity as knowledge transmitters rather than as "social workers", a role for which they do not feel well prepared. Nevertheless, most of them see their role as adapting students to "realistic" choices, which includes both aspects. Preventing students from risk and failure may also result in unintended or unconscious effects of "cooling out" students' aspirations. Lack of preparation is also reflected in teachers' attitudes regarding cooperation with other actors in the educational field, except parents, counsellors, social workers and other

supporters. They accept networking as necessary for schools to cope with de-standardised transitions, but seem neither prepared for, nor supported in, reconciling it with their professional role and daily practice.

*Constellations of decision-making in the educational trajectories of so-called disadvantaged youth: differentiation and reconstruction*

In order to get more insight into the different patterns of structure and agency involved in educational trajectories, in-depth analysis of selected student biographies allowed us to reconstruct different constellations of decision-making with regard to the transition from lower secondary school to subsequent stages of education or training (see: Cuconato & Walther, 2013). Key dimensions emerging from the analysis were processual dynamics, actor constellations, resources and opportunities, subjective interest, criteria and strategies of decision-making and degrees of reflection of the young people concerned (see: Cuconato et al., 2013b):

- *“family convoy”*: in these cases of decision-making, the family plays a protective and directive role preventing dropping out and channelling young people’s choices according to their own possibilities and social capital;
- *“step-by-step”*: in some cases, young people developed ambitious aspirations despite disadvantaged starting positions constraining them to break plans down to modest goals which they adjusted once they had achieved them in order to cautiously climb up the educational ladder, yet without losing sight of their ambitions;
- *“fighting for dreams”*: constellations in which young people’s decision-making was motivated by maintaining intrinsic dreams and wishes for their lives despite unfavourable social conditions and sometimes also actively defending them against external pressure to adapt to more ‘realistic’ possibilities;
- *“too weak to resist”*: decision-making of young people characterised by resignation and reduction of one’s own (sometimes vague) aspirations in front of institutional pressure and mechanisms of ‘cooling out’ (cf. Goffman, 1962).

These different constellations – which are far from an exhaustive typology – reveal that not only the trajectories but also the decision-making of students classified as disadvantaged is much more differentiated and complex than images of disengaged, disoriented and demotivated young people suggest. An important insight from our analyses is that one key factor in decision-making refers to how young people succeeded in creating future perspectives in a subjectively meaningful way from the education and training options available to them, and at the same time compatible with their present everyday lives. Across the different constellations a key criterion of decision-making was gaining time and keeping options open for later choices. This is also confirmed by the finding that three out of four students in the survey intended to continue with full-time education after lower secondary school (cf. McDowell et al., 2012).

*‘Doing Transitions’: Educational trajectories as interplay of structures and individual agency under conditions of disadvantage and inequality*

Our findings reveal that educational transitions do not simply occur in the sense that individuals make choices and/or meet educational demands. This implies that structures of social inequality continue to affect young people’s educational experiences in a significant way. Especially parental education, migration or ethnic minority status, the social context in which schools are located, and – in differentiated school systems – the type of secondary school, are highly influential. However, they do not simply determine achievements and outcomes but rather structure the social situations of educational and learning practice. In analogy to the discussion of access and accessibility of education, transitions – especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds – have to be viewed as processual and not simply as punctual and thus be recognised as being affected by a number of conditions, each of which impact on the outcome of transition, mitigating or reproducing disadvantage

and inequality (see also section on Access above). From the perspective of educational trajectories and transitions as processual it is important to highlight that these are highly interactive in nature – they emerge in the interplay of structures (e.g., type of education system, provision of formal support, social inequalities) and agency (e.g., decision-making of individuals). Trajectories and transitions do not simply exist and have to be coped with by individuals. In fact, they are ‘done’ and processed in an interactive way between institutional mechanisms and individual coping strategies. Interaction means both negotiation and struggle between different actors at different levels. This is especially important to acknowledge in understanding the trajectories of young people regarded as disadvantaged. The analysis of patterns of trajectories and decision-making processes reveals that also under conditions of social disadvantage, individual cases differ with regard to existing “windows of opportunity” towards different directions, at different moments and depending on different actors (see also section on Governance above). Understanding small scale interaction is necessary to extend the knowledge about how socio-economic structures of inequality as well as institutional structures of selectivity make a difference throughout these processes.

### **3. Conclusions: qualitative multilevel analysis of accessibility, coping with and without support, negotiating relevance of education and “doing transitions” across different scales**

The particular achievement and contribution of the GOETE study to the understanding of the role of education for social integration in knowledge societies lies in its ability to relate different actor perspectives across different scales in a complex yet differentiated manner, rather than in the single findings of the different sub-studies. The innovative analytic-theoretical approach and the research design of GOETE proved particularly prolific in its drawing together of distinct research strands – Life Course and Governance – and in its attempt to address different facets of the research question – Access, Coping/Support, and Relevance of education – at various levels of analysis. Both avenues of research contributed in its own particular way to an adequate conceptualisation of educational trajectories and to its appropriate methodological treatment.

Against the background of differing conceptions, traditions and perspectives of education, one crucial issue related to the role of education in social integration in knowledge societies pertains to its ability to integrate and conciliate individual-subjective meanings and relevances with more societal-instrumental needs and requirements in order to facilitate educational trajectories which are individually meaningful and societally sustainable. With regard to the meaning and *relevance* of education, GOETE demonstrated that an instrumental view of education as a means of securing employability and life chances based on employment prevailed among all actors from teachers and teacher trainers, school principals and policy makers, counsellors and social workers, employers and civil society representatives, to parents and students themselves. Other meanings of education such as personal development and emancipation as well as the relevances more directly related to young people’s everyday lives seem to remain hidden amidst this discourse. This predominant view of education is also reflected by the recent EU policy agenda on education and training.

The latter is related to the increasing role of transnational discourses such as Knowledge Society, Knowledge-based Economy, Lifelong Learning, Employability or Disadvantage in the governance of education. The ways in which educational trajectories are currently being shaped occur more and more indirectly and insensibly through a complex interaction of multiple actors and increasingly less through top-down state policies. A new vertical and horizontal division of labour in educational governance has emerged contributing to different ‘opportunity structures’ being produced at different scales by different actors, institutions and processes of governance. In this framework, parents and students are expected to take responsibility for their own education. Yet, possibilities of participation in decision-making at school are limited. The adopted conceptualisation of governance as our research object may be in itself considered as one major contribution to research in the governance of education. The framework adds to the conceptual and analytical repertoire of researchers, allowing for a more differentiated view of governance that distinguishes scales, activities, and actors/institutions of governance, thus opening up issues to theoretical and empirical analyses. Policy and practice also profit from these insights inasmuch as the need for critical reflection upon the different messages they receive from different actors, but also from the distinction of scales, activities, and actors/institutions

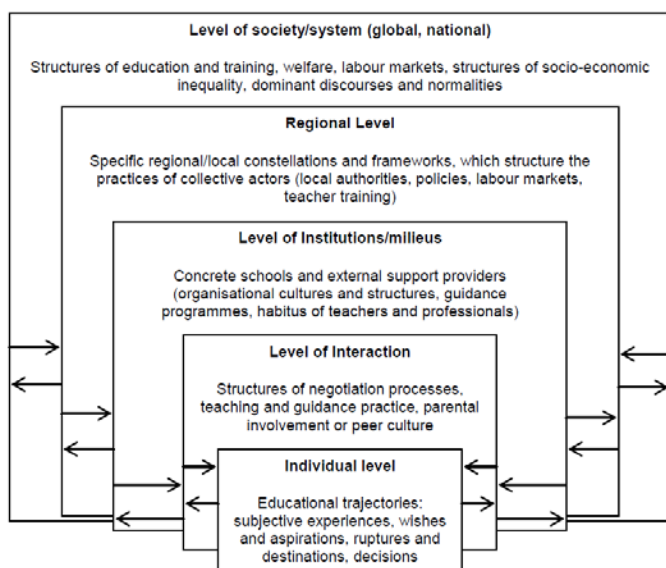
which allows for a clearer understanding of the complexity they all are part of, thus pointing to the need for careful coordination.

GOETE also contributed to a more differentiated view of issues of access to education in educational trajectories. It discussed crucial issues related to *access to education and inequality* pointing to the interactive and iterative nature of providing and effectively ‘getting’ access to education. Access reflects socio-economic factors such as class, gender and ethnicity as well as the social context of schools and depends on the stratification inherent to the institutional structure of education and training. Differences occur especially between high-level standardised and comprehensive systems (Finland, Slovenia) and high-level standardised differentiated systems (France, Germany, the Netherlands). Yet, findings revealed also that access needs to be expanded by *accessibility*, thus referring to individuals’ subjective interpretation and realisation of access. Apart from this, also the discretionary practice of teachers and other professionals contributed to different degrees of accessibility of education and training. Here, in particular the concept of accessibility may be viewed as a contribution both to research and to policy and practice inasmuch as it, on the one hand, points to the complexity of a research object and to the need to account for it when studying issues of access to education and inequality; on the other hand, in terms of its insights for policy and practice, GOETE research points to the preconditions of effectively accessing education by showing how institutional and organisational arrangements play out on individual trajectories, but also by pointing to the need to reflect on the interaction among those involved in these processes, both those providing education and those directly concerned – namely pupils and parents.

Unequal accessibility is also related to different abilities and resources for *coping* with educational demands. GOETE investigated how students, especially those from deprived social backgrounds, cope with educational demands and the *support* they receive for it. Evidence of a powerful discourse of individualism was found putting students under pressure. They believe to be alone responsible for success or failure in their educational trajectories. GOETE findings showed that academic demands seem to be the most pressing challenge for students to cope with, this, it seems, may be related to the predominant instrumental view of education mentioned above. Students feel especially burdened with decision-making at transition points which implies that more and better guidance and counselling are needed. However, formal support measures suffer from little trust by students. Four times more students refer to informal sources of support in case of school or transition problems than to teachers or other professionals. Informal support in turn suffers from a lack of recognition from institutional actors. In fact, findings reveal a “blaming game” between school and parents.

The complexity of dimensions, actors and levels involved in the emergence of individual educational trajectories reveals that the relationship between education and the *life course* results from interaction and negotiation. Educational decisions, especially at transition points, are neither made by students and their parents alone nor are automatically determined by the education system. The analysis of processes of “doing transitions” reveals that educational trajectories of so-called disadvantaged students are much more diverse than homogenising images suggest. The analysis identified different patterns of educational trajectories as well as different constellations of decision-making which reveal different biographical dynamics while also being significantly structured by the institutional structures of education systems and the availability of support.

One of the major contributions of GOETE to research, policy and practice pertains to applying multi-level analysis methodology to empirical research. While educational and social research has long discussed multi-level analysis, its empirical use has been mostly restricted to quantitative research (Hox, 2010). GOETE drew from the model of qualitative multilevel analysis developed by Helsper et al. (2010) in designing research and analysis. The main challenge was, though, to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data while at the same time paying adequate attention to the highly interactive nature of the research question at hand. This challenge is, however, linked to a great potential for a better and more differentiated understanding of educational trajectories. In order to make use of this potential, GOETE developed Helsper et al.’s model further and applied it to analyse educational processes across different levels involved (see graph 8 below).



**Graph 8: Model of Qualitative Multilevel Analysis (adapted from Helsper et al. 2010)**

The model has been extended to the integration of findings from qualitative and quantitative analysis and applied in a comparative perspective. The distinction of levels (individual, interaction, institutional, local/regional, societal) has to be understood as analytical constructions. The focus lies on the *relationships* between the different levels (represented by arrows). By way of illustration: How are individual level decision-making processes negotiated with parents and teachers? How are these negotiations framed by concrete guidance programmes and procedures? How are they embedded in a local infrastructure of support measures and connected with the local labour market? And how do these local contexts reflect national or global structures and discourses? In reconstructing these series of interactions we have to limit ourselves to a selection of levels and interactive configurations.

The interrelatedness of the levels and interactions involved in the emergence and evolution of individual educational trajectories is illustrated in graph 9 below. At *macro level*, it reveals the “context of contexts” consisting of socio-economic inequalities, different labour markets, welfare regimes, and education systems as well as of policy preferences and ideological discourses that frame and orient, yet not determine outcomes of educational trajectories. GOETE has shown that different types of education systems provide different levels of access/ibility and display varying levels of selectivity, thus providing unequal institutional opportunity structures to pupils (see section 2.3 above). Different welfare traditions also impact directly on the level and kind of support pupils receive. Also, the findings of the project has pointed to the central role of transnational discourses in shaping policy preferences and options, thus framing specific discursive opportunity structures (see section 2.2), for instance a predominant view of education as employability and as social positioning device (see section 2.1).

At *institutional/milieu level* specific (actor) constellations and local (infra)structures of policy measures, schools available (choice) and within-school arrangements (e.g., pupil selection), welfare and other organisations operating on the ground emerge that are flanked and informed by the level above and which interact with the supra-individual level of socio-cultural milieus such as neighbourhood or ethnic communities that impact on preferences/aspirations and normalities (see below). The forms these local constellations take and operate are crucial for the outcomes of educational trajectories, since it is above all here where all other levels interact. For instance, in accordance to overall policy measures and focus on particular target groups, pressure emerges at local level to ‘cool out’ or streamline pupils in specific directions (e.g., vocational training vs. higher education), depending on labour market imperatives. Also, different types of education systems offer support to all students equally as is the case with high standardised and comprehensive systems (FI, SI), while others focus on ‘problematic’ target groups (e.g., migrants) or issues (e.g., language proficiency), as in high standardised and high differentiated systems (DE, NL).

Further, the *individual level* refers primarily to young people in their role as students, but also includes parents, teachers and other professionals who are individually involved in their attempts of influencing the decision-making in young people's educational trajectories. It is at this level where subjective meanings, individual experiences, expectations and motivation as well as coping strategies are manifest, which set the stage for innumerable instances of negotiation processes between individual and its environment (e.g., pupils and their living situation) and between individuals (e.g., pupils and teachers, social workers, parents and so on). One further important insight from the multi-level exercise is that, at the individual level, analyses of general mechanisms of social reproduction in and through education which is usually conducted at the structural level (for instance through aggregation of statistical data) needs to be complemented by (qualitative) analysis of individual cases, both successful and not so successful trajectories. The latter has the potential to reveal both alternative trajectories as well as differentiation among apparently homogeneous patterns of disadvantage. Indeed, the analysis of apparent exceptions or statistical minority cases may provide useful insights into the prerequisites of breaking the circle of disadvantage and reproduction.

The *interaction level* refers to the face-to-face interactions between individual students and other individuals, irrespective of whether these are family members, peers, representatives of institutions such as teachers or counsellors in the context of vocational and educational guidance. The latter are to be seen as the transmitters – or translators – of institutional, local/regional and societal factors. For instance, the interaction between pupils/parents and school representatives is marked by different practices (for instance, with view teachers' self-perception as merely transmitters of cognitive knowledge or as individuals responsible for encouraging and supporting pupils in a more comprehensive way) and degrees of discretionary power (see section 2.3 above).

By way of conclusion, interaction at each connecting point between the different levels exerts influence and is influenced by the other levels. While particular attention is usually paid to macro structures – for instance, the organisation of education systems, numbers of places available in schools, etc. – and to institutional arrangements (institutional level), it is fundamental – as GOETE shows – to attend to the individual-subjective dimension and most importantly to interaction among the levels, as this implies contingency with regard to the exact interpretation and not least outcomes of as well as the reconstruction of meanings and opportunity structures that shape educational trajectories of youth.

Levels of meaning	Society/macro: Education systems Structures of inequality Discourses (high-level experts)	Milieus/institutions: Local experts Teacher trainers Teachers Policy measures	Interaction and practices. Teaching Counselling Family	Individuals – subjective meaning Experiences, needs, interest, motivation, coping strategies, decisions
Society/macro Education systems Structures of inequality Discourses (high-level experts)	Inequalities Discourses (disadvantage, lifelong learning) Education systems	Implementation effects, variations, institutional/ local culture	Negotiating 'good' jobs and 'realistic' careers	Steering provision by demand or failure/success
Milieus/institutions: Local experts Teacher trainers Teachers Policy measures	Pressure of cooling out, programmes/standards of voc. guidance, local normalities	Actor constellations Local (infra)structure and culture	Concrete practice and available options, teacher identities (teaching, careers guidance, support)	Preferences and 'choices' among concrete options
Interaction and practices: Teaching Counselling Family	Negotiating 'good' jobs and 'realistic' careers	Concrete practice, available options (teaching, careers guidance, support)	Negotiation of expectations and possibilities (parental involvement, peers, encouragement versus cooling out)	Interpretation, use, acceptance/resistance, biographies; motives, preferences strategies of parents and peers
Individuals – subjective meaning Experiences, needs, interest, motivation, coping strategies, decisions	General aspirations, future expectations	Preferences and 'choices' among concrete options	Interpretation, use, acceptance/resis- tance, biographies	Wishes, expectations, decision-making, coping strategies, patterns of educational trajectories

Graph 9: Levels and interactions involved in the emergence and evolution of individual educational trajectories

## 4. Description of the potential impact

### 4.1 Impact of the research findings

The objectives of the GOETE project relate to goals and concepts which are central in current educational discourses and reform agendas at EU level as well as in member states. On the one hand, one of the key objectives of the GOETE project was to reflect under what conditions education can actually contribute to social integration in knowledge societies. This includes a normative perspective inasmuch these societies claim social justice and social cohesion as well as individual autonomy to be core values and principles of integration (European Commission, 2008a+b+c). GOETE, in this respect helps assessing the degree to which regulations of access, support for coping and negotiation of relevancies of education contribute to social justice, cohesion and autonomy. On the other hand, GOETE provides insight into the changed mechanisms of governance of education according to which traditional ways of policy making may be re-thought in order to allow reforms being effective (Simmons et al., 2009; Dale & Robertson, 2009; Maroy, 2004).

While GOETE findings have been and are being disseminated and discussed in different local and national contexts in different ways, their relevance for policy and practice may be outlined in an exemplary way with regard to EU education and training policies which can be re-read in terms of access, coping/support and relevance. Regarding the *relevance of education*, the Commission's Memorandum from 2001 introduced Lifelong Learning as new understanding of education aimed at enhancing active citizenship and social inclusion. During the period of the Lisbon agenda, however, education and training policies have been more and more associated with aims of competitiveness and growth which is even more visible in the agenda of Europe 2020 relying mainly on skills and growth. The dimension of *access* more indirectly inasmuch as reaching the objective of a higher qualified workforce and reducing early school leaving implies changing access regulations in most countries. The communication on Efficiency and equity in education and training (European Commission, 2006) addressed educational disadvantage resulting from early differentiation in education and training compared to more comprehensive systems in which more young people achieve higher. The same document states a need for measures aimed at *supporting* students in coping with the demands of education (see also: OCDE, 2007, 2010). However, in the following these have been mainly promoted in the framework of youth policies and/or policies for social inclusion addressing specific problem groups rather than general structures of education and training. What has become even more visible throughout the EU education and training policy process is that social aspects of education and training or the well-being of students have been more and more justified with regard to their economic impact; the costs of educational disadvantage in terms of social problems or a lack of productive human capital. This is especially visible in the Commissions' recent communication "Re-thinking education" (European Commission, 2012).

Against this background, the aim of GOETE has been to make visible all actors involved in the education and training and to look for ways and spaces that allow for participatory and dialogic processes of policy making and governance. This objective has also informed and structured the dissemination activities undertaken within the project.

### 4.2 Dissemination activities and involvement of actors

In correspondence to the research design, the dissemination process of the GOETE findings has been designed in a multilevel and processual way.

#### *Advisory board:*

The project included an advisory board consisting of researchers and policy makers. The board was implemented in order to provide the consortium with an external feedback from the beginning regarding the relevance of the research objectives for policy and practice. Through the advisory board members, the project was connected to debates and developments in different contexts of educational policy, practice and research. It also connected GOETE with other EU member states not involved in the project. The members of the advisory board were:

- Dr. Angelos Agalianos, DG EAC, European Commission
- Prof. Dr. Xavier Bonal, University of Barcelona / European Association of Child Ombudsmen
- Prof. Dr. Pepka Boyadijeva, Academy of Sciences, Sofia
- Prof. Dr. Torben Bechmann Jensen, University of Copenhagen
- Prof. Dr. Lynne Chisholm, University of Innsbruck
- Chris Harrison, European Association of School Heads
- Paul Hoop, City of Rotterdam / Eurocities
- Prof. Dr. Fernanda Rodrigues, Ministry of Social Affairs, Lisbon / University of Porto
- Prof. Dr. Michael Young, Institute of Education, London
- Dr. Susanne Zander, National Board of Youth Affairs, Stockholm

### ***Dissemination at local level:***

A *first* step of dissemination – in a stricter sense – included providing the participating schools the data resulting from surveys and interviews carried out in their own framework, thus offering some immediate feedback on their own school contexts.

A *second* – and probably the most comprehensive – step of dissemination consisted in confronting policy makers and practitioners at local level with the findings from empirical analysis, i.e., in parallel to the ongoing process of thematic analysis. The aim of these activities was to give local actors a possibility to influence the research process by validating the findings from their perspective and providing their interpretation, especially as political and practical consequences are concerned. Apart from this, a key insight from GOETE research is that the local level plays a crucial role in bringing together the diverse actors involved in education and training. Therefore, educational policies have to empower municipalities and reinforce the role of other local actors.

All in all, 37 sessions took place in the 8 countries reaching out to almost 1,850 participants (see table 5 below).

**Table 6: Number of sessions and participants per country**

	<i>No. of sessions</i>	<i>No. of participants</i>
<b>Finland</b>	5	40
<b>France</b>	3	41
<b>Germany</b>	11	540
<b>Italy</b>	6	215
<b>The Netherlands</b>	3	44
<b>Poland</b>	3	77
<b>Slovenia</b>	6	880
<b>Total</b>	<i>37</i>	<i>1.837</i>

The types of sessions varied between formal and informal ones; most were held in administrative environments, universities or in schools. However, there was also one session organized in a commercial centre and another one at one parents' place. The main actors were school principals, teachers, counsellors and advisers, social workers, mediators, teacher trainers, teacher students and researchers.

As a consequence of the diversity of groups, actors and places, the reactions to our presentations were very different. In some cases, actors considered the findings of high relevance for their practice and debates centred on questions such as: 'how to change or to reform school?' 'How can research have an

impact on decision making?’ ‘How to restore the image of youth in society?’ Some actors underlined their satisfaction to be involved in the research process. At the other end of the continuum, actors expressed disagreement with and mistrust toward the results. There were also cases in which actors refused engaging in debates and reflection of practice, which underlined the lack of resources and their feeling of powerlessness (in particular due to the lack of public funding).

These sessions have been documented, analysed both with regard to implementations for policy making (Loncle & Mellottée, 2013) and for the initial and further training of pedagogical professionals (Salovaara & Julkunen, 2013) and findings have been integrated in the process of thematic analysis (see above).

In some cases, the debates on research findings have been integrated into local policy making in which researchers have been involved as consultants.

#### ***Dissemination at international level:***

A *third* step of dissemination occurred towards the end of the project. The implications of the findings across the different thematic reports have been collected and integrated. They have been presented and discussed during a European Policy Seminar held on 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2013 at the University of Frankfurt attracting an international audience from policy, practice and research and representing 18 different European countries (see Annex II below).

Findings have been also disseminated through press releases and a policy brief (see: [www.goete.eu](http://www.goete.eu)).

Inasmuch as GOETE aims at contributing to developing more dialogical policy making and enhancing the active participation of students and parents research, two formats have been produced aimed at disseminating the findings at a wider societal level:

- In all eight countries, students were encouraged and involved in producing audio-visual evidence of their views on being in education and having to cope with the transition from lower to upper secondary education and training. From these single films and clips a short documentary film has been compiled, titled “Me, my education and I”.
- Essays written by students on their views of education and their personal future in the context of the project, have been compiled and commented in a booklet titled “views and voices of education”.

Both products give a more direct voice to young people who have to be understood and addressed as the main actors of education. Products are available for download from the project website ([www.goete.eu](http://www.goete.eu)) and all actors who have participated in the study will be informed.

### **4.3 Recommendations for policy and practice**

#### ***Premise: education and welfare systems make a difference with regard to social integration***

As a general remark and direction we may start our recommendations for policy and practice with the observation that GOETE largely confirms but differentiates findings from comparative educational research. In sum, we can conclude that education contributes to social justice, social cohesion and individual autonomy in countries in which ...

- ... education and training are structures in a standardised and comprehensive way,
- ... welfare services support students individually, yet on an universalised basis without stigma,
- ... funding for education and welfare is high enough to provide all students with opportunities and qualified staff (cf. Allmendinger & Leibfried, 2003; Mayer, 2005; Jenson, 2007; Walther & Pohl, 2005).

#### ***Broadening education and providing experience beyond formal learning***

The current emphasis of education lies on preparing young people for the labour market ('employability') and developing their human capital. Other meanings and outcomes of school education are being devalued. This contributes to the alienation of children and young people from their individual learning processes which lack of tangible user value. Both individual development as well as a collective socio-cultural benefit of education are addressed by political rhetoric but not systematically addressed by educational practice in school. This is especially problematic in the case of socially disadvantaged young people for whom school may represent the only way of being able to avert social exclusion, and to access the full benefits of citizenship (cf. Holford & van Veen, 2003; Walther et al., 2006; Loncle et al., 2012).

- Education needs to take into account the *subjective needs of individual students*. This includes acknowledging informal learning and life experiences. Students need environments and (learning) conditions where they feel a sense of belonging and communality with peers.
- Schools should be encouraged to provide students with *non-formal learning* opportunities and out-of-school activities, also by cooperation with other actors in the wider community such as youth work. This may include companies in order to provide insight into different areas and activities of social and economic life as well as into different careers. Yet, work practice must not be reduced to channel students into specific career pathways.

### ***Re-structuring school pathways***

Analysis has confirmed that – although social reproduction through education pertains to all modern societies – structures of education and training systems make a difference with regard to subjective experiences, trajectories and outcomes of education. Differentiated education systems create bottlenecks and problems with regard to accessibility. The simple rule: there is 'no differentiation without hierarchisation' shapes the way institutions and their representatives (have to) function. In addition, current reforms – e.g. free school choice in Finland – have started to undermine the perceived accessibility also within comprehensive systems. Findings show that selective transitions even weaken the potential of support measures aimed at compensating with effects of disadvantage (cf. GHK, 2005; Walther & Pohl, 2005; NESSE, 2008; OECD, 2010).

- *Reduce number of (selective) transitions*: The number of transitions in school pathways needs to be reduced and comprehensive structures of education and training maintained and reinforced.
- *Postponing differentiation and decision-making*: Making decisions regarding future educational or occupational careers appears to be a very important challenge for all students. Students are 'forced' to make changes at a very young age which lead in many cases to frustrations, disappointment, and multiple transitions to 'correct' earlier decisions. This can be viewed as a waste of much time and effort. These findings demand the attention of policy makers to review early selection systems and high differentiation, and to consider the postponement of critical selection moments.
- Accessibility has to be *created on a structural level* of national policies and educational systems, implemented on the level of *interaction in educational institutions*, and facilitated by empowering practice. The structural dimension of making education more accessible therefore has to be broken down to self-concepts and practices of professionals, be they principals, teachers, school social workers, youth workers, school psychologists or educational counsellors, etc.
- The effects of policies on the distribution of educational goods and outcomes are clearly known. *School zones* are not 'natural' but 'constructed' through policies. Reframing school zones may be the single most effective way of reducing educational failure among socially disadvantaged young people.

### ***Increase, improve and individualise support for children and young people in school***

Both, a broader understanding of education as well as the aim to reduce educational disadvantage refers to the insight that education implies not only instruction and knowledge provision but supporting the learning processes of individuals in a broad sense. The increasing educational demands

in knowledge societies in general and the problems of students from socially disadvantaged families in meeting these demands in particular reveal the inadequacy of support provided in schools. Inclusive school requires supportive welfare including counselling and guidance as well as addressing issues of well-being (cf. Walther & Pohl, 2005; Power, 2007; Flecha, 2011). A similar approach of Integrated Transition Policies has been developed on the basis of comparative research on young people's school-to-work transitions (López Blasco et al., 2003).

- Future pathways cause stress and uncertainty among students, especially in countries where educational and occupational choices are made at a young age. This requires close *guidance*, coaching and accompaniment in a holistic perspective towards the young person. In contrast, vocational and educational guidance today is too narrowly focused on the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary.
- Educational trajectories result from *negotiation* processes between subjective and institutional perspectives. Therefore guidance needs to be open regarding outcomes and reflexive rather than persuading or pushing young people into certain 'realistic' directions and cooling their aspirations out. Young people tend to withdraw from guidance processes in which their subjective aspirations are not recognised and in which they are not encouraged to follow intrinsic wishes. Success criteria of guidance need to be re-defined in terms of students' biographical reflection rather than quantitative indicators of students placed in upper secondary education or vocational training.
- More emphasis should be made on *integrating guidance and counselling* into the curriculum rather than provide merely additive support. With regard to career guidance schools need to balance between providing links with the labour market and work experience without subjecting vocational orientation to labour market segmentation and companies' recruitment and selection procedures.
- *Ethnic origin* of students should be recognised and valued as a part of identity and an important heritage. Lessons in mother language of students not only support their identity formation but also contribute to general learning and represent a skill that can be an advantage in further education and on the labour market.
- Especially in schools or courses of low status – more frequent in differentiated school systems – students suffer from poor self-confidence. In order not to reduce them to deficits and problems, a *resource- and strength-oriented view* needs to be developed. One requirement for this is acknowledging informal competencies in a way that allows balancing weaknesses in formal subjects.
- Uptake and use of support in school needs to be low-threshold, universal and unconditional in order to *avoid stigmatisation*. Otherwise support is unlikely to be utilised.
- The importance of *indirect support measures* should not be under-estimated even in times of economic hardship. The importance of school nurses, school social work or mentors goes beyond specific help like health care. Often they represent trustful advocates that help students coping with alienation.
- Disadvantage is a multifactor issue. School staff needs to develop towards *multi-professional* teams and provide time and space for *cooperation* with out-of-school-actors.

### ***Involving and recognising (!) informal support from parents and peers***

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to need more support at school. However, they trust support from informal sources, especially from parents and peers like siblings or friends, more. School actors tend to disregard or to patronise informal support by informing and controlling parents. School and parents appear to be entrapped in a 'blaming-game' in which the responsibility for school problems is reciprocally ascribed to the other side. While many parents may not be adequately informed about the education system and existing transition options, assumptions regarding the disinterest of parents from lower social and/or with a migration background do not correspond to their and their children's perceptions. Recognition of their education and effort as well as of the socio-

emotional aspects of support is therefore a prerequisite of effective support in school (cf. Flecha, 2011; see also [www.includ-ed.ub.cat](http://www.includ-ed.ub.cat)).

- The *social networks* of students need to be incorporated into efforts to provide support to students by professionals at school. The linkages with family and the community also need to be strengthened.
- Rather than expecting parents to make the first step, school needs to *advance trust* towards families and not only trying to understand but recognising their views and needs.
- School needs to involve *mediators* representing disadvantaged communities in order to bridge the gap. In the case of families with a migration background, project experiences show that initiatives addressing parents with regard to their personal needs lead much more directly to concerns about their children's futures. In contrast, school initiatives tend to be experienced as control.
- *Peer mentoring* projects in which students are supported by former students of the same school provide credible and relevant role models and are highly accepted and effective.

A 'bottom up' approach is needed in building practices of cooperation in order to understand and include values, expectations, strong points available in the context. Too often, in fact, cooperation is built up on formal rules and old practices.

### ***Preparation and training of teachers beyond mere instruction***

School principals, out-of-school experts as well as teachers themselves complain that teachers are not well prepared for the increasingly complex demands connected to preparing children and young people for later life. Teachers see themselves primarily as instructors and knowledge providers while supporting the learning and educational decision-making of students requires guidance and counselling. Teachers need ...

- ... a deeper and broader *knowledge base on young people*, their life worlds and life courses. This includes the role of school in reproducing social inequality, the demands and effects of transitions in educational trajectories, the different subjective and youth cultural ways in which students interpret and cope with educational demands.
- ... to be trained in *guidance and counselling*, not only but especially with regard to supporting students at transition points of their educational trajectories. Such skills need to extend beyond mere information on options but include encouragement. Counselling skills have to become an indispensable part of teachers' professional identity.
- ... to be prepared for *cooperation in multi-professional teams* with other actors inside and outside school in order to provide children and young people comprehensive education and support. This involves both openness for different views on children and young people and skills of communicating with representatives from different professions. Teachers need also supervision and mentoring to cope with increasing demands.
- ... knowledge and competencies with regard to *teaching in heterogeneous classes* (according to origin and capacities) by addressing students in an individualised way and acknowledging different needs, interest and rhythms of learning. At the same time they need training to reflect assumptions and avoid stigmatisation and discrimination.

Existing knowledge and experience developed by experts and teachers in schools in addressing social disadvantage should be valued with *bottom-up knowledge based practices* (cf. European Commission, 2010).

### ***Accessibility and support require adequate funding***

The analysis has revealed that not only do school actors in all countries refer to a lack of staff to meet increasing educational demands and provide sufficient support to students. It also shows that differences in the overall public expenditure of countries correlate with indicators such as early school leaving and positive subjective experiences of students. Cross-country comparison reveals that in

countries with higher funding for education students and parents are more positive about support and guidance while early school leaving is lower.

- Times and spaces require resources for *increasing both teaching and non-teaching staff* in and around schools. Teachers as well as social workers and counsellors in school need more flexible hours in order to be able to respond to individual needs of students.
- *Sufficient places in upper secondary education and training* allowing for individual choice at the end of lower secondary education need to be provided and funded.
- School and students do not exist in a societal vacuum but are strongly affected by out-of-school policies, such as the functioning of the general social protection system. *Social policy* in terms of both re-distribution of income and social infrastructure affects school, and vice versa. Cuts in one sphere may easily result in rising expenses in another one.

Merely quantitative benchmarks are not sufficient. Yet, findings confirm earlier research that educational reforms cannot make a difference with public expenditure for education remaining under 6% of GDP (cf. Walther & Pohl, 2005).

### ***Participation and cooperation***

Prerequisites of support and guidance are trust on the one side and a broader view on education in terms of informal/non-formal learning and support on the other. Instead of a bureaucratic model governing education top down, active participation of students and parents – understood as rights and possibilities of influence – as well as cooperation with other professional actors such as youth work, counselling or social services are needed (Walther et al., 2006; Jenson, 2007; Flecha, 2011).

- *Times and spaces for exchange and cooperation*: Since decision-making involves not only students and teachers but also parents and other professionals, times and spaces need to be created for dialogue, exchange and mutual recognition. More attention needs to be paid to (limited) resources as time (for interacting/negotiating), space (where interactions and negotiation occur), and also to the new function of mediation that needs more defined and consolidated skills and roles: mediation. Otherwise cooperation is undermined by mutual distrust or competition among professionals inside and outside school.
- *Parental involvement*. Current practice of parental involvement favours those who are knowledgeable and well-informed about processes and stakes implied by educational trajectories which adds a further dimension to the social and educational inequality. This includes acknowledging and providing time and space for different ways in which parents want to get involved in the education of their children – yet equipped with the same right.
- *Student participation*: Decision-making power of students needs to be enhanced. At school level in terms of increasing responsibilities of student councils beyond contributing to social and cultural activities. At individual level, possibilities of choice and influence regarding the own educational trajectory need to be improved legally, included in teacher training and integrated into school culture.

### ***Re-thinking policy making with regard to education and training***

The findings reveal a rising number of actors and an increasing complexity of policy-making at school, local, national or transnational level (governance) while also decision-making with regard to the individual level of educational trajectories does not occur in isolation ('doing transitions'). This implies questioning existing concepts of educational policy and re-examining the meaning and function of education in modern societies. Otherwise, young people and their families are the first to pay the price. 'Doing transitions' implies a paradigm shift in education and welfare towards recognising and empowering the agency of young people as the main actors of their educational trajectories. With regard to improve educational opportunities of so-called disadvantaged students this implies (cf. Maroy, 2004; Simons et al., 2009; Ball & Junemann, 2012):

- *Creating accessibility* means that all relevant actors (including social scientists as critical observers of the field) need to be allocated adequate resources to effectively provide access to education and mitigate social inequalities in and through education.
- *Schools have to face the reality of diversity*: Schools are characterised by national ‘monoculturalism’ reflected in the obsession with homogeneous groups. Discourses which are sensitive towards diversity in terms of reflecting the relationship differentiation and discrimination need to inform initial and further teacher training. Individualised teaching and support needs to go hand in hand with avoiding individualised ascriptions of failure and reproducing differentiation of the ‘normal’ and ‘the others’.
- *Structural problems cannot be solved by means of pedagogy*: in education and training institutional discrimination with regard to heterogeneous groups of young people tends to be addressed by compensatory pedagogical action. Only the consequences of disadvantage and exclusion are addressed, the mechanisms themselves however are reinforced. Research can contribute to break circles of reproduction by deconstructing individualised and deficit-orientated ascriptions of school failure.
- *Greater continuity and collaboration between levels of education policy making*: There seem to be gaps between different levels of educational policy making based on different responsibilities and constituencies. The transnationalisation of education policies may have ‘lifted’ the concerns and the eyes of national policy makers ‘upwards’, while the persisting need to ‘deliver’ remains dominant at local level. This takes different forms and different levels of intensity in different countries. Almost everywhere a passing down of responsibility can be observed, often unaccompanied by any matching or adequate devolution of resources or authority. There should be encouragement of and support for local initiatives of dialogical and participatory educational policy making. This includes involving local actors in educational research by developing *bottom-up research designs*.
- *Deconstruction of ideological discourses*: ideological discourses play a central role in educational governance. Existing power structures between actors determine which concepts become dominant and inform policy-making. Research as well as policy and practice need to constantly question and deconstruct these discourses in order to reveal the imperatives and interests behind existing policy agendas. For example, contradictions between lifelong learning as a means of social inclusion, human capital formation or meritocratic legitimation of unequal life chances need to be identified and made visible.
- *Monitoring* needs to extend outcomes and achievements but include individual satisfaction and well-being as much as the overcoming of disadvantage and exclusion.

## 5. Public website address

Project public webpage: [www.goete.eu](http://www.goete.eu)

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<sup>4</sup> Entries that are at the same time a Project Deliverable are marked bold.

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