

Thematic Report

**Education! (What Is It Good For?) – The Relevance of Education in
Contemporary Knowledge Society**

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Executive Summary

What is the relevance of education from the perspectives of various actors? To elaborate and grasp not only the students' perspectives and their understandings of relevance, but also the respective influence, of parents, teachers and teacher trainers, local and high-level experts on student perceptions, this report addresses why education is important to each group of participants, for what reasons and in which circumstances. These are the key questions underlying the report "Education! (What Is It Good For?) – The Relevance of Education in Contemporary Knowledge Society".

The Relevance of Education as a research perspective

To address this report's objectives the analysis of the relevance of education begins with a multi-perspectiveal approach that takes the aforementioned actors into account by describing their interpretation of education in detail. Secondly, we analyse the explicit and implicit patterns in their accounts to discover the similarities and differences that will finally lead to a deeper understanding of the circumstances in which education becomes relevant. Finally, we utilize three theoretical approaches as a theoretical and systematic basis for the process of describing and systematically analysing the database of actor perspectives. We apply these perspectives in context to the following theoretical concepts that stress different forms of educational relevance depending on their explanatory approach, be it in terms of education as a form of self-cultivation, a form of social practice, or as social and cultural reproduction:

- Relevance of education as an active form of participation of an individual while shaping the world. Under this perspective education is understood as a form of self-cultivation where we use the German concept of 'Bildung', which refers to the reflexive process of an individual realising his/her human potential and becoming a subjective agent by actively exploring the material and social world (e.g. Humboldt, 1986; Klafki, 1964; Heydorn, 2004);
- Relevance of education as a form of social practice of the individual as active learner situated within social contexts (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998);
- Relevance of education as social and cultural reproduction in terms of the relevance that is constructed according to different social positions (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Moreover, we explore educational relevance in relation to the organization and its impact of educational systems.

Decisions on educational paths, especially during transitions, are not based on the decision of a single actor. Rather, they are a consequence of a decision-making-process that is influenced by the interaction of different actors (e.g. students, parents, teachers, actors in high-level governance, the level at which the choices available to different groups are effectively framed, albeit quite broadly). That is why education might be crucial for several reasons, but such decisions require at least partly

shared understandings that are sustainable for an educational-biographical setting of its future direction.

This report draws on the complete empirical data spectrum of the mixed-method project GOETE. To address the research questions introduced above, it examines the qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the duration of the GOETE project. To ensure that a wide range of actor perspectives toward, and their understandings of, the relevance of education are accounted for, key results from the national and comparative reports of all sub-studies were extracted and reinterpreted according to the research questions. In addition, original datasets as well as interviews and focus groups have been subjected to further primary analysis. Rather than seeking to identify or classify the similarities and differences between conceptions of the relevance of education for socially disadvantaged young people in our eight countries, we see them as emerging in particular 'contexts of contexts', that specify what is permitted within particular national education systems. For this reason data were also examined at country level where relevant, especially in discussions considering the overall effect of the education system on students' viewpoints on, and even their confidence in, their educational pathway.

Key Findings on the Relevance of Education in Contemporary Knowledge Society

While education is regarded to be relevant for young people in contemporary society by all actors, students, parents, teachers, teacher trainers, local experts and high-level experts; they all have different views on as to why. How actors perceive the relevance of education is not only linked to their role in school or society, i.e. whether they are students, teachers or parents, but also to the local and national context. In some countries the connection to the labour market is stronger, while in other countries education is regarded as the only real option for young people. For example, in countries with well-developed apprenticeship or work placement training (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands), students may choose between enrolling in full time education or entering the labour market after compulsory education. In other countries full time education is considered as the only real option (e.g. Finland and Slovenia). In all countries students and parents are sometimes sceptical about the link between education, work and future success. However they acknowledge that education is the most important option and that must be achieved; especially in the absence of other feasible opportunities. This ensures that educational aspirations remain high despite relative high scepticism.

While the relevance of education is not limited to the labour market, it tends to be reduced in terms of getting credentials of almost any type. The way that relevance is related to the labour market takes a number of forms. The link between school achievements and jobs has become, certainly for socially disadvantaged young people, much less direct than it has been historically, when the link was mediated through educational achievement as a qualification for a particular job, or job category. By contrast, the current link is much more one where the educational achievement is taken as a credential, signalling a generalised level of attainment, which may be seen as relevant to a range of jobs. This decreasing specificity of the link between school achievement and the labour market further

exacerbates the competition for jobs and can lead directly to credential inflation or reduction in the value of a level of achievement achieved by many. Education is a key means of preventing social disadvantage being translated into social exclusion through forms of socialisation epitomised in, but not confined to, language competence on the part of migrants. It thus has enormous social relevance as well as economic – labour market – and personal relevance, in the traditional sense of education as emancipation, as the key means to a fuller life for all.

Actor Perspectives on the Relevance of Education

- **Students:** Key findings suggest that students across the EU have different ideas as to what they will do with their current level of education and what it can do for them at this stage in their lives, e.g. move into work or further education. This is due to their education system and the relevance they assign to education due to their national context providing evidence that education systems can directly affect the importance students assign to education, their motivation to remain in school, their will to continue to use other opportunities of lifelong learning. Examining students' perspectives as to why they felt education was, or was not, important also highlighted some differences between those with a subjective interpretation and those with a systematic interpretation. Students in all countries often highlighted the perceived contradiction between the view that a good education will lead to secure and attractive careers and the actual destinations of older peers in their communities who are either unemployed or have to compromise with underemployment (Colley et al., 2002; Walther et al., 2006; Machacek & Walther, 2008). This occurs especially in areas of disadvantage, where many of the pupils' peers drop-out of school, or cannot find employment at the end of compulsory schooling. 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 motivation of students who have a more systematic interpretation of education – *'to help me get a good job'*, and indeed many students stressed they were not too sure about the point of education, or indeed many of their cores subject areas, as it does not always lead to obtaining employment. One crucial issue with this is that if students do not see the point of learning about Maths or Science for example, this hinders their enjoyment when learning that subject. Enjoyment is key for deep level learning (Wenger, 1998) which sees the student become immersed in their learning leading to knowledge obtainment, understanding and hence better academic results. For these students, if labour market entry is the sole reason for gaining an education, they may end up finishing their educational pathway as soon as they are legally allowed (e.g. 16 years old). Students' perceptions of the relevance of education were also hampered by their parental role models. This was perceived as a particular issue in such areas of high deprivation, which had high unemployment levels with many parents out of work claiming welfare benefits. When they added this to their own lack of education, some students felt that education and work were a waste of time, since the government could provide. Others, however, were more determined to better themselves by getting a good job (defined by material wealth) and reported that they were strongly encouraged by their parents, who wanted them to do

better for themselves than they ever did (upward social mobility and symbolic capital/status). Motivation behind getting one's education and a good job as result may be as a means for upward social mobility. School context was a good predictor of educational aspirations, with students in disadvantaged schools much less likely to aspire to a university education. At the European level there is a relative balance between students in vocational and general education, nevertheless high variations exist between individual countries (McDowell et al., 2012). In some countries (Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Slovenia and France) vocational education still has a low status and academic pathways are seen to be more prestigious, especially amongst more affluent families. This 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 located and that access to university is therefore not an option. Highly stratified systems may prevent students from even acknowledging University as a possibility (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). Despite from what is explicitly affirmed by students, from implicit students' discourses we can assume that education is not only relevant for them in terms of learning achievements, but also for the socialization and integration with peers. In fact, for some students school is the only environment where they can meet others fellows with different backgrounds, meet and discuss with adults that are not parents, and compare their own experiences. We cannot forget this crucial point, which regards education as a field of social inclusion and peer education.

- **Parents:** 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 the subjective satisfaction in life, where feelings of accomplishments, fulfilment, and enjoyment in children's future professions are considered highly important. Many, especially more disadvantaged, parents expressed a belief or hope that children would improve their socio-economic position through knowledge and attaining high and adequate educational levels. Nevertheless the research results indicate that socio-cultural-economic capital of the families has a strong influence on parental views regarding educational aspirations for their children, the most probable future status of the students, their access and barriers to education, all which indicates that on the general level, educational and social inequalities are likely to be reproduced and that habitus remains highly influential at the level of educational practice. Moreover, although educational aspirations of parents are very high and education is considered highly relevant, parents expressed considerable scepticism about the link between education and job possibilities for their children, which points to their awareness that in the insecure and unpredictable circumstances of contemporary European society, education alone is no guarantee for later career possibilities or safe and prosperous employment.
- **Teachers:** Many teachers see themselves as knowledge brokers in schools. At the same time many of them make a great effort to help students to cope with their transitions into training and

continuing further education. For many students teachers are role models when it comes to develop an understanding of the relevance of education. While teachers stress the importance of education in terms of participation in society they appear to know very little about the leisure time of students and the respective relevance of education they develop in their after-school-life. Teachers are faced with behavioural problems in schools and therefore need to create a functioning learning atmosphere in class, which is a latent form of imparting knowledge. Teachers complain that teacher education does not provide them with the necessary tools how to deal with socially disadvantaged students. This means, on the other side, that they often do not know how to instil the relevance of education in their students.

- **Teacher trainers:** What teacher students learn in teacher training is important for the relevance of education for their future students. Teacher training has to cope with new and complex difficulties as training programmes become more diverse. New challenges evolve, such as including migrants (although few), part-time students, students entering teacher training from different training or professional backgrounds, second chance students, etc. But how does teacher training account for the increasing complexities? According to GOETE findings, the analysis shows that there is little evidence in the curricula regarding the respective differences and new tasks. Some teacher trainers appreciate the effort of particular administrations to attract students with the experience of overcoming their own disadvantages (e.g., socially mobile and migrant students). Those teachers might be able to offer "better" role models for their pupils in this regard.
- **Local experts:** Local experts consider the harmonious development of students as the main aim of education. From this perspective educational processes have the goal of providing cultural and practical tools that can help young people to achieve a positive social integration as well as well-rounded development of their personality. For this reason experts perceive 'relevance' and 'coping' dimensions as being related to each other: a hierarchical concept of educational relevance, more precisely of different levels of education with different aims and meanings, in their view causes stress for all actors involved in the system. Local experts often stressed the point that socialization aspects of education and achievement of disciplinary skills have to be considered together. Another crucial point raised from their view is the importance of making education more relevant for socially disadvantaged young people. Aims, methodology and teaching approach are related not only to pupils' achievements in school subjects, but also to the transmission of tools and skills aimed at social integration. Due to the complexity of social and educational systems, for many of the experts, the goals of education cannot be addressed in traditional ways, and they underline the importance of a self-contained learning process and of a positive link between school-family-community as being essential for learning. Experts who work closely with students acknowledge that out-of-school contexts may be very important for the relevance of education for students. E.g. in the UK, Italy and Germany learning motivation is stimulated through non-formal courses and extra-curricular activities offered in the youth work or community work sector. Finland, as another example, has 'weighted curricula' where interests and hobbies can be brought into the formal

curriculum and may serve as a springboard to further (general) education. The experts also acknowledge that family background has a great influence on how students perceive education and therefore also how they cope in school. This is particularly important in the context of socially disadvantaged students and local experts have usually developed considerable expertise in this area. Also, many experts and teachers in schools have developed a significant expertise in how to support socially disadvantaged students.

- **High-level experts:** According to high-level experts the school has an important role in reducing or compensating for social inequalities. We also have to take into account that high-level governance does not directly 'control' educational activities, or conceptions of educational relevance. It is always mediated through other levels of governance. In this process high-level governors are able to set goals but also to enable the chances of their attainment in various ways. This is especially noted in the Italian case, where it appears that central policies rarely come with any resource for their implementation. Another crucial feature of the multi-level nature of governance is that both discursive and institutional opportunity structures may vary at different levels of governance and this can cause considerable confusion, albeit that it is rarely recognised, between different uses of the same term, in this case, relevance. We found considerable evidence of this in the case of teacher training, where conceptions of relevance seemed rarely to be considered the business of high-level governance. In some ways ensuring the relevance of education might be seen as the most important challenge to high-level governance, since typically accountability for the education system ultimately rests.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Schools are interested in, and have the capacity to, if supported, demonstrating the wider relevance of education. Schools and teachers have important roles in creating student and parent perceptions on relevance of education, in particular for those who are socially disadvantaged students. However, many teachers complain that they are not properly prepared during training for this, referring to the need to provide schools with sufficient knowledge on how to better support their students.
- Schools should be encouraged to provide students with different non-formal learning opportunities and out-of-school activities. Schools and youth welfare agencies need to extend and increase their cooperation with each other and the wider community. Even labour market institutions could be more involved to provide extracurricular activities for students and provide experiences of relevance that are not bound to school but are connected to students' leisure time activities.
- Educational policies need to take into account the individual needs of students. This means acknowledging informal learning contexts and processes. Policies should accept this need and promote a view of the relevance of education not only in terms of school success but also more in terms of life experiences. Students need environments and (learning) conditions where they feel a

sense of belonging and communality with their peers to reduce the impact of existing family problems or other factors of disadvantage.

- There is a need for inclusive educational and labour market policies combined with supportive schooling and welfare policies. Education, employment, equal rights and opportunities for citizenship, participation and solidarity between society and young people are the key areas where change is needed to develop and execute EU youth strategy actions for the empowerment of young people's agency and for initiatives to prevent social exclusion, in support of the implementation of related and relevant policies at regional and national levels. Bottom-up knowledge based practices especially could be promising in this sense.
- There is a strong need to provide schools with guidance on how to support parents in supporting their children. Although parents regard education as being relevant, it does not mean that they necessarily can convey this message effectively to their children. In some cases parents regard education as the task of the school and trust in the school to provide students with all the sufficient knowledge and means to manage in their educational trajectory. In other cases parents intervene too much and school personnel feel overburdened by their demands. This is why parents need guidance on how to support their children in their educational trajectory.
- In many schools we can find a great knowledge regarding how to support socially disadvantaged students. Many experts and teachers in schools have developed a significant expertise in how to support socially disadvantaged students. This knowledge should be better valued with bottom-up knowledge based practices.

1 Introduction

Education seems to have gained more importance in modern knowledge societies. At the same time the last ten years of educational research (e.g. OECD's PISA studies) have shown that education is not equally accessible to all children and young people. Children from more disadvantaged economic backgrounds are more likely to leave education early despite high educational aspirations. Furthermore, in contemporary European societies, education alone does not guarantee prosperous career possibilities or safe and secure employment. This means that students' wishes, plans and aspirations are subject to external fluctuations of capital in society (current economic, cultural and social prospects) and demands in the labour market. Such influencing forces may have a critical effect on how key groups of actors view the role of education in today's society (cf. Parreira do Amaral, 2011). However, this might be questioned with regard to how education is defined, why and how it is relevant for whom and under what circumstances.

In this report we will examine the perspectives of various actors on their understanding of the relevance of education as part of an international research project funded by the European Commission's 7th framework programme: Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe (GOETE). The project's large qualitative and quantitative data set reveals some form of influence (both direct and indirect) on student attitudes towards the relevance of education and their present and future life courses. To elaborate and grasp not only students' perspectives but the understanding of relevance and respective influence of their parents, teachers and teacher trainers, local and high-level experts, we address the following general questions:

- Why is education important?
- To whom is education important?
- For what is education important?
- Under which circumstances is education important?

Here we apply different interpretations and meanings of the relevance of education across each group of actors, including what can account for their perspectives (chapter 2). Moreover we explore these perspectives in relation to theoretical frames (chapter 3) that stress different forms of educational relevance depending on their explanatory approach, be it in terms of education as a form of self-cultivation (3.1), as a form of social practice (3.2), or as social and cultural reproduction (3.3). Also, we explore educational relevance in relation to the organization of educational systems and their impact (chapter 4). This approach attempts to explain the different aspects of the relevance of education, and consequently touches on research objectives apparent in the various GOETE sub-studies. This contains detailed analysis on the research questions:

- What are the motivational processes or factors behind *students'* educational decisions? What meaning do they ascribe to their own educational process, and why?

- What do *parents* understand the relevance of education to be? What are their educational aspirations for their children as well as the level of scepticism they express in terms of the relevancy of education with regards to future work possibilities?
- How might the attitudes of *teacher trainers*, in regards to the relevance of education, effect those of the *teaching staff* and in turn the students' perspectives of the relevance of their own education and future life course trajectories?

1.1 Theoretical background

1.1.1 *The transformation of the relevance of education*

Educational opportunities and participation in the education system have been discussed extensively over the last years. An important result of research (PISA, 2001) is that the role of social origin is the most important predictor of selection in education (access to education) and of how successfully educational paths proceed (life course dimension). This means that what counts as relevance for (young) individuals is (at least in part) the function of conditions of access and life experiences (with school experiences representing a large part of this) and how they become a matter of who gets access to education seen as relevant for successful entry into the labour market. Combining both dimensions, access to education and education in life course leads to the question: how, and in what different ways, is education relevant for living in a post-modern and knowledge-based society? This question is especially interesting as the discourse on the knowledge society implies that education has an ever more important role in the integration of modern societies. The concept of knowledge society can be interpreted as a shift in education towards a managerial model serving primarily economic purposes (Maroy, 2004; Young, 2007; Daun, 2007). Outcomes are formulated in terms of standards concerning reading, calculation and science-based problem-solving skills (OECD, 2001) as well as technical, social and personal key competencies (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). At the same time the notion of lifelong learning reflects an increasing uncertainty about what skills and knowledge are necessary and the role of individual responsibility in ones learning career (Coffield, 1999; Field, 2000; Young, 2007; Jarvis, 2009).

However, two other features of the PISA exercise are also of crucial importance to the understanding of the nature, forms and significance of conceptions of relevance in education. One is that the levels of success of students from comprehensive secondary education systems exceeds that of those who have been educated in selective systems (this success is especially apparent where comprehensive schools are not in competition with other types of school, especially with types of grammar school) (Pekkarinen et al., 2006; Meghier & Palme, 2005). This is also linked to the second very important aspect of the discussion of conceptions of relevance in education that is very easily overlooked, that conceptions of relevance are not 'natural', or 'obvious', but have to be produced. PISA is indeed the outstanding example of the *production*, at a very high – transnational – level of governance, of a new, and rapidly compelling, conception of the relevance of education.

Educational sociology has been concerned with the fact that education has proved to be a key factor in reproducing structures of social inequality (cf. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). While until the 1970s this meant that working class children 'inherited' the working class jobs of their parents (cf. Willis, 1971), nowadays low education implies risks of social exclusion (Castel, 2000; cf. Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2001; Field et al., 2007). Education has become an indispensable prerequisite of social inclusion while it no longer leads predictably to specific careers. Labour markets are more flexible and as a consequence life courses become de-standardised (Walther et al., 2002; cf. Beck, 1992; Mayer, 2005; Olkinuora et al., 2008). Neither access to or successfully coping with, nor the relevance of education can be taken for granted (cf. Young, 1998 & 2007).

In order to fulfil societal functions as qualification, allocation and integration (Fend, 1974), education needs to provide skills, knowledge and competencies held relevant by teachers and school representatives, students and parents, and employers. Curricula and qualifications represent institutionalised agreements on relevant education differentiated according to age and occupation (Reid, 1992; Doll, 1993). Yet, they play different roles: in organisational labour markets entry is characterised by learning-on-the-job and internal and external career mobility; occupational labour markets rely on the relevance of standardised vocational qualifications and their acknowledgement through employers (Shavit & Müller, 1998; Müller & Gangl, 2003). At the same time social and technological change challenges the contents and occupational directions of qualifications. In other words, conceptions of relevance have changed with changing labour market sectors. While many occupations in crafts and manufacturing rely on distinct technical skills and knowledge, this is much less the case in the service and information economy (Castells, 2000; CEDEFOP, 2008a). Standardised sets of technical skills have lost relevance for more and more occupations due to the flexibilisation and acceleration of production during Post-Fordism (Piore & Sabel, 1986; Brown & Lauder, 1998). This is reflected by concepts such as technical, social, personal key competencies and transversal skills (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Competence-based lifelong learning strategies can also be seen as a step-by-step withdrawal of state institutions from defining what is relevant in education, leaving it to individuals and competitiveness on the labour market (Mørch & Stalder, 2003; Robertson, 2009).

On the other side, individual decisions to invest in education depend on the relevance learners ascribe to education for their subjective life plans, although this depends on socially differentiated access to education. However, such individual judgments are influenced by subjective experience in the own learning biography, by success and failure of peers in entering vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) or employment and by public discourses on the adequacy of school qualifications with regard to labour market demands and employers' need for human capital. However individual disorientation coincides with general uncertainties about what skills, knowledge and key competencies are needed in knowledge societies. The coincidence of early school leaving and youth unemployment on the one hand, and the forecast of skills shortages on the other, suggest a growing mismatch between education and the labour market. Global competitiveness calls for

innovation, economic development towards “new jobs” requires “new skills” and creativity (CEDEFOP, 2008a; EC, 2008a). Technological change has increased the need for transversal skills, ICT skills and social skills (Castells, 2000; Jung, 2003). At the same time, employers complain that school leavers lack basic skills of reading and calculating, while in manual and manufacturing work key competencies tend to be interpreted in traditional terms: compromising own aspirations, accepting hierarchies and standardised routines. It is no longer self-evident what makes skills and competencies relevant for social integration and for meaningful working and personal experiences (Robertson, 2009a).

With regard to school, little comparative knowledge is available on how the rhetoric of competence development is being put into practice in particular and on the mechanisms of curricula development in general – who is involved in what way, what information and knowledge is being used, how key competencies are broken down (Resnik, 2005). In vocational education and training (VET) three ideal typical developments can be discerned (Green et al., 1999; Walther & Pohl, 2005):

- Introduction of national qualification frameworks allowing for the integration and recognition of informal and non-formal learning (UK, Slovenia, Finland);
- Innovation of standardised vocational curricula by reshaping occupational, professional and vocational profiles (Germany, Netherlands);
- Minor changes in school-based VET by including practical elements and introducing additional programmes and courses (Italy, France, Poland).

As regards forecasting future skills needs, a comparative study by CEDEFOP distinguishes national models according to their coordination and comprehensiveness (CEDEFOP, 2008b). Interestingly, across these models worries related to the future provision of a skilled workforce persist as forecasts cannot necessarily be translated directly into VET provision. Neither bureaucratic nor managerial approaches succeed in involving all relevant actors, in combining skills forecast, curriculum development, teacher training and educational planning models, or in ensuring employers’ active engagement in training provision (Biggart, 2005; Brockmann et al., 2008).

Yet the relevance of education is not restricted to labour market demands. In democratic societies the relevance of education is by definition related to the need of providing young people with an understanding of their role as citizens (Dewey, 1966; Loncle & Muniglia, 2008; Walther et al., 2009). However, de-standardised life courses make the meaning and prerequisites of active citizenship unclear. Learning for democracy and civil society requires that individual learners ascribe intrinsic value and meaning to contents of learning (Holford & van der Veen, 2003). In the context of lifelong learning this has been interpreted as the need of ‘biographicity’, the competence to reflect and to shape the own learning biography according to subjective interests and to external demands (Alheit et al., 1995; West et al., 2007). This requires a democratic assessment of educational relevance. This points to one significant danger in the analysis of conceptions of relevance in education; that any other explanation than one concerned with labour markets and employability will be crowded out, and

one of our major concerns in structuring this chapter has been to ensure that we provide examples of such broader possibilities; see sections 3.3-5, for instance

For students at the same time, school is about far more than education as we will highlight further in section 2.1. Peer cultures as well as pressure, competition or bullying in (and out of) school are of high relevance as well. School often neglects that it is a key meeting point and arena of youth cultures (Willis, 1971; Dekleva, 1999; Bottrell, 2007; Helve & Bynner, 2007; Foljanty-Jost et al., 2008). That is why, biographically, education needs to be reconciled with other areas of everyday life such as family obligations, life styles, financial needs, expectations of peers, or partnership. For students, these areas may be experienced as more important than education at times (cf. Walther, 2009).

As outlined above, the necessity of public and dialogic educational planning increases in the context of lifelong learning with its increase of individual responsibilities. Systemic criteria for relevant education need to be communicated and matched with biographical ones. To better assess the systemic and individual dimensions of education in late modern knowledge societies, it could be of great help to know what skills and competencies are held relevant for “satisfying and successful lives” (Rychen & Salganik, 2003) by all type of actors in the field of education. That is why this report highlights the questions of: how important is education for young people (“how relevant”)? For which reasons (“relevant for what”)? Under what circumstances (“conditions of relevance”)? And why they argue education is relevant in that specific sense (“why and in what sense relevant”)? Because students are surrounded and influenced by a vast array of different actors (parents, teachers, labour market, society etc.) that may have similar or different views toward their educational trajectories, another issue is the question: from which perspective (“relevant for whom”) is education important? and are the perspectives congruent or divergent?

The analysis of the relevance of education therefore first and foremost needs a multi-perspective approach that takes the aforementioned actors into account and describes their views in detail. Secondly, it is then necessary to analyse the explicit and implicit patterns in their accounts to discover similarities and differences that will lead to a deeper understanding of the circumstances in which education becomes relevant – not only for parents or teachers, but also for young people. Decisions on educational paths, especially during transitions, are not based on the decision of a single actor, they are always a consequence of a decision-making-process that is influenced by the interaction of different actors (e.g. students, parents, teachers, actors in high-level governance, the level at which the choices available to different groups are effectively framed, albeit quite broadly). That is why education might be crucial for several reasons but such decisions require at least a partly shared and sustainable understanding of educational-biographical challenges of the future. As a theoretical and systematic basis for the process of describing the database along an actor perspective (chapter 2) and for its systematic analysis (chapter 3), three theoretical approaches are used in this report.

These analytical dimensions are concerned with identifying different dimensions of relevance, based on the understanding of education that prevails among a specific actor-group (e.g. teachers might first

of all be convinced that education has the function of delivering content knowledge to students, whereas students might be adamant that education mainly is relevant to get a job). The strategy of re-connecting to different concepts, traditions and perspectives of education as well as trying to clarify the conditions and mechanisms of relevance is important for several reasons. The three approaches that are used as a theoretical starting point are introduced below:

1.1.2 The concept of *Bildung*

The first theoretical approach that is used in this report is the German concept of 'Bildung'. It refers to the reflexive process of an individual realising his/her human potential and becoming a subjective agent by actively exploring the material and social world (Humboldt, 1986; Klafki, 1964; Heydorn, 2004). For the individual that means to be able to refer to the world as an objective culture which has to be transformed and reconstructed in each singular personality (Gonon, 1995). That way Bildung covers a form of self-cultivation and learnedness (Hamann, 2011) implying the cultivation of a profound intellectual culture (Oelkers, 2011). There is no direct translation for the German term Bildung. To some extent this has to do with the fact that Bildung as a concept, has a more extensive range of meanings than 'education':

“A reason for that development could be the continuously growing awareness that there are some important aspects of human development and of pedagogical interactions which cannot be properly and precisely grasped by the English term 'education'” (Stojanov, 2012: 1).

However, the main idea of the concept Bildung was also taken up by English and American theorists of education such as John Dewey. Dewey “emphasises (...) the intrinsic value of education as an unlimited development and flourishing of the potentials and capacities of the single human person: a development and flourishing that is to be understood (...) as an end-in-itself and not primarily as a tool for the achievement of extrinsic economic or political goals of a given society” (Stojanov 2012: 1). In recent trends in educational policy and forms of educational governance however, “this notion has been transformed into a notion of Bildung that is closer to vocational training than to self-cultivation, providing a certain set of skills rather than aiming at the whole personality and teaching practical abilities and competencies rather than passing on general cultural values” (Hamann, 2011: 63). Notwithstanding the above more precise notions, the concepts of education and/or Bildung display the central elements of the interplay between structure and agency (Giddens, 1984) or between individual life course trajectories (Mayer, 1997) and biographies (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000; du Bois-Reymond, 2004; Walther et al., 2006; Diepstraten et al., 2006). Thus, the concept of 'Bildung' understood as subjective reflexivity, is still relevant even within the “new educational order” of lifelong learning (Field, 2000).

1.1.3 The concept of *learning as social practice*

The second approach that is used in this report looks at education in terms of social practice of the individual as an active learner situated within social contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998;

Coffield, 1999; Field, 2005; Mørch & du Bois-Reymond, 2006; Chisholm, 2008). This perspective refers more to the notion of 'learning' although in many respects it shares with 'Bildung' an understanding of learning as a subjective process. More pragmatic approaches of social learning refer to individual problem solving and coping with everyday life (Dewey, 1966; Popkewitz, 2005; Young, 2007; Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Other approaches such as 'Social Pedagogy' are also concerned with the social conditions of education and the educational conditions of social life (Hämäläinen, 2003; Lorenz, 2006). One of the most acknowledged concepts – the idea of "communities of practice" of Etienne Wenger (1998) – argues about a sense of belonging that social learning gives to the individual. It nurtures identity and aids learning when the individual enjoys what he/she is learning about. Here learning obtains an individual sense instead of a socially mediated sense, such as learning to get a job. Wenger stresses that school is structured today in a way that gives students a taster of the many subjects, so that realistically they have no chance to learn anything in any real depth. One consequence of this is that they cannot apply what they are learning to their future lives, or get the chance to enjoy what they are learning as school is all about exams and how they influence your occupational future. Therefore they are likely to become bored, discouraged and dispassionate.

In this report learning and education are referred to as social practices within social life worlds in which education is negotiated and experienced. In fact, social reproduction through social capital requires lived relationships in which subjective identities are reworked and in which learning habits are internalised (Bourdieu, 1990; Wenger, 1998; Field, 2005; Helve & Bynner, 2007). In families children experience norms, values and practices with regard to social relationships and are encouraged to, or prevented from, exploring their wider social environment. Friendship, peer networks and youth cultures provide support and/or imply problematic challenges. Informal work or side-jobs after, or sometimes instead of, school lessons, can have different meanings, functions and consequences across different contexts (Ball et al., 2000; Raffo & Reeves, 2000; Walther et al., 2005; Foljanty-Jost et al., 2008; Invernizzi, 2008; Hungerlander et al., 2008).

A perspective on education and learning as social practice needs to take into account that all formal learning depends on its integration with the individual learning biography. The notion of *lifewide* learning differentiates *formal, non-formal and informal* contexts; for example, second chance measures rely upon transversal motivational effects when they provide socially disadvantaged students with experiences of success in non-formal learning contexts. However, there is little acknowledgment of learning outside formal institutions (Coffield, 2000; Young, 2007; Bekerman et al., 2006; Jarvis, 2009). But students also learn informally in school – with regard to hidden curricula, discrepancies between rhetoric and reality of participation, or the career destinations of peers in their communities (Jackson, 1968; Colley et al., 2002; Walther et al., 2006; Machacek & Walther, 2008). Understanding the dynamics of individual learning biographies therefore needs to embrace wider social contexts (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000; Kobolt & Zsorga, 2006).

This is also one of the current challenges in the organisation of schooling and learning at schools. One main trend to be observed here is the increase of individualised teaching and self-directed learning as a reaction to the diversity of students' learning rhythms. As this implies a shift in the teacher's role from 'instructor' towards 'learning facilitator' (Wenger, 1998) such trends need to affect and to combine curriculum development and teacher training in order to become effective. In fact, teachers' professional identities and profiles differ across national education systems (Eurydice, 2008). While Nordic countries introduced individual education plans, in continental and Southern European countries there is still a struggle for the right balance between open and structured forms of learning (Weinert, 1995; Akker et al., 2004; Döbert & Sroka, 2004; Cuconato, 2007; Kuiper et al., 2007). Although it is hard to overlook the multiple measures and initiatives which have been taken at school, local, regional or national level in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure access, coping and relevance of students and students, more comparative research is still needed.

Analytically speaking, this points to the need to clarify from what kinds of interaction (e.g. relationships, struggles or discourses) specific understandings of the relevance of education *emerge*. This places the focus on the different actors, not only as a means of identifying how education is important for them, but also as recognizing the social practices (interaction in terms of speaking, acting, expressing themselves, legitimating own patterns of action etc.) through which this takes place. Young learners' dispositions can transform in a short period of time and are often linked, in complex ways, to wider social, economic and cultural contexts (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000). This is why in this report the focus is also on the interaction between students and parents, students and teachers etc. in order to understand more clearly some of the complex mechanisms of giving education relevance. Although there is no operationalization of the processes of interaction itself, much implicit data resulting from the different actors' voices is available, that provide information about the relationship between different types of actors.

1.1.4 The concept of social and cultural reproduction

The third theoretical and analytical approach in this report is asking how relevance is constructed according to different social positions. Focusing on socially disadvantaged students, this perspective seems to be of high importance. In current educational research the economic position refers to the relative position of parents in the social hierarchy on the basis of financial funds, power and prestige. Because these three indicators are hard to operationalize, research most often relies on the employment status of parents, which can provide information on funds, power and prestige at the same time. Living and learning conditions are strongly connected with material resources: beginning while growing up (professional care, learning materials, nutrition, non-formal educational activities etc.), followed by time in school (books, private lessons, studies abroad etc.) up to the choice of profession (financing, living and learning environment, computer etc.). This is what makes it important to have an idea of how much money parents are able to spend on the education of their child, though

parents' economic capital is not the only issue; the ways that they can valorise their children's involvement with cultural assets or social relationships are equally important, especially in areas where there is strong competition for entry into schools with superior examination results.

To overcome problems of operationalization, three major theoretical explanatory models of social disparity (the observation that people are advantaged or disadvantaged in social life) can be outlined regarding the associated discourse for this report. The fact of social disparities first of all leads to (1) a *theory of social inequality*. It assumes that individuals vary in their supply of goods, information and influence through political and economic structures. Although there is a tendency towards pluralisation, individualisation, differentiation and diversification, social classes, subcultures and different opportunities in life still exist (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993; Geißler, 2011). From the perspective of (2) the *theory of social mobility*, belonging to a particular social class is not fixed for the whole life course – one is able to move up or down in the social hierarchy (Schüren, 1989). Today, this kind of vertical mobility is strongly connected to occupational changes: A daughter of working-class parents can move up when becoming a secondary teacher, at the same time the son of two medical practitioners can move down while deciding to become a teacher as well. However, the idea of social mobility begs a number of questions, which are taken up in (3) the *theory of social reproduction*. This assumes that social classes are reproduced constantly through the inheritance of goods or educational resources (Hanf, 1975) an example might be the son of a working-class family who goes to the lowest school type in a selective education system because his parents are not able to support him.

Here, it is useful to take note of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', by which he refers to "the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them" (Wacquant, 2005: 316). This indicates both the sources and the strength of differences in people's understandings of the world, as these dispositions, capacities and propensities.

"The organization of space and time embody the assumptions of gender, age and social hierarchy upon which a particular way of life is built. As the actor grows up and lives everyday life within these spatial and temporal forms, s/he comes to embody those assumptions, both literally and figuratively. The effect is one of near-total naturalization of the social order, the forging of homologies between personal identity and social classification" (Dirks & Eley, 1994: 13).

This international educational research regarding educational disparities is most often based on theoretically informed social strata or classes. Using the description of social situations, social milieus or life style (Hradil, 2005) did not replace hierarchical models in the empirical research (Maaz, 2006). A family's cultural, social resources, and economic resources are still the most important basis of social disparities (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1996; Baumert & Schümer, 2001). The question of resources can be traced back to the 1980 and the work of Pierre Bourdieu who developed some powerful concepts into social theory such as the concept of capital. Bourdieu distinguished four forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1983; Thomson, 2005): (1) economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights (e.g. money and

assets); (2) cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications (e.g. forms of knowledge; taste, aesthetic and cultural preferences; language, narrative and voice); and (3) social capital, made up of social obligations, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (e.g. affiliations and networks; family, religious and cultural heritage). (4) Symbolic capital as the fourth form is special. As contrasted with the other three forms it plays an overarching role. Symbolic capital refers to the collection and preservation of social recognition and results in social prestige. This can be done by inserting the other types of capital (e.g. social power, symbolic violence, prestige, reputation etc.). The acquired capital marks the position in the larger material, cultural or social life. Children who have inherited particular kinds of behaviours, languages and dispositions are privileged in schooling over children who do not have such capital available are educationally disadvantaged.

The four above mentioned capitals are always present while describing the data in chapter 2, but they become crucial for the analysis in chapter 3. While chapter 2 describes the particular actors' view considering the analytical approaches, the strategy in chapter 3 is to start from the three theory-based approaches, analysing the actors' data from these perspectives, and to show how they are defined by and allocated through the various levels of governance.

1.2 A Methodological Preamble

It is clear from all the preceding reports on the GOETE project that comparing the practices of the different national and sub-national levels of governance creates significant problems. These have been addressed in a number of ways throughout the project's sub-studies; through the concepts of 'transition regime', and 'logics of intervention', and through the strategy of tertium comparationis, for instance. In this report, we follow the logic that underlies all those strategies, that of raising the level of abstraction at which we view our data above the level of the empirical data themselves. In this case, we draw on a pair of concepts deployed in the sub-study on high-level governance (Dale et al., 2012) discuss differences in approaches to migrant education, those of discursive and institutional opportunity structures. This means that rather than seeking to identify or classify the similarities and differences between conceptions of the relevance of education for socially disadvantaged young people in our eight countries, we see them as emerging in particular 'contexts of contexts', that specify what is sayable and doable in particular national education systems – which is what is meant by the discursive and institutional opportunity structures they provide for the construction and implementation of education policy, and especially, in this case, both what is *seen as*, and *enacted as*, 'relevant' education for the populations we are studying. For instance, on the one hand, the discursive opportunity structures of all our countries are now shaped, to differing degrees, by the educational work of international organisations, such as the OECD (PISA) and EU; and on the other hand their institutional opportunity structures all, again in different ways, are faced with reductions in

the role of the central state in forming and implementing education policy, though it should be noted at the same time that such institutional opportunity structures are very deeply embedded and resistant to change – as is evident from the sub-study on local school spaces (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). This approach also helps us to reveal and recognize the nature of, what has changed, imperceptibly, before our eyes over the past two decades, and how far it may or may not be possible to turn back the clock – should we wish to – and thus to see more clearly the nature of what now confronts us, and thus offers the possibility of recognising where and how it may be feasible as well as desirable to change it.

The ways that education systems are governed both reflects and shapes conceptions of the relevance of education, especially for socially disadvantaged young people. By looking at the priorities and foci evident in the governance of education, we see both how disadvantage is constructed and how it is responded to.

One way of looking at how education systems work is to see them as resting on three fundamental bases – (1) their Mandate, what it is considered desirable for them to achieve; (2) their Capacity – what it is feasible for them to achieve; and (3) their Governance – how the relationship between Mandate and Capacity is actualized (Dale, 1989). At different times and in different periods, a different basis will be the main shaper of an education system; for instance, in times of relative economic and social growth, with a demand-led social welfare system, the mandate might be expected to be the main agent, propelling capacity and governance towards the achievement of high expectations. By contrast, in less prosperous times, and/or with a supply led approach to social welfare provision, the capacity of the system might be expected to be dominant, setting limits to the possible as well as the desirable. And finally, in an era such as that now being experienced across Europe, one where social welfare is more shaped by, and subject to, the organizational forms of the market, we find governance combining and setting limits to what is desirable and feasible for education systems. It rests on a particular set of assumptions about the nature and place of education in the social contract in an era of neoliberal capitalism/global knowledge economy, where the role of education – its mandate and the capacity allocated to achieve that mandate – is to contribute economically to increase the prosperity of a society, from which all will – eventually – benefit, by means of the ‘trickle down effect’. But it also rests on the recognition that while waiting for the benefits to trickle down, there may be some – possibly many – who do not experience these benefits, as a result of being ‘socially disadvantaged’, by various combinations of the circumstances of their birth and upbringing, on the one hand, and the institutions of educational governance, on the other, and some account has to be taken of their plight, if only to prevent or forestall forms of breakdown of social cohesion. And finally, education is seen as the means not just to achieving collective prosperity, but to the possibilities of individuals accessing more of that prosperity, as the key means of social mobility in a society, available to all willing and able to take advantage of it.

Issues of Mandate, Capacity and Governance are closely related and striking a balance between these three priorities is the central problem of educational governance. And this means that we in a

sense find issues of ‘relevance’ ‘everywhere’ in education systems. It is not just in shaping access to the labour market that the ways that it is governed make education relevant for young people, especially those who are disadvantaged – and their families – but in recognizing, defining and treating them as disadvantaged, and responding to those disadvantages in various ways. We see this in arrangements for access to particular forms of education, and in the approaches adopted to enabling young people to cope with them, both in their ‘seriousness’ and the strategies – prevention, intervention, compensation – on which they are based.

1.3 Data basis of the report

This report draws on the whole empirical data spectrum of the mixed-method project GOETE. It recaps the data in terms of primary and secondary analysis in relation to the research questions introduced above. To be able and ensure a wide range of actor perspectives on and understandings of the relevance of education, key results from the national and comparative reports of all sub-studies were extracted and reinterpreted according to the research questions. Moreover original datasets as well as interviews and focus groups have undergone further primary analysis where needed. One criterion for the data to be appropriate was that one of the following research perspectives appears explicitly or implicitly in the data or reports: How important is education for young people and other actors, for which reasons, under what circumstances, and on what grounds do they argue education is relevant in that specific sense?

The results of this report on the actor perspectives on the relevance of education are based on the following sub-studies and reports that resulted from them. For more detailed information on methodology, methods, sample and analysis please refer to the reports.

1.3.1 Data basis on the perspective of students

Data on general patterns of educational practice and educational trajectories was collected through an individual survey with students (McDowell et al., 2012). The survey is based on 6390 questionnaires distributed to young people mostly aged 15/16¹ in the last year of compulsory education in 3 cities per country. *Lower secondary schools* were the main sampling unit and were selected at random from a sampling frame in each city. Depending on the structure of the national educational system the sample was stratified according to school context and/or the level of (socio-economic) disadvantage within the school and its catchment area in order to achieve a “best probability sample design” (Lynn et al., 2004), that permits comparability. Here three categories of stratification of school contexts were used: *disadvantaged*, *average* and *affluent*. The *student survey* aimed to assess young people’s subjective accounts and experiences regarding progression through

¹ Due to the nature of the education system in Italy the Italian sample is slightly younger most aged 13/14.

their educational trajectories to date as well as attitudes, expectations and aspirations towards their continued participation.

The initial sample design involved selecting schools purposively from each city to provide a broadly representative sample that was stratified to ensure representation of young people from deprived, average and affluent schools types. Depending on school sizes it was envisaged to include a minimum of 12 schools in each country, a national sample of around 600 students, with the aim of achieving an overall sample of 4,800 students. All countries exceeded the target sample of 600, with a particularly large sample in Italy (N=1388). Most countries were broadly balanced in terms of school context, but some were under-represented either in terms of disadvantaged schools, which in many cases proved hard to access, or affluent schools. Design weights were applied to balance the sample by country, and each of the school contexts. Some countries over-sampled while some struggled to achieve the desired sample. Sample design weights were applied to the data at country level to correct for over or under-sampling according to school context, with the resultant sample meaning that each country provided a similar number of cases across each of the school typologies. Although in many of the country contexts data collection went smoothly and according to the original sampling design, the difficulty in recruiting schools to participate in the project in some cases has led to some imbalance in the samples achieved. While in many cases it would be unwise to make strong generalisations from the findings at the individual city or country level the application of statistical design weights can help partially overcome some of the shortcomings of the achieved samples. Comparative quantitative research even with scale large resources and the most robust research designs will always present methodological challenges. Despite these shortcomings the achieved sample represents a very large European sample of young people in their final post-compulsory year of education across 8 countries and statistical designs weights can help adjust for the observed imbalances in the national samples.

Based on the local case sub-studies that were carried out to understand in-depth how educational trajectories evolve from the interaction between institutional structures, educational practice and individual agency, data on students' perspectives was also taken from 195 interviews and focus groups with students (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012) from what are classed as disadvantaged school contexts in order to provide fruitful qualitative information on this particular groups' perspectives on the relevance of education: 31 from Finland (Salovaara et al., 2012), 26 from France (Jahnich et al., 2012a), 24 from Germany (Boron et al., 2012), 18 from Italy (Barberis et al., 2012), 21 from the Netherlands (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012), 22 from Poland (Błędowski & Fedorczyk, 2012), 37 from Slovenia (Razpotnik et al., 2012) and 18 from the UK (Biggart & McDowell, 2012).

1.3.2 Data basis on the perspective of parents

The quantitative survey data on parents' perspective on the relevance of education is linked to the student survey on general patterns of educational practice and educational trajectories (see 1.3.1; cf.

McDowell et al., 2012). Parental (weighted²) sample include 3290 parents from 7 countries³ (Italy, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovenia), where the socio-economic classification of sampled schools is the following: 33,3% parents from disadvantaged schools, 33,3% from average schools and 33,3% from affluent schools. The parental sample has a gender bias as a great majority of respondents are female (81,8%); because of the dominance of females, the data could not be weighted in terms of gender. Moreover, 81,8% of all respondents are students' mothers, 16,8% are fathers and 1,4% are other respondents (step mothers/fathers, legal guardians, others). In the overall sample, 62,4% of respondents are aged between 41 to 50 years, 19,7% between 21 and 40 years and 17,8% are 51 years old or more. Furthermore, 17,5% of mothers and 19,1% of fathers have basic (primary or lower secondary) education, 44,2% of mothers and 37,3% of fathers have secondary education and 31,3% of mothers and 37,7% of fathers have tertiary education; educational level is unknown for 6,8% of mothers and 19,9% of fathers.

Just as for student data, the parental perspective was also elaborated on the basis of 109 semi-structured interviews based on the local case studies data (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012): 13 from Finland (Salovaara et al., 2012), 17 from France (Jahnich et al., 2012a), 7 from Germany (Boron et al., 2012), 19 from Italy (Barberis et al., 2012), 18 from the Netherlands (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012), 16 from Poland (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012), 18 from Slovenia (Razpotnik et al., 2012) and 1 from the UK (Biggart & McDowell, 2012).

1.3.3 Data basis on the perspective of teachers

The analysis of the teachers' perspective is based on interviews and focus groups with teachers and principals conducted through local case studies (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). In total 109 teachers have participated in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions: 17 from Finland (Salovaara et al., 2012), 11 from France (Jahnich et al., 2012a), 15 from Germany (Boron et al., 2012), 11 from Italy (Barberis et al., 2012), 21 from the Netherlands (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012), 15 from Poland (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012), 12 from Slovenia (Razpotnik et al., 2012) and 7 from the UK (Biggart & McDowell, 2012). Also 3 principals per country were interviewed (except for Poland with 2 principals in total).

The main qualitative findings have been drawn from a secondary analysis of the national and comparative reports of all countries within the GOETE project. A primary analysis was conducted on the interviews and focus groups as well as on the respective translated summaries, when needed to elaborate first findings further.

² To ensure equivalence in the national samples data structure for the purpose of the statistical analysis the data were weighted; poststratification weights were made by two criteria: the country sample size, and the national school sample distribution.

³ UK parental data were excluded following consideration of the small and biased sample.

1.3.4 Data basis on the perspective of teacher trainers

The analysis of teacher trainers' perspectives is mainly based on 65 expert interviews with teacher trainers or experts involved in questions of teacher training (e.g. administrative responsible), 7 from Finland, 10 from France, 9 from Germany, 8 from Italy, 7 from The Netherlands, 8 from Poland, 9 from Slovenia and 7 from the United Kingdom (Cramer et al., 2012). Moreover 118 documents were analysed such as teacher training legislation, teacher training curricula, examination regulations, programme of professional development etc. Finland analysed 13 documents, France 5 documents, Germany 22 documents, Italy 19 documents, the Netherlands 17 documents, Poland 11 documents, Slovenia 13 documents and the United Kingdom 18 documents (Cramer et al., 2012). To answer the question of relevance of education the data originally collected to compare the structures and contents of teacher training in international comparison has been reanalysed under the specific focus of how it explains what teacher trainers rate as important when thinking about education.

1.3.5 Data basis on the perspective of local experts

The analysis of local experts' perspectives is mainly based on interviews and focus group discussions with internal and external experts from case studies (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). In total 208 internal and external experts participated in the case studies: 40 from Finland (Salovaara et al., 2012), 26 from France (Jahnich et al., 2012a), 32 from Germany (Boron et al., 2012), 33 from Italy (Barberis et al., 2012), 23 from the Netherlands (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012), 17 from Poland (Błądowski & Fedorczyk, 2012), 27 from Slovenia (Razpotnik et al., 2012) and 9 from the UK (Biggart & McDowell, 2012).

In this report a (internal or external) local expert is defined as a person who is most relevant in the transition phase for young people and who is involved in the daily lives of students. Internal experts are those working in the researched schools, external experts are those working with students of the researched schools but not directly in the school. Moreover, as data for the analysis, we have relied on the knowledge of each local researcher in terms of clarifying the differences between the countries. "Local experts" is a very heterogeneous group of people; they have different roles and backgrounds, different education and different experiences with students' transitions. In different countries experts are defined as the most important persons in the transition phase. Therefore the background, role and work experience differ greatly among local environments. We have for example interviewed care coordinators, company owners, guidance counsellors, mentors, project managers, psychologists, school counsellors, school doctors, school nurses, social workers, special or social pedagogues mentors, transition phase workers, youth and community workers, etc.

The main qualitative findings have been drawn from a secondary analysis of the national and comparative reports of all countries within the GOETE project. A primary analysis was conducted on the interviews as well as on the respective translated summaries, when needed to elaborate first findings further.

1.3.6 Data basis on the perspective of high-level experts

The analysis of the high-level experts' perspective is based on interviews with decision makers, policy makers and policy commentators (Dale et al., 2012). In total 95 high-level experts were interviewed; 39 policy makers, 28 policy brokers and 28 policy commentators. Policy makers are the 'decision actors', or authorities and they are key interviewees in the analysis. They are the authors of policy or the authority in a particular department able to speak to the policy. This does not mean that they 'control' the enactment or outcomes of the policies – this takes place largely at other levels of governance. In essence, they are frequently responding to 'external' pressures on education, and seeking to translate them into programmes for practitioners. Policy brokers are non-state policy shapers from organizations that are beyond central or regional government. These organizations might be political, think tanks, policy units', or trades unions for example, or they might be pressure groups organized around particular issues or points of concern. Policy commentators are public policy contesters and may include the national, regional and city press and independent commentators like bloggers or academics. Depending on the regulatory and procedural systems present in different countries, some experts are located at the national level, while others are located at the regional or local level.

The main qualitative findings have been drawn from a secondary analysis of the national (Jahnich et al., 2012b; Amos et al., 2012; Barberis & Kazepov, 2012; Mellor & Dale, 2012; Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012; Buchowicz & Błędowski, 2012; Koşar Altinyelken & du Bois-Reymond, 2012; Dale et al., 2012) and comparative (Dale et al., 2012) reports of all countries within the GOETE project. A primary analysis was conducted on the interviews as well as on the respective translated summaries, when needed to elaborate first findings further.

2 The relevance of education in the view of educational actors

In order to understand and explain the relevance of education in contemporary society; e.g. what relevance education has for young people today, one needs to acknowledge what different views, different actors, from different countries, ascribe to education. In this chapter we will therefore illuminate these different views and perspectives which have been recognized in the GOETE research project. We illuminate the views from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. In each subchapter 2.1 - 2.7 we will focus on different actors and their perspective on relevance of education for young people. The actors are: students (chapter 2.1), parents (chapter 2.2), teachers (chapter 2.3), principals (chapter 2.4), teacher trainers (chapter 2.5), local experts (chapter 2.6) and high-level experts (chapter 2.7).

2.1 Students

This section on students examines the link between the relevance of education expressed by the students and investigates the influence they believe education has on one's future life course. It addresses how education is relevant for the future lives of young people; how students evaluate the relevance of education in general and for their future life course, and investigates their future transition plans in relation to this. It then addresses the actors that are influential on student attitudes to the relevance of education in general and for future life courses in particular and on their educational decisions in relation to their parent/guardians influence, and the influence of their school system and gender. Student data was gathered from case studies and student surveys that were carried out in each of the EU countries taking part in the GOETE study (McDowell et al., 2012; Du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). Data was examined to assess young people's subjective accounts and experiences regarding their attitudes, expectations, aspirations towards their continued participation in education and its relevance to their future life plans in order to explore how students view the ir/relevance of education in their trajectories and the potential underlying reasons for these perspectives (e.g. interactions with parents and teachers, gender). We will explore the motivational processes behind students' educational decisions (e.g. socio-economic, cultural and social resources) and under which circumstances education is relevant for them? Throughout we will also address if the Allmendinger's (1989) classification system applies to the student's perspective on the relevance of education (examined further in chapter 3.4). When examining the data, the main analytical approaches outlined in chapter one were considered throughout to discuss the students' definition of education and whether they believe it is relevant for later life trajectories and for what reasons (e.g. upward social mobility, subjective vs. systematic interpretations, for the purpose of economic, cultural, social or symbolic capital gain) which is also explored further in chapter 3. Data examines the present and future perspectives on student attitudes, focusing mainly on how education will effect their future transition pathways.

Motivation to do well in school, to carry on after compulsory schooling or to drop out, might depend on the importance that young people assign to the point of getting an education (Walther, 2009). Therefore the definition of education and the belief in its relevance are important for the success or failure of educational trajectories. To gain a general idea of the level of importance students placed on their education they were asked about their future plans and what they expected to do at the end of compulsory education. This would establish who wanted to continue on with upper secondary education and who wanted to enter into vocational training or the world of work. Table 1 demonstrates responses for each country:

Table 1: What students think will be doing after compulsory education

	IT	FI	FR	DE	NL	PL	SI	UK	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Remain in full time education	88	83	56	75	41	83	70	71	71
Get a full time job	4	2	16	4	17	4	17	16	10
Enter a work placement	5	5	0	*	30	8	4	4	7
Enter an apprenticeship	1	2	19	1	5	*	1	6	4
Look after home or family	1	*	*	0	0	*	2	*	*
Become a full-time parent	0	*	5	0	*	2	3	*	1
Be unemployed	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	*	6	1	18	5	*	2	2	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	802	772	737	783	790	762	773	768	6187

Abbreviations: IT- Italy FI= Finland FR= France DE= Germany NL= Netherlands PL= Poland SI= Slovenia UK= United Kingdom
* Under 1%

As we can see from table 1, future transition pathways vary across countries. In France, 56% of students wish to remain in full time education, in Germany 75% and Netherlands 41% illustrating that despite being in similar education systems (highly stratified/high standardised), the students in these countries place different emphasis on staying on in education past compulsory schooling. In fact, over 70% of the student cohort in each country wishes to stay on in education except for France and Netherlands, where students strongly favour entering into the world of work instead via a full time job, apprenticeship or work placement. This may be explained in Netherlands by the strong vocational element of schools (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011). Countries with more differentiated education systems may mean that the early age of selection results in students in the lower educational tracks understanding that education is not the only route towards a socially recognised and subjectively satisfying future. However, across the EU the service sector increasingly tends to recruit school leavers with higher general education qualifications. In Germany for example, more and more students are attending Gymnasium (general course) and vocational training is witnessing a decline in popularity⁴. Furthermore in Slovenia and Finland vocational education students account for more than 60 per cent of all students in upper secondary education, while less than a third in the UK (31%).

⁴ 47% of German respondents wished to go onto University

Therefore students have different ideas as to what they will do with their current level of education and what it can do for them at this stage in their lives due to their education system and the relevance they assign to it due to the context.

To further examine these findings and the thoughts on the relevance of education on their future life transitions, questions from the PALS assessment tool were utilised (Relevance of Education for Future Life). This asks a range of questions about the future relevance of education such as *'my chances of succeeding later in life does not depend on doing well in school'* and *'doing well in school will not help me have a satisfying career when I grow up'*. Students were asked to rank how strongly they agreed with each comment and the items are scored into an overall scale (a higher score=more sceptic attitude toward relevance of education). Table 2 below shows the mean score for each country:

Table 2: Summed Overall Score PALS Sceptism about School and Work Scale (Higher score=more sceptism) by country

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

Table 2 demonstrates that out of each country, students from Poland are the most sceptical about the links of education to work and future success. Polish students are the 3rd highest group who wish to remain in full time education which shows that despite being the most sceptical about the relevance of education to getting a job, 83% of students wanted to remain in full time education after compulsory school in order to get as many qualifications as possible (62% of students want to achieve ISCED level 5 or 6 higher education). So although sceptical, Polish students still see getting an education as something they must achieve. This indicates that students who are quite sceptical about the links of education to work (economic capital) may find it to be relevant for other reasons (social, cultural, symbolic) and may embrace a more subjective interpretation of the relevance of education. Students in Slovenia for example are 4th most sceptical group regarding the links between work and education. Case study data demonstrated that they view education extremely relevant for other reasons, such as social aspects of gaining communicative competence and life skills, and for upward social mobility (Bledowski & Fedorczyk, 2012). German students fall in behind Slovene students in their levels of scepticism. They too stressed that education was more than just for economic capital, emphasising cultural and social capital as well; it helped them to become full rounded citizens who could contribute to their society (Boron et al., 2012). The UK is one of the least sceptical countries in regards to education and its links to the labour market, and indeed this is highlighted in case study data (Biggart & McDowell, 2012), where every student interviewed stressed heavily the systematic interpretation of education for labour market entry, economic capital and material wealth (big house, lots of money).

France has the second highest scepticism level regarding the relevance of education, but unlike Polish students this is reflected in the proportion of students who wish to remain in full time education (56%) with 35% wanting to enter into an apprenticeship or a full time job on leaving compulsory education. This demonstrates that motivation to remain on a lifelong learning trajectory can diminish at a very early stage if students do not assign much importance to the relevance of education; their motivation to remain in schooling will ebb. This may be a result of the education system structure. Students are stratified into certain school types and this forms the basis of what they will do in the future- academic or vocational pathways (Allmendinger, 1989). The Netherlands, who also share this educational system classification, have the lowest number of students who wish to remain in full time education (41%) with 52% wanting to enter into the world of work/training directly after lower secondary school, and are the third highest country sceptical about links of relevance of education to labour market entry (12.99 mean score). This provides evidence that education systems can directly affect the importance students assign to education and affect their motivation to remain in lifelong learning.

Italians have the lowest level of scepticism with a mean for 11.64. This may be a result of the age of the students in the Italian sample (13-14) as for them leaving school and getting a job etc. is much further away than the other students aged 15-16year old. They also have the highest group who wish to remain in full time education (88%) after compulsory schooling ends. This group however has the lowest proportion of students who want to go on to university (16%), so although many want to continue into upper secondary schooling, they intend to end their education there. Again this could be a result of the age of the respondents who may have been the least likely group to think ahead so far as to Higher education level (18years+).

To examine whether socio-economic, cultural and social capital matter for the student's perspective on why, for what reason and under what circumstances education is relevant for them, table 3 highlights students' reasoning for choosing a job. The results are discussed alongside findings from case study data (du Bois-Reymond, 2012).

Table 3: What would be main reason for choosing a job by country

	IT	FI	FR	DE	NL	PL	SI	UK	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Good income so have no money worries	32	29	42	35	43	48	32	40	38
Safe job with no risk of closing down/unemployment	20	7	6	24	4	10	18	12	13
Working with people you like	5	8	4	5	4	6	7	4	5
Doing important job which gives feeling of accomplishment	23	10	10	20	12	21	20	15	16
Doing job that interests me regardless of pay	10	30	33	8	29	9	13	24	19
Don't know	3	4	4	2	2	3	9	3	4
Other	6	14	*	5	6	2	0	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	779	775	694	791	786	741	725	728	6019

* Under 1%

Having a *good income so have no money worries* was the most popular choice for students in UK, Poland, France, and the Netherlands with over 40 % of the cohort in each country selecting this as the main reason they would choose a job. This may be a result of the welfare systems in the countries in which these educational systems are located. In the UK, public provision is residual in terms of providing a means-tested minimum for survival and rather low pension rates or unemployment benefits of short duration (Biggart et al., 2010). In France the State has largely withdrawn from the field of social policy. In parallel with the decentralisation reforms of the early 80s, the rise of local social policies and the development of social urban policy were related both with the rise of poverty and with the restructuring of the state (Mellottée et al., 2010). The welfare state in the *Netherlands* used to be classified as a social democratic regime, whereas it mixes elements from liberal, conservative-corporatist and social democratic welfare types (Koşar Altınyelken et al., 2010). Poland's welfare spending is lower than in any other EU member state; according to Eurostat Poland spends as little as 0.8% of GDP on welfare and family benefits, around a third of the EU average (Błaszczuk et al., 2010). So getting a job where money is good and one can provide for oneself is important in these countries as welfare provision is low and often unequal. Therefore economic capital is important to these students. They also embrace a more systematic view of the point of education- to get a good job- which is discussed in further detail below utilising case study data (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altınyelken, 2012).

Getting a good job for a good income was not as important in Germany (35%), Italy and Slovenia (32%), and Finland (29%). *Doing an interesting job* is next highest for students in Germany, UK, Finland and France. These subjective interpretations were evident in case study data; students not only see education as a gateway into a job, but into a job that they enjoy, which means something to them. For example German students stressed the social capital of education; it made them a better citizen who contributed to their society (Boron et al., 2012).

We will now further examine the extent that socio-economic, cultural and social resources matter from the student's perspective on why, for what and under which circumstances education is relevant for them, by considering the qualitative data which provides more in-depth information to account for the quantitative findings discussed above. Examining students' perspectives as to why they felt education was, or was not, important highlighted some differences between those with a subjective interpretation and those with a systematic interpretation. Students' perspectives in the *UK* concerning the relevance of education revolves around mainly economic capital. Students reported a strong systematic interpretation of school; that education was important in order to obtain qualifications for labour market entry, linking relevance of education strongly to finding a job and economic gain. The economic task of education is seen as key to preparing children and young people for their future life; moreover a happy and successful life gained through financial success and material wealth (Biggart & McDowell, 2012). Therefore, for students in the *UK*, education is key to financial success, they are motivated by material goods (nice house, big car, holidays, nice clothes), with over 40% of *UK* students wanting a job with a good income (McDowell et al., 2012).

For *UK* students living in disadvantaged areas, education also had a personal social aspect and offered the potential of upward social mobility. They stressed that it was relevant in terms of increasing their academic abilities; to improve their low self-esteem by increasing the likelihood of future education pathways. They were given the self-belief that they could carry on to future life and further education. Social aspects of education here become relevant as students see that having a good education can differentiate them from the non-educated delinquents (NEDS) who they claim did not seem to understand the relevance of education nor want to work later in life. This separates them from the 'others' in their area who do not understand the point of education nor want to contribute to society economically or socially so find no motivation to continue after compulsory schooling ends. Social aspects mentioned also include building relationships with peers; developing friendships and enhancing communicative competence and networking skills, all noteworthy skills important for later life. This may be a direct result of the area where these students lived, areas where the community was built upon very dense social networks. Many people never move out of these areas and often there are two or even three generations of the same family living in very close proximity to each other. This is often a barrier to these students who are reluctant to leave their community to go further afield for education or work. Work opportunities have become increasingly limited in these areas and as these students attach economic gain and labour market entry to the relevance of education, more students are beginning to see education as a 'waste of time' as even if they work hard, they will not be able to get a job with their qualifications (Biggart & McDowell, 2012).

In *Finland*, we see the same ideological viewpoint behind the purpose of education amongst the students. Education in lower secondary is important in order to achieve grades good enough to access upper secondary level. Education seems to be regarded as relevant for students in order to enable certain goals in life. A primary goal seems to be access to upper secondary education; without a leaving certificate from lower secondary one cannot get access to upper secondary. A subsequent

goal is acquiring a job, but education is important to get a profession of one's choice. It is important to find the right field in education after comprehensive school, so one can study what one wants (in comprehensive schools all students study the same curricula) and then get a profession that one wants (Salovaara et al., 2012). Recurrent here is the notion that education opens access to a wide range of schools for upper secondary level, which in turn provides more opportunities when entering the labour market. Therefore, labour market entry is a direct result of education, but more specifically entry into a profession that one has chosen. Education allows this choice. In support of these opinions, the Finnish students had the second highest proportion of students who *wanted a job that would interest them regardless of pay* (30%). Vocational education is a relief for many students who are tired of "reading" as in vocational education they get to *do something* (more practical learning and less theoretical). Students applying for vocational education might also be excited when they get to specialize in something they like to do (e.g. work with cars, cooking, etc.). So although the economic aspect of education is clearly important to the students, getting a job to finance one's life is not enough. Students seem very intent of get a jobs that they choose, that they want to do, and education is seen as key to achieving this. This links with notion of improving life quality- it is not merely about getting material goods via a job like, for example, the UK students, but more about job satisfaction, something one enjoys.

For *Italian* students, education in lower secondary is important as a foundation in order to achieve good grades at upper secondary. Similar to Finland, students also have a general vision about the importance of education related mostly with the "capacity of choosing" in life (Barberis et al., 2012). Education provides access to upper secondary school and then leads to a good job. Not only a good job, but one the student wants. Indeed 23% of Italian students claimed they wanted an *important job that gave them a feeling of accomplishment*, and 10% wanted a job *that interested them regardless of pay*. However, they are more wary about their future due to the current economic climate. So again the economic systematic relevance of education is important to students in terms of access to the labour market. This is reflected by 20% of students wanting a job that is secure with little risk of unemployment (table 2.4). Although a small minority overall, students in Italy alongside Finland and UK make up the largest group of students who want to work within lower sales and service positions, many of which do not require further schooling past compulsory school or upper secondary level. This is also reflected in the large number of students who do not want to attend University (84%) although this may be a result of the participants' age (13-14years).

In *Germany* students stressed the economic and social aspects of the relevance of education. For the case study participants, education would allow them to earn money, increase their confidence in their abilities, and have the possibility of contributing and participating to their society (Boron et al., 2012). Education provided motivation to move on in life. However, some students do not always grasp the relevance of some specific subjects. Despite understanding the importance of education, they do not always understand why they have to learn certain subjects (e.g. science) if they will never be used outside of school. This concerned them because they worry that teachers do not really know about

their future aspirations. This attitude is also evident in the UK students, many of whom reported that they dislike Maths and did not want to study it past GCSE level (Biggart & McDowell, 2012). They did not grasp that a basic understanding of Maths is of critical importance to any future labour market entry. This suggests that these students do see relevance of education as a whole, but only pay attention to the subjects they enjoy.

As German students were from disadvantaged areas, and therefore future pathways for them centre heavily, if not solely, on vocational subjects and training courses (Boron et al., 2012). They acknowledged that the practical experience acquired in internships and in occupational orientation in school is key to finding and keeping a training place/employment. Therefore their motivation in regards to carrying on with education centres heavily on education system typology and the schools that these students are placed in after primary school. While some students from disadvantaged areas did mention attending University as a potential pathway (e.g. UK), students in Germany, as a result of their stratified system, have been placed on the pathway to vocational work, which means that their motivation to carry on past compulsory education is perhaps limited or quashed. Students are also critical about the way occupational orientation is done in their school, reporting that there are too many guidance offers but conflicting advice/information between them. Consequently, even if they generally think that graduation and certificates (no matter the marks) are highly relevant, they have some doubts about the quality of support they get at their school that exemplifies the relevance of (this type of) education.

Social aspects of education were also highlighted by the German students. Students saw schooling as a way to gain and improve self confidence in themselves, but also as a facilitator of social skills including good manners and being a responsible citizen. Again this was linked to career expectations, with these skills perceived as necessary for labour market entry alongside qualifications. Education was seen as a tool to impart social life skills that enable integration in society and prevent social exclusion. Through, providing skills and competences that would enable them to find and complete a training place/vocational education. There is a social or systemic dimension that focuses on the formal relevance of educational attainment and there is a more individual or subjective dimension that stresses the non-formal relevance in terms of key competences. Students seem to interpret education as systematic – *to get a job*- but also offer subjective interpretations too – *to make me a well-rounded person who contributes to society*.

For students in *Slovenia*, education is seen to be highly valuable for both, economic, social and symbolic reasons. Education achieves social status as *you are nothing without education* (Razpotnik et al., 2012). Students see it as extremely relevant for their future life, with knowledge as a value for itself. From the perspective of the theory of social mobility, one's social class is not fixed for the whole life course and for Slovene students, education allows upward social mobility connected to occupation and having an education. Education is seen as a means to become economically independent, securing employment and offering better starting positions in the labour market. Achieving one's

desired educational level will lead to one attaining a good socio-economic position in future life. However students do stress, like Italian and UK students, they know that education is a basis, but not a guarantee, for secure employment due to the current economic climate.

Similar to Italian and Finnish students, Slovenia students stress that getting a good job, moreover one that has been chosen and one wants to do, leads to a happy future life. To be able to choose one's future career is of importance to this happy future life which many students desire, and achieving the necessary educational level is key for students' multiple life chances. Furthermore, subjective interpretations were stressed- enjoying your work; '*work is more than just earning money*'. This is reflected by 20% of students choosing a job that *gives a feeling of accomplishment* and 13% a job that interests *them regardless of salary* (table 2.4 in McDowell et al., 2012). Finally, the social aspects of education are highlighted. School is also to teach students how to generally live their everyday life, from communicative skills, to mathematics and learning Slovene and English, all skills that will be needed to aid students in their everyday life as well as in future education/work transitions.

Students in the *Netherlands* also report the same themes regarding why they see education as relevant- for economic capital. Labour market entry, attaining a good job, all increase young people's chances of employment, which in turn increase the future chances they have in life. Attaining their diploma is an absolute necessity in life otherwise they won't succeed. Students have high aspirations and ambitions, especially female Turkish students. Education is a means to climb the social ladder and for women this allows them to divert from the traditional roads of motherhood and housewife into the world of work (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012). Indeed, the majority of students aimed at EsEC level 1, 2, and 3 jobs (Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals/ lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians/ Intermediate occupations). Students in the Netherlands and Slovenia have the highest proportion of students who wish to work in managerial/professional positions which would require further or higher educational study. From the perspective of the *theory of social mobility* education offers a chance to move up the social hierarchy (Schüren, 1989).

For students in France, education is seen as a more practical tool. Similar to Slovene, where students mention language and maths as a set of everyday skills that are necessary, students in France see knowledge as practical skills (for example, French is useful to speak with people or to write emails. Mathematics is necessary to count). Practical uses of knowledge which limit education to a utilitarian perspective limited its perceived usefulness, lowering student motivation for lifelong learning (Jahnich et al., 2012a). Interestingly, French students were second in the PALS survey, making them the second most sceptical group regarding the importance of education in relation to work amongst the 8 countries.

2.1.1 Social conditions as influences on student perspectives

To examine the influence of parental/guardian influence on student's future transition plans and their attitudes to further education and work, this section examines parent/guardians education levels and occupations and the effect it may have on their children's motivation to stay on in school or decide on labour market entry. Parents' ESeC (Socio-economic class based on ISCO) and ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) results are addressed as independent variables that could potentially influence students' future life trajectories. This section examines if parents educational levels have an effect on their children's educational aspirations.

Anova tests on PALS scores as a dependent variable and parent ESeC level as an independent variable did not reveal any significant difference across the socio-economic categories. Furthermore, tests on parent ISCED levels and student PAL scores showed no significant association between the two variables. Therefore parents' education and socio-economic level was not a significant influence on how sceptical students were toward the relevance of education in their future life. However, parents' education level and job type did influence students' future plans of what they wanted to do with their future regarding future job and level of education they desired to achieve:

Table 4. Student wants to go onto HE by Highest ISCED of either mother or father

	Highest ISCED of either mother or father*								Total % (N)
	% within no qualifications	% within ISCED 2	% within ISCED 3	% within ISCED 4	% within ISCED 5	% within ISCED 6	other	don't know	
does not want to go to University	64	69	56	47	26	40	49	62	50
wants to go to university	36	31	44	53	74	60	51	38	50
Total N	375	669	1570	327	1413	302	146	725	5527

*P.value = <.001, Cramer's V .308

Table 4 demonstrates a significant association between parent's educational level and whether their child wants to continue on past compulsory education and go on to University to increase their education levels. A pattern emerges revealing that an increase in parental education in general increases the educational aspirations of their children. For example 69% of students with parents with ISCED level 2 do not want to go on to University, compared to 26% of students whose parents have ISCED level 5. Therefore students who have parents with higher levels of education (e.g. past compulsory schooling) are more likely to want to go onto further/higher education themselves, which could be a result of parental support, influence or pressure to do so. Parents' expectations for their children's life chances can have consequences for the educational decisions the students take.

Table 5 below illustrates the results for parent ESeC (socio-economic class) and students' educational aspirations (ISCED):

Table 5: Student ISCED aspirations by Highest ESeC Socio-economic class of either mother or father

Student ISCED aspirations	Highest ESeC Socio-economic class of either mother or father *							Total % (N)
	% within 1 Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals	% within 2 Lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians	% within 3 Intermediate occupations	% within 4/5 Small employers and self-employed (agriculture and non)	% within 6/7 Lower sales and service	% within 8 Lower technical	% within 9 Routine	
ISCED 2	.5	1	2	.5	2	5	6	2
ISCED 3	27	33	37	39	51	59	47	40
ISCED 4	7	8	10	8	8	8	9	8
ISCED 5	49	46	40	43	31	22	31	39
ISCED 6	16	12	10	8	6	4	7	10
Total N	1113	1038	926	370	817	522	581	5367

* *p.value* = <.001, Cramer's V.117

Overall, we can see an association between parental socio-economic class and its influence on their child's future plans in regards to their higher/further education decisions (relevance, life course). For students whose parents are within ESeC groups 7-9, their children mostly aim at ISCED level 3 and 5 (undergraduate level). Those with parents in higher level socio-economic jobs aim at ISCED level 5 and above. Overall, very few students are aiming at ISCED level 4, which denotes the more vocational pathways of study. Very few students with parents at the lowest end of the ESeC scale aim at ISCED 6 (PhD level).

Table 6 below shows students' career aspirations in relation to their parents' socio-economic class based on their occupation within each country for the three most common class levels based on occupation (1,2 and 7).

Table 6: Students career aspirations in relation to parents' socio-economic class

		Country							
Highest ESeC Socio-economic class of either mother or father	ESeC students aspired job	1 Italy	2 Finland	3 France	4 Germany	5 Netherlands	6 Poland	7 Slovenia	8 United Kingdom
1 Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals	1 Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals % within country	54%	16%	41%	46%	39%	36%	45%	43%
	2 Lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians % within country	17%	19%	14%	15%	30%	19%	21%	17%
	7 Lower sales and service % within country	4%	6%	8%	3%	3%	8%	1%	3%
2 Lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians	1 Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals	40%	23%	37%	27%	25%	25%	35%	37%
	2 Lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians	18%	20%	15%	20%	35%	27%	30%	27%
	7 Lower sales and service	7%	30%	8%	10%	9%	6%	3%	13%
7 Lower sales and service	1 Large employers, higher mgrs/professionals	25%	20%	26%	14%	38%	19%	28%	18%
	2 Lower mgrs/professionals, higher supervisory/technicians	22%	22%	19%	20%	41%	27%	22%	21%
	7 Lower sales and service	12%	16%	15%	20%	5%	5%	7%	16%

Here we can see a link between parents ESeC socio-economic level and the type of job their children's aspire to in the future. Overall students seem to want to follow in their parents' footsteps in terms of occupation, but class 1 type jobs are the most popular in the majority of countries even when parents hold lower sales and service positions. This indicates that within each country (with the exception of Finland) students are aspiring to get occupations in higher level or lower level management positions; jobs which all require further and higher education. Whether or not students actually think they can get such jobs varies across each country. Italian students appear to be the most confident in regards to getting their desired job, and students from Finland the least confident, even though this group of students have less ambitious type of jobs in mind (lower sales and service). Although there is some effect of parental occupation group on students' aspirations, many aim higher than the jobs their parents actually hold. This could be a result of parental support, or pressure, encouraging children to achieve the best job they can. Motivation behind getting one's education and a good job as result may be as a means for upward social mobility.

Table 7: Levels of confidence student has in regards to getting desired job

	IT	FI	FR	DE	NL	PL	SI	UK	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	41	10	11	22	22	20	19	21	21
Confident	45	47	52	47	51	56	47	53	50
Unconfident	12	38	31	27	22	22	31	22	26
Very unconfident	2	5	5	3	5	2	3	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	768	762	758	789	781	745	786	782	6171

2.1.2 Gender – what influence can it have on attitudes to education?

Results revealed that males were significantly more sceptical about the relevance of education than females illustrating that the young women in the GOETE study find education more essential for their future success than young men (Hodgson, 2008). For many girls their prolonged education can be a reflection of fewer opportunities for them as women in the labour market and that more education may widen this access (access, relevance, life course). Results revealed that males were significantly more sceptical about the relevance of education than females:

Table 8: PALS mean scores by sex

	Male	Female	Total (N)
PALS total scores (mean)*	12.82	12.50	12.66 (6074)

*Sig. 006

This supports both school assessment and qualitative research that suggests that young women find education more relevant for future success than young men (Hodgson, 2008). This may be a result of the desire women have to climb the ladder- to gain social status and have independence and move away from just being housewives and mothers. Many desire to work and therefore know they must do well in school in order to achieve this (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011). Gender also has an effect not only on attitudes to education in terms of transitions into labour market areas. For many girls their prolonged education can be a reflection of fewer opportunities for them as women in the labour market and that more education may widen this access (access, relevance, life course). When asked what they think they will be doing after compulsory education, 75% of females answered “remain in full time education” in comparison to 67% of the male cohort. Women wanted to achieve higher education levels than the young men (McDowell et al., 2012). This illustrates how relevance is constructed according to different social positions. From the perspective of the *theory of social mobility*, belonging to a social class is not fixed for the whole life course – she or he is able to move up or down in the social hierarchy (Schüren, 1989). Today, this kind of vertical mobility is strongly connected to occupational changes and upward social mobility and status can be achieved through one’s occupation.

2.1.3 Relevance of education for students in relation to school

This section investigates students' views on the relevance of their education in relation to the schools to which they have had and will have access to, and how the education system may limit or alter future life course perspectives or affect students' feelings toward the relevance of their education.

The typology of transition regimens (Allmendinger, 1989) allows us to consider the way in which education systems are organised and how this impacts on young people and other actors' views and experiences of the relevance of education. The classification of standardised/stratified education systems was used as an analytical tool in other work packages of the project as well which allows the involved countries to be clustered into relatively even groups, so that more than one country was represented by each educational typology. This allows comparison between the classifications and will be addressed in this section.

Table 9: GOETE EU sample by education (taken from Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011):

	Standardised	Low	High
Stratification			
Low		UK, Italy, Poland	Finland, Slovenia
High			France, Germany, Netherlands

The Allmendinger classification of education systems as noted in table 9 overall was found to have a significant effect on students' attitudes to further education and some key findings are discussed here. Results from PALS indicate that students in Allmendinger low stratified/low standardised groups and high stratified/high standardised group are more sceptical about the relevance of education than those in low stratified/high standardised educational systems:

Table 10: PALS mean scores by education system typology (Allmendinger)

	<i>Low stratified/low standardised</i>	<i>Low stratified/high standardised</i>	<i>High stratified/high standardised</i>	<i>Total (N)</i>
PALS total scores (mean)*	12.83	12.47	12.85	12.75 (6123)

* $f = 5.836$, $sig = .003$

The differences between the PALS scores of students in each group are significant. Students from low stratification and high standardised education systems on average are less sceptical about the relevance of education when compared to the other two groups even when other factors are controlled (gender, school context, age). Whilst students in the low stratified/low standardised

education systems were most likely to say they wished to remain in education they were also most sceptical in terms of education being relevant for their future career. While this at first may seem contradictory it may be a reflection of local labour market opportunities. They know it will be important to remain at school to get a good job, but they are pessimistic whether or not education will pay off in the long run. In contrast, students within highly stratified highly standardised systems had the lowest level of people wanting to remain at school and, despite the close connections between education and the labour market within these systems, they were also more sceptical about the future relevance of education, at least in comparison to students in low stratified and high standardised systems. Student in the low stratified and high standardised systems had a high-level of young people wanting to remain at school and were least sceptical about the future relevance of education to their careers (McDowell et al., 2012).

The main reasons why students' would choose a particular job differed according to education system. Students in low stratified and high standardised education systems were less concerned about income, chosen by 30 per cent compared to two-fifths among students in the other two groups. Whilst nearly a quarter said their main reason was job satisfaction regardless of pay, the low stratified/low standardised and high stratified/high standardised systems, 22% and 23% respectively, this was a less common reason among those in the low stratified and low standardised systems.

School context was 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 backgrounds did not want to go to university over half of those (61%) from affluent schools did, with the average schools falling somewhere in-between. At the European level there is a relative balance between students in vocational and general education, nevertheless high variations exist between individual countries (McDowell et al., 2012). In some countries (Germany, UK, Netherlands) vocational education still has low status and academic pathways are seen to be more prestigious, especially amongst more affluent families. This 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 (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012).

The highest proportion of students wished to remain in some form of full-time education. 81% of students in the low stratified/low standardised cohort thought they would remain in full time education. This can be compared to 77 per cent of students in low stratified/high standardised group, and only 58% of students in high stratified/high standardised group who want to stay on in school. These differences may be explained by the expectations these students have of their capabilities in relation to their school. This difference is significant, illustrating the way in which education systems may affect a student's future transitional plan. Education system may play a role in the future transition

expectations of the students, with gaining further academic education perhaps of less relevance in high stratified/high standardised education systems than others. Furthermore in highly stratified systems it is very difficult to go on to Higher Education if students start within vocational education (access).

This can also be seen in even farther transitions- what happens when students turn 18? We looked at whether the Allmendinger classification of systems could influence students wish to progress past compulsory schooling and onto further/higher education (ISCED 5 and 6). The largest cohort of students that do not want to attend higher education are Allmendinger's low stratified/low standardised groups who make up 44 per cent of the student cohort and do not wish to pursue higher education. Over half of the low stratified/high standardised group (Finland, Slovenia) and high stratified/high standardised cohort (Germany, Netherlands, France) want to go to University, compared to 42 per cent of the low stratified/low standardised⁵ cohort (Italy, UK, and Poland). Therefore, although students in low stratified/low standardised groups recognised that it was important to remain in school until the age of 18, they were less keen to progress onto higher education pathways after this.

Table 11: Students who want to go onto University by education system typology (Allmendinger)

by education system typology (Allmendinger)*				
	% within Low stratified/low standardised	% within Low stratified/high standardised	% within High stratified/high standardised ⁶	Total (N)
does not want to go to University	58	47	49	52
wants to go to university	42	53	51	48
Total (N)	(2299)	(1518)	(2348)	(6165)

*p.value= <.001; Cramer's V .093

Such aspiration to attend university, even in countries where vocational education is strong, may be explained by the job sectors students wish to enter, and the rising demand of employers for higher education levels from their employees. Since educational degrees are inflated, e.g. increasing numbers of people study at higher levels of education, students feel the need to study further in order to acquire higher degrees to compete better in the labour market (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012; McDowell et al., 2012).

The importance of general versus vocational education in upper secondary education (e.g. the primary destinations after the end of lower secondary education) does not seem therefore to have a significant effect on actors' views of relevance of education. General education dominates in France, Poland and the UK while in the other countries vocational tracks are prevalent (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011). As expected, those who reside in countries where general/academic education are

⁵ Only 16% of Italian students wish to attend University so this may lower the average score for low/low group. IT score maybe a result of the age of the Italian GOETE respondents (13-14yrs old).

⁶ 72% of students in Netherlands wanted to attend University compared to DE 47% and FR 35%, so may have increased the high stratified/high standardised education typology average score.

prevalent, stress the importance of education. In countries where vocational tracks are prevalent, there was still some aspiration to proceed onto tertiary education alongside aspirations for labour market entry after compulsory schooling.

2.1.4 Summary

This section examined how education is *relevant* for the future lives of young people in the GOETE study. It considered how students evaluated the relevance of education for their future life course, and investigated their future transition plans in relation to this. It then addressed student attitudes to the relevance of education in general and for future life courses in and on their educational decisions in relation to their parent/guardians influence, educational system and gender. Key findings suggest that students across the EU have different ideas as to what they will do with their current level of education and what it can do for them at this stage in their lives due to their education system and the relevance they assign to it in their context. This provides evidence that education system can directly affect the importance students assign to education and affect their motivation to remain in lifelong learning.

Whether socio-economic, cultural and social capital mattered from the students' perspectives as to why they felt education was, or was not, important highlighted some differences between those with a subjective interpretation and those with a systematic interpretation. Getting a job where money is good and can provide for oneself is important in countries where welfare provision is quite low and often unequal. Therefore economic capital is important to students in these countries. They also embrace a more systematic view of the point of education- to get a good job (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012). Students in all countries highlighted the perceived contradiction that a good education will lead to secure and attractive careers with the destinations of older peers in their communities who are either unemployed or have to compromise with underemployment (Colley et al., 2002; Walther et al., 2006; Machacek & Walther, 2008). This especially occurs in areas of disadvantage, where many of the students' peers drop-out of school, or cannot find employment at the end of compulsory schooling. A concern of 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 motivation of students who have a more systematic interpretation of education- *'to help me a get a good job'*, and indeed many students stressed they weren't too sure about the point of education anymore as it didn't always led to getting a job. For these students, if labour market entry is the sole reason for gaining an education, these students may end up their educational pathway as soon as they are legally allowed.

Students' perceptions of the relevance of education are also hampered by their parental role models. In such areas of high deprivation, unemployment levels are high, with many parents out of work claiming benefits. Paired with their own lack of education, some students feel that education and work are a waste of time as the government can provide. Others however are more determined to better

themselves by getting a good job (defined by material wealth) and report they are strongly encouraged by their parents, who want them to do better for themselves than they ever did (upward social mobility and symbolic capital status). Motivation to continue in formal education and achieve a good job, as a result, may be found in an aspiration for upward social mobility.

School context was a good predictor of educational aspirations, with students in disadvantaged schools much less likely to aspire to a university education. At the European level there is a relative balance between students in vocational and general education, nevertheless high variations exist between individual countries (McDowell et al., 2012). In some countries (Germany, UK, Netherlands, Slovenia and France) vocational education still has low status and academic pathways are seen to be more prestigious, especially amongst more affluent families. This 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 (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012).

2.2 Parents

The aim of this section is to analyse the relevance of education from the perspective of parents. It examines the link between the relevance of education perceived and expressed by parents and the influence they believe education has on the future educational trajectories and life course of their children. This link will be addressed by examining the parental attitudes and underlying (systemic and subjective) reasons and factors behind the relevance of education, their educational aspirations for their children as well as the level of scepticism they express in terms of the relevancy of education with regards to future work possibilities. Data will also be examined through the selected socio-demographic indicators in order to account for the possible structural differences between distinctive groups of parents or the potential influence of the reproduction of economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983) as well as through Allmendinger's (1989) typology of educational systems.

These questions are posed within a specific societal context. Namely, in recent decades modern societies have successfully shifted the burden and responsibility for its reproduction to the shoulders of individuals and their families (Bauman, 2001; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Furthermore, education alone is no longer a guarantee for later career possibilities or secure employment (Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006). This is why the families and the support they offer to students (along with their economic, social and cultural capital), are becoming increasingly more important and crucial, not only for the educational transitions and the planning of the life course of the students, but also for their general perception about the relevance of education in their lives (Scabini et al., 2006; Toguchi & Bengston, 2009). Moreover, along with these changes, the relationship between parents and children is also

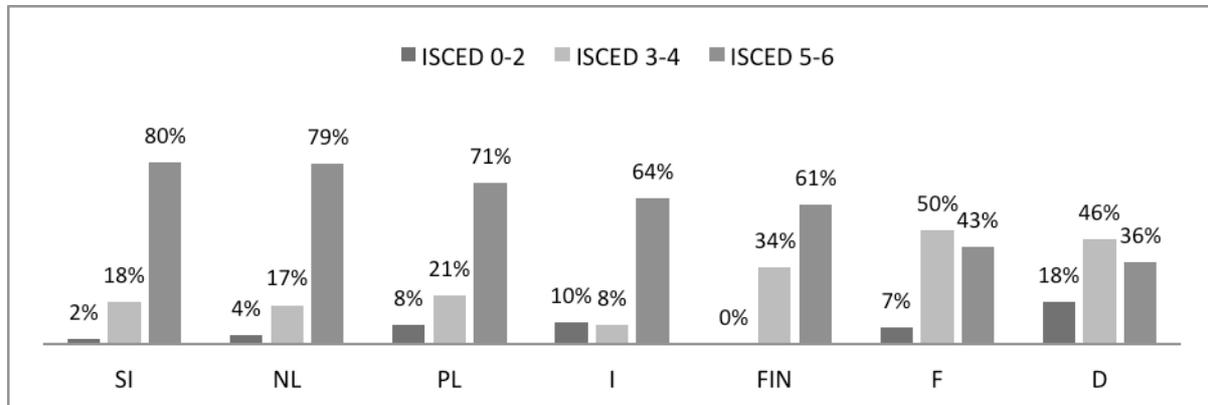
changing; it is now less focused on the development of independent children (from their parents), but more on the restructuring of the relationship in a way which simultaneously allows for young adults autonomy and continued parental support, which is needed under new external objective circumstances (Featherstone, 2004; Ule, 2004). Emotional and instrumental support can be important at times of crisis, change or aging. Therefore, precisely because families are so much more important than other groups and experts for the educational coping and well-being of students, the reproduction of social (educational) and economic disadvantage is even more likely (Arendell, 1997).

We will address parental accounts of relevance of education in three sections: first we will explore parental educational aspirations and their views on the children's near future (their wishes compared to actual future options of their children), then we will proceed by close examination of the reasons parents give for the relevance of education and finally, we will address parental worries about their children's future that are related to education as well as perceived barriers to education.

2.2.1 Educational aspirations and future

Educational aspirations of parents⁷ provide a crucial insight into how they understand and regard the relevance of education. Figure 1 shows the highest levels of education that parents would like their children to achieve for each country:

Figure 1: What is the highest level of education that you would like your child to achieve (country*)?



*Sig. = <0.000, Cramer's V 0.366 (N = 3290)

Firstly, we can see that educational aspirations across the sample are very high as more than 60% of all parents would like their children to achieve a tertiary level of education. These unprecedented numbers are certainly very high, for example in Slovenia and the Netherlands they reach almost 80%, which indicates that (in parental view) university studies are becoming a sort of demand, a precondition or even hope for any kind of upward mobility, ensuring a good position in the labour market and in society in general. This could also reflect changing perceptions about knowledge.

⁷ Quantitative analysis of parental sample is gender biased as 81% of all respondents are female; UK is not in the sample. For more information see section 1.2 on Methodology.

Secondly, we can see that there are substantial differences between the countries, where aspirations for achieving a tertiary level of education are the highest in Slovenia and the Netherlands, while France and Germany are the only countries where majority of parents would like their child to achieve “only” secondary education. To try to understand the reasons for these differences, the following table shows educational aspirations according to socio-demographic indicators and education system.

Table 12: What is the highest level of education that you would like your child to achieve?

		ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6	NA, other	N
SCHOOL SAMPLE*	Disadvantaged	11%	36%	50%	3%	1.095
	Average	7%	26%	64%	3%	1.095
	Affluent	4%	21%	71%	4%	1.095
EU EDU CLASS. (Allmendinger)**	Low strat / Low stand	9%	15%	67%	9%	940
	Low strat / Hi stand	1%	26%	70%	3%	938
	Hi strat / Hi stand	10%	38%	53%	0%	1.411
Education Mother***	Basic	14%	42%	42%	2%	584
	Secondary	5%	35%	57%	3%	1.453
	Tertiary	2%	12%	81%	4%	1.029
	NA,other	25%	17%	56%	2%	223
Total		7%	28%	62%	3%	3.290

*Sig. =<0.000, Cramer's V 0.170

**Sig. =<0.000, Cramer's V 0.414

*** Sig. =<0.000, Cramer's V 0.274

Socio-demographic analysis reveals highly distinctive patterns as parents with more socio-economic and cultural capital express considerably higher educational aspirations. The differences between these groups of parents are very substantial, for example, 81% of parents with tertiary education and “only” 42% of parents with basic education would like their children to achieve tertiary education.

Such vast differences in educational aspirations are certainly not innocent. On the one hand they are the reflection of not only the perceived relevance of education in terms of different social or cultural capital of families. On the other had that reflects issues around access to education, that is the different educational possibilities and opportunities that are available to the different families in contemporary society and educational systems. These vast differences in aspiration thus point towards, and confirm, Bourdieu’s thesis on the social reproduction of capitals, e.g. the reproduction of educational inequalities, which then leads to the overall reproduction of socio-economic inequalities.

In terms of parental educational aspirations Allmendinger’s typology of educational systems proves to be statistically significant and the relationship between aspirations and the typology is strong. It shows that educational aspirations are, overall, highest in countries with low stratification and high standardization of their national educational systems, (Slovenia and Finland), where aspirations for achieving tertiary education are not only high but are combined with the lowest proportions of parents who would like their child to finish education after compulsory education. On the other hand the overall aspirations are the lowest in countries where both the stratification and standardization are

high (France and Germany). In Germany 64% of parents would be satisfied with their child achieving only a secondary level of education, in France this accounts for 57% of parents, while this proportion is considerably lower in all other countries. Again, these results are certainly also a reflection of access to education: in countries, where the educational system is more differentiated and stratified, some educational routes are not available to some students (those in lower tracks), which is why they are 'beyond' expectations, that is, are not necessarily an indication of lower aspirations in general. Nevertheless, the Netherlands (high stratification / high standardization) is an exception in this, since it shows the second highest educational aspirations among all countries.

Parental views about relevance of education are reflected also in the parental wishes and hopes for their children's near future. In order to gain a general idea of the level of importance parents place on education they were asked about their wishes and expectations regarding children's immediate future. The following table presents the difference between what parents wish or hope that the child would do after finishing compulsory education and what they think they will actually do.

Table 13: Parental wishes and expectations about their children's immediate future after compulsory education (What would you MOST LIKE your child to do after compulsory education? and What do you think your child will ACTUALLY do after compulsory education?)

		Full education		Job / Work placement / Apprenticeship		Family / Parent / Other	
		MOST LIKE	ACTUALLY	MOST LIKE	ACTUALLY	MOST LIKE	ACTUALLY
SCHOOL SAMPLE*	Disadvantaged	85%	77%	15%	21%	1%	3%
	Average	89%	85%	10%	13%	1%	2%
	Affluent	95%	92%	4%	7%	1%	0%
EU EDU CLASS.** (Allmendinger)	Low strat / low stand	92%	87%	8%	12%	1%	1%
	Low strat / hi stand	95%	93%	4%	6%	1%	1%
	Hi strat / hi stand	85%	78%	14%	20%	1%	2%
Education Mother***	Basic	78%	72%	22%	26%	0%	3%
	Secondary	91%	85%	8%	14%	1%	1%
	Tertiary	95%	94%	3%	5%	2%	1%
	NA, other	89%	76%	9%	21%	2%	3%
Total		90%	85%	9%	14%	1%	2%

MOST LIKE: *Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.120; **Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.130; ***Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.140 (N = 3223)
ACTUALLY: *Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.140; **Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.171; *** Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.143 (N = 3222)

In the overall sample a great majority of parents, that is 90%, stated they would most like their child to continue with education after finishing compulsory education. This fact, on the one hand, seems to confirm the importance parents place in the education of their children. On the other hand, aspirations could also be understood in terms of 'normalcy', that is, post compulsory education in European societies is regarded and accepted as the 'norm'. Thus, less than 10% of all parents would most like their child to begin with any form of work, and only 1% would like their child to become a parent, look after a family or stay at home.

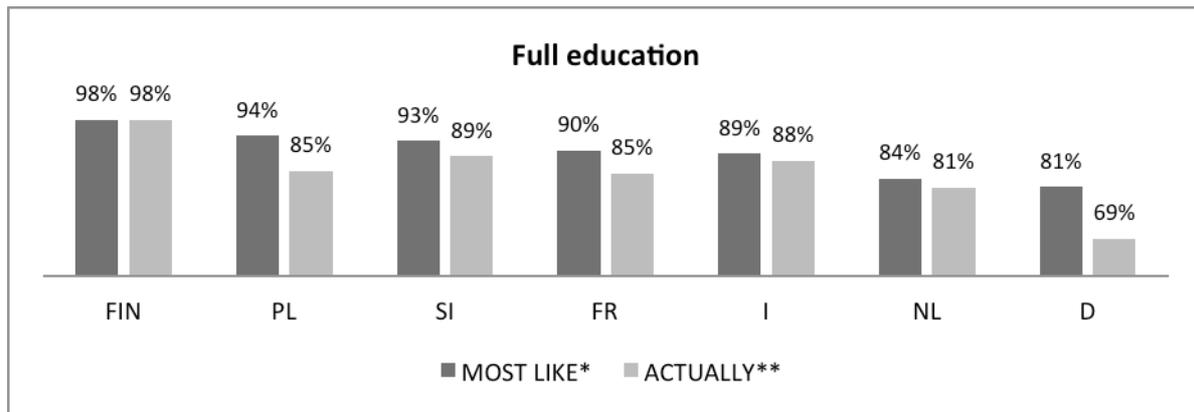
However, a closer socio-demographic analysis reveals statistically significant differences across different groups of parents. These differences are substantial both across the desired and expected future status of their children; this means not only that the actual future opportunities are strongly subject to social, economic and cultural capital of families, but also that the same trends equally apply to the educational aspirations and hopes of families. For example, the difference between least educated and most educated parents as regards to the proportion of students who will most likely engage in work after compulsory education is very telling and outstanding, 21 percentage points. That is, more than a quarter of all students whose mothers are only basically educated, will most likely have to start working at the end of compulsory education, while only 5% of students whose mothers have a tertiary education will have to do the same.

Moreover, the differences between desired and expected future statuses are the smallest in families with the highest levels of capitals, which also signifies these families have the necessary resources to enable their children the most desired future educational and life path, which speaks against the often advocated rationale that educational inequalities are the results of differences in children's' abilities and efforts. As illustrated in the table above, it appears to be quite the opposite, that educational choices and opportunities are often the reflection of the socio-economic status and capital of the families and to some extent, also the result of the differences in the educational systems (as shown by statistically significant differences in Allmendinger's typology in the table above).

According to Allmendinger's typology, students in Finland and Slovenia (countries with low stratification and high standardization) are significantly more likely to remain in full time education and conversely, least likely to start working. For example, the difference between this group and the group where both standardization and stratification are high (France, Germany, the Netherlands), is remarkable (14 percentage points) in terms of the proportion of students who will most likely engage in work after compulsory education.

Furthermore, country level data (two figures below) shows significant differences. Finland stands out, as 98% of parents would like their child to continue with education, followed by Poland (94%) and Slovenia (93%). Germany (81%) and the Netherlands (84%) are the countries with the lowest proportions of parents who would like their child to remain in education. Moreover, Finland is a remarkable case, as there is no difference between the most desired and expected or most probable future status of children, which suggests that in Finland further education is most (equally) accessible to the different socio-economic groups of population.

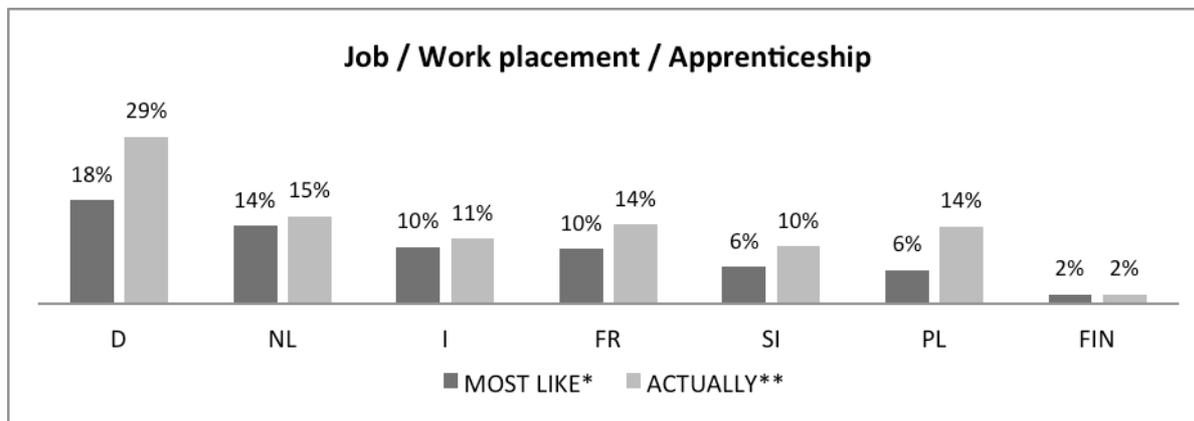
Figure 2: Proportions of parents, who would most like their child to remain in full education and proportions of parents, who think their child will actually remain in full education (country*)



*Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.134 (N = 3223)

**Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.155 (N = 3222)

Figure 3: Proportions of parents, who would most like their child to start working⁸ and proportions of parents, who think their child will actually start working (country)



*Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.134 (N = 3223)

**Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.155 (N = 3222)

Figure 3 above shows the proportions of parents, who wish or expect their children to begin working. Germany stands out, both in terms of proportion of parents who wish and expect their children to start working. Especially striking is the difference between the desired and most probable working status, which shows that almost a third of all sampled parents in Germany expect their children will most probably enter different kinds of work, while only 18% parents would most like that. This data, on the one hand, reflects a highly stratified and relatively impermeable educational system and corresponding employment opportunities in Germany, while on the other hand reflecting a more specific vocational or professional orientation which starts at an early age (for example, in contrast to Slovenian educational system, where all surveyed parents' children attended general primary and lower secondary education with no vocational orientation yet).

⁸ Three categories are merged in the notion of "start working": full time job, work placement and apprenticeship. These three categories have quite different meanings and interpretations in each country.

Finnish surveyed parents are on the opposite side of the spectrum, where only 2% of parents wish and expect their children to start working after finishing compulsory education. This again confirms that the Finnish educational system, compared to other sampled countries, is widely accessible to all groups of the population.

2.2.2 Reasons for the relevance of education

Despite considerable differences between the countries and between families with different socio-economic-cultural capital, educational aspirations across the sample are nevertheless very high. In order to grasp why parents consider education so important, we have to explore what the parental reasons behind educational aspirations.

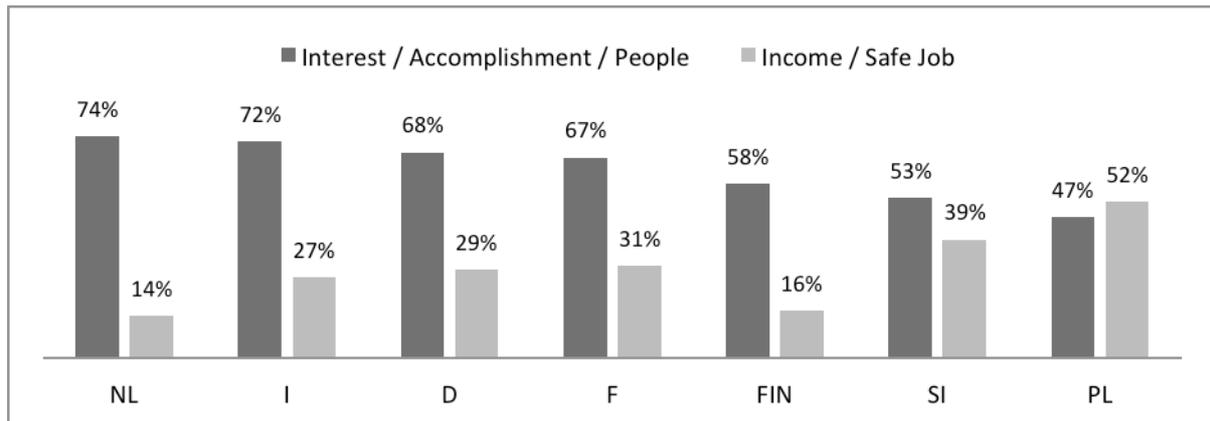
Following the quantitative data, which consists of five distinctive reasons or interpretations (besides the category *Don't know / Other*) why parents want their child to achieve, we can cluster these reasons into two umbrella categories:

- Subjective / individual reasons “Doing an important job which gives feelings of accomplishment”; “Doing a job that interests them regardless of pay”; “Working with people they like”;
- Objective / systemic / instrumental reasons (coloured blue): “Good income so you have no money worries”; “Secure job without any risk of closing down / unemployment”.

Whether education is predominately desired from subjective / individual reasons or from instrumental / systemic reasons is of key importance as it signifies or points to the different concepts and aspects of the relevance of education. For instance, is education relevant in terms of its functional or instrumental value as qualification for the labour market and reaching desired economic position? In terms of its subjective value, is it relevant as a development of the self, gaining knowledge, feelings of accomplishment, enjoying in the profession?

The results show that in the overall parental sample, subjective reasons of the meaning of education prevail (62,7%), among which “*Doing an important job which gives feelings of accomplishment*” is most important (32,8%), followed by “*Doing a job that interests them regardless of pay*” (26,1%) and “*Working with people they like*” (3,8%). On the other hand, 29,5% of all parents stated that objective reasons – good income (12,9%) and secure employment (16,6%) – are the most important reasons for their child attaining the desired level of education. 7,8% of parents in the sample have opted for “*Don't know or Other reasons*”. This data has to be further examined across different countries and socio-demographic indicators in order to determine if, and in what way, the subjective/systemic categories correspond to different socio-economic positions of families or different educational systems.

Figure 4: Parental reasons for child's educational level (country*)?

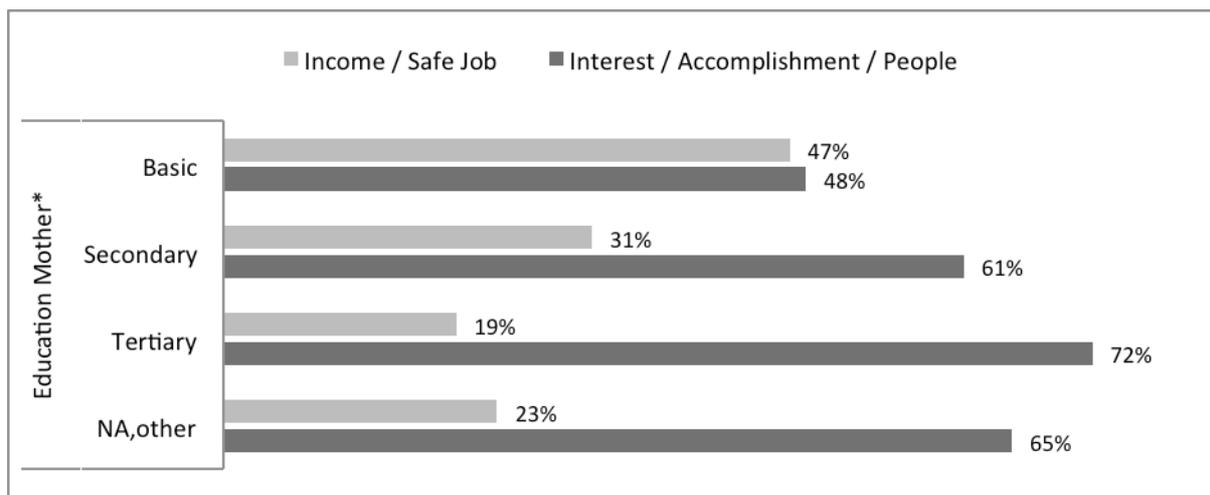


**Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.238 (N = 3154)

Country data analysis reveals significant differences between the countries, where subjective reasons for education are most important in the Netherlands (74%) and Italy (72%). Moreover, in the majority of countries subjective reasons prevail by a substantial margin to systemic reasons, with the exception of Slovenia, where this margin is smaller (14 percentage points) and Poland, which is the only sampled country where systemic reasons are more important than subjective reasons. However, data should be interpreted with care in the case of three countries, where the category "Don't know / Other", which is not included in the Figure above, is quite high. Those are Finland (26%), the Netherlands (12%) and Slovenia (8%); in other countries this category accounts for less than 3%.

In order to account for the socio-demographic influence on the perception of reasons for the relevance of education, the following figure shows the distributions of subjective and objective reasons according mother's education.

Figure 5: Parental reasons for child's educational level (education mother)



*Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.170 (N = 3155)

The figure illustrates statistically significant and considerable differences in the distributions of subjective and objective reasons across the parental educational levels. Subjective reasons strongly prevail for the most educated parents, while subjective and objective reasons are almost even for parents with the lowest level of education. These differences undoubtedly support the assumption of the social reproduction of educational inequalities, as families with most social, economic and/or cultural capital have the resources that allow their children to pursue subjective interests and choices while the range of possibilities of families with least capitals are considerably limited, which forces their children's choices and hopes to be more subjected to the external fluctuations of capital (current economic, cultural and social prospects) and demands in the labour market. Such influencing forces may have a critical effect on how key groups of actors view the role of education in today's society.

Drawing on the *qualitative analysis* (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012), parental reasons for the relevance of education were more extensively investigated in the *interviews with parents*, where national specifics emerged in more detail (see below). However, we have to keep in mind that interviews with parents have been conducted only in '*disadvantaged*' schools, while quantitative data were obtained in the general sample, including affluent, average and disadvantaged schools in all surveyed countries.

The interviews in all countries have pointed out a common parental opinion that education is important above all *for students themselves*, in some cases, for distinctive groups of students, such as Turkish female students in the Netherlands or socially disadvantaged students attending "Hauptschule" in Germany. Most distinct and clearly expressed reason for relevance of education was the importance in relation to student's future *employment*; both, in terms of systemic/instrumental perspective, such as the value of attaining a diploma for a job, getting a job at all, or enabling getting a "secure" job in an uncertain and changing labour market, or to ensure a good socio-economic position in society, as well as in terms of more subjective perspective, such as enjoying the occupation, feelings of accomplishment or a job in a fulfilling profession, where one can achieve self-realization.

Moreover, some common understandings of the relevance of education of especially socially disadvantaged families were found across the sample. For example, in many countries, these families understand education as a sort of a family project to upward social mobility (for example Turkish families in Germany and The Netherlands, some parents in France, the UK, Poland, Slovenia). These families regard education as the most promising strategy to reach a higher social and economic standing for their children. In relation to this understanding many regarded education as providing a *better life than they had*. This wish was explicitly stated by socially disadvantaged parents in UK, France, Poland and Slovenia; many of these parents left education too early for various reasons (financial reasons, family, migration, disliked it, education was not regarded as necessary, etc.) and/or were unemployed or working in poorly paid positions. What is most important in this respect is that some socially disadvantaged families hope or believe that education is the right and possible path out

of the reproduction of social inequalities, while some other families are much more sceptical about the link between education and labour market opportunities or well-being of children in general.

In addition to these reasons, some further national specifics that have emerged in the qualitative empirical work in disadvantaged schools are:

In *Finland* parents regard education relevant for students themselves in order to enable further educational goals in life and to get a job, since without education it is very hard or even impossible to get a job. Parents have also emphasized that today a good education is more important, since in the past it was possible to get a job also without qualifications, which is now almost impossible. Parents have also stated that education is important because it will allow students to get a job according to their interests, to do something, and to earn money. As one parent explained, in contemporary society:

“Money makes the world go round” (Parent 3, Finland)

Nevertheless, parents have also highlighted specific problems related to the rapid changes in today's society, where education is no longer a 'guarantee' for the future, for example:

“Sometimes it feels like the world is changing so fast so that the choices the students possibly make now are not valid any more at a later point. Nowadays you cannot trust the permanency of factory jobs or blue-colour jobs, not even universities. That it is really hard to predict what really in the end will work.” (Parent 2, Finland).

Some parents have also emphasised that children do not always understand the relevance of good education, as they sometimes want to start earning money fast.

In *French* interviews with parents especially instrumental reasons emerge, such as the practical usefulness of knowledge, attaining an educational degree which prepares students to have a (good) job and an opportunity for a child to climb up the social ladder. Even if some parents are aware that having a general knowledge is not necessarily related to work, they consider degrees as a main objective of education. Thus, in French disadvantaged schools there is a consensus regarding the utilitarian view of school (Jahnich et al., 2012a). Nevertheless, in terms of the general sample, which includes also average and affluent schools, quantitative data has showed that 67% of all sampled parents in France opted for subjective reasons (interest, accomplishment, people) as the main reasons for attaining a certain educational level, while objective or instrumental reasons, such as income and secure job accounted for 31% of reasons.

In *German* interviews with parents from disadvantaged schools, subjective and systemic/social reasons for the relevance of education became visible, but in general, the social/systemic reasons prevailed. Education is considered relevant in terms of career opportunities and the possibilities to participate in society, and to qualify students, that is, to provide skills and competences which will enable them to find and complete a training place/vocational education. In this context a case of socially disadvantaged students that attend “Hauptschule” was highlighted, as these students will not continue with further education but will have to find vocational training places and later a job:

“Well, he doesn’t have a wide range of future plans, now he has to take, what he can get” (Parent 3, Germany).

Education was also seen by parents as a place or the opportunity for the upbringing of children, in terms of improving self-confidence and learning good manners and to prevent violence and bullying (Boron et al., 2012). Quantitative analysis that included all school types showed that German parents have the lowest educational aspirations of the overall GOETE sample.

In the *Netherlands*, interviewed parents from disadvantaged schools highlighted education as relevant especially in terms of students’ future lives, both employment opportunities as well as life possibilities in general; in this respect they emphasized the absolute necessity of gaining a diploma. High educational aspirations were noted by Turkish families, who want their daughters to reach as high as possible and divert themselves from the traditional roles of mothers and housewives (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012). Quantitative data showed that in the GOETE sample Dutch parents most often (74%) stated subjective reasons for education (interest, accomplishment, people) as most important.

In *Italy*, parents from disadvantaged schools claimed education is especially important to get a job, to become a good citizen and to learn the language. For example, parents consider education as the main tool for promoting active citizenship, particularly in Catania, where it seems that school qualifications are related with being respected within the community. However, many parents express their scepticism regarding the connection of education and labour market, as job opportunities are still strongly socio-economically structured and influenced by social status and contextual variables (Barberis et al., 2012). For example, as reported by Catania teachers, some parents (especially those living in disadvantaged socio-economic conditions) are not interested in their children’s school experience. According to many of them, school is just a waste of time. Thus, teachers claim that several families (both Italian and foreign) do not support their children due to a lack of awareness about the importance of education. Overwhelmed with their own problems, families don't play a favourable role in students' educational paths (Barberis et al., 2012: 60). On the other hand, in terms of the quantitative analysis, 72% of all sampled Italian parents chose subjective reasons as most important reasons for the education.

Among subjective reasons parents in *Slovenia* most often mentioned that a good or proper education, which is related especially to child’s interests, can have a direct influence on child’s future in terms of a happy and a meaningful life (enjoying your profession is seen as a very important factor of students’ future lives), and moreover, such education can increase a child’s possibilities to choose their own profession or vocation. Among objective reasons, parents often highlighted that in today’s society education is an absolute necessity for having any kind of job (especially compared to the times, when they went to school), for example:

“Yes, unfortunately [today everything depends on education]. And it begins right here, without secondary school, without a start? There is nothing here. Secondary school is obligatory.” (Parent 3, Slovenia) or

“Yes, today education is very important, certainly today. Because if you don't have education or something like that today, it is very difficult to struggle through life. This is it today. Previously it was possible somehow, because you got a job wherever you went, but not today.” (Parent 2, Slovenia).

Moreover, parents have highlighted that education also increases career opportunities and opportunities on the labour market:

“Today it [education] has a great importance. The higher the education, the better the opportunities.” (Parent 1, Slovenia).

Moreover, education is seen as a “safety tool” to a secure stable employment and as a tool towards a better and independent socio-economic position. Some parents have expressed that their children are not aware of the importance of knowledge and education. As a reflection to these reasons, educational aspirations of Slovenian parents were together with Dutch parents the highest in the GOETE sample. On the other hand, prevailing reason of why education is not important was that it is no longer a guarantee for an employment (Razpotnik et al., 2012).

In the UK only one parental interview has been carried out and this one points to the importance of education from the systemic or instrumental view and reflects the liberal transition regime (Walther, 2006): education is strongly linked to the labour market and regarded as key to financial success, which can in turn ensure a happy and successful life. Education is also considered as the key to break out of poverty:

“There is a great onus that you have got a responsibility to break the cycle of deprivation and for our young people in this area the only way out of deprivation is through educational qualification.” (Parent 1, UK).

However, the parent also stated that education was not always the only key factor for future success, since this often depends on ‘*who you know*’ regardless of the education level (Biggart & McDowell, 2012).

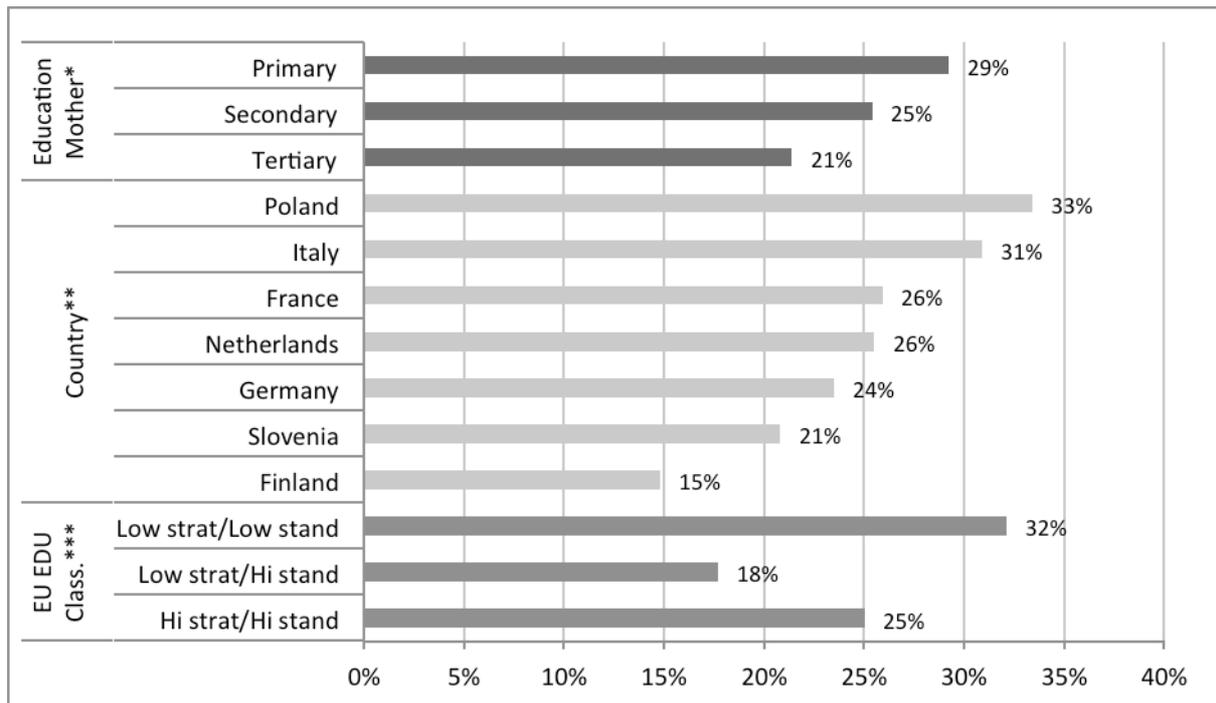
Also parents in *Poland* mostly highlight the pragmatic or instrumental dimension of education and knowledge. However, some parents emphasize that achieving certain levels of education enables not only getting a job, but also provides other working opportunities for children. For example manual work could be perceived as an unsatisfactory employment outcome, whereas education opens up non-manual work opportunities:

“How can I hurt my kid making him learn? That is not the point. More harm I would do if I had made him go to work that is unsatisfactory.” (Parent 5, Poland).

2.2.3 Barriers and worries

Furthermore, one of the important underlying causes for the perceived relevance of education might also be contained by the perceived barriers of attaining certain level of education. The following figure shows the proportions of parents who have confirmed there are barriers to their child's educational achievement.

Figure 6: Is there anything standing in child's way of achieving this level of education? (Yes, country, education mother, Allmendinger)



*Sig. =<0.005, Cramer's V 0.063 (N = 3204)

**Sig. =<0.000, Cramer's V 0.133 (N = 3204)

***Sig. =<0.000, Cramer's V 0.126 (N = 3204)

In the overall sample almost a quarter of respondents stated that there are barriers standing in their child's way. These are the highest in Poland and Italy (countries, where standardization and stratification of educational system is low) and the lowest in Finland and Slovenia (countries where educational system is highly standardized, but with low stratification). Moreover, and certainly not surprisingly, families with the least education and socio-cultural capital are facing the strongest barriers in their children attaining desired levels of education, which could also partially explain why their educational aspirations are lower. Further analysis has revealed that in the overall sample the most important barriers are: that a child might not do well enough in school to continue with education (23%); lack of financial resources (18%) and competition for places at university (16%). However, these barriers substantially differ across the countries and respective educational systems. Systemic financial obstacles are substantially the lowest in Finland and Slovenia (in countries where stratification of educational system is low and standardization is high); which confirms that in this Allmendinger group education is most widely accessible to all groups of population (in terms of systemic barriers).

To address parents' thoughts about the relevance of education in terms of future work options, that is, in terms of education as systemic or instrumental concept of relevance, we have utilised questions from the PALS assessment tool (Relevance of Education for Future Life). PALS measures level of scepticism with regards to the relevance of education, where a higher score means higher scepticism.

Results show that parents are most sceptical about the link between work and education in Poland (14,8) and France (14,8), least sceptical in Finland (12,1), while level of parental scepticism in the other four surveyed countries is very similar (approx. 13,5). While levels of scepticism in France are in accordance with the low educational aspiration of sampled French parents (see Figure 2.2.1), this is not the case for Polish parents, who despite high scepticism show very high educational ambitions (more than 70% would like their children to attain tertiary level of education). The situation with Slovenian and Dutch parents is similar; both express the highest educational aspirations among all countries (in both cases, more than 79% of all sample parents aim at tertiary level), but show a relatively high level of scepticism regarding the relation between education and work opportunities.

One could explain these inconsistencies with different understandings of the role of education and its importance (subjective vs. systemic reasons). However, if we compare the results on PALS with those about parental reasons for the desired child's educational levels we can only confirm this assumption for the case of Netherlands, where subjective reasons (interest, accomplishment, working with people they like) account for 74% of all reasons (the highest proportion among all countries). In contrast, systemic or objective reasons (good income, safe job) are the highest for Poland (52%) and Slovenia (39%), countries who at the same time express not only high-levels of scepticism (PALS), but also very high educational aspirations. These inconsistencies with regard to education and work for these two countries could be partially explained by their political-economic situation; both are post-socialist countries where massive socio-economic-political changes have occurred in the past two decades and where employment strategies and expectations, which have been useful in socialist times, are no longer valid. Furthermore, the explanation could come from the recent economic recession with high youth unemployment and unpredictable and uncertain working prospects for the increasingly educated young people. All these point to the lack of other opportunities – in the absence of other feasible options educational aspirations remain high despite relative high scepticism.

In terms of mother's educational level, most educated parents are significantly less sceptical (13,1), while there are no significant differences between low and middle educated parents. If we compare these results with educational aspirations (see table 12), we see that parents who express highest levels of desired educational levels (81% of parents with tertiary education would like their children to attain the same level of education) are also least sceptical about the link between educational levels and job opportunities. These parents are at the same time also those, who have the most social, economic and cultural capital as well as decision making power (their decisions are considerably less subjected to external societal circumstances, barriers in access to education and current employment opportunities in the labour market) to support children's educational and professional aspirations and paths. All these confirm that educational inequalities are subjected to wider social inequalities and are likely to be reproduced through the generations.

PALS scores in terms of Allmendinger's typology of educational system show that parents in the Low strat/Hi Stand group are significantly less sceptical (12,9) than those in groups Low strat/Low stand

(14) and Hi strat/Hi stand (13,8) (while there are no statistically significant differences between these two groups). These are also the countries, where most children (93%) are expected to remain in full education and least children are expected to enter a labour market (6%).

The relevance of education perceived by parents (as well as possible subsequent interactions with their children) might also illuminate how much they worry that their child might do badly in school or that s/he might not be able to find employment. The following figure shows proportions of parents (here we have to again to note that parents are mostly mothers), who frequently or always worry that their child might not be able to find employment or will do badly school:

Figure 7: Proportions of parents, who frequently or always worry about their child would not be able to find employment or would do badly in school (country)



*Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.239 (N = 3219)

**Sig.=<0.000, Cramer's V 0.163 (N = 3220)

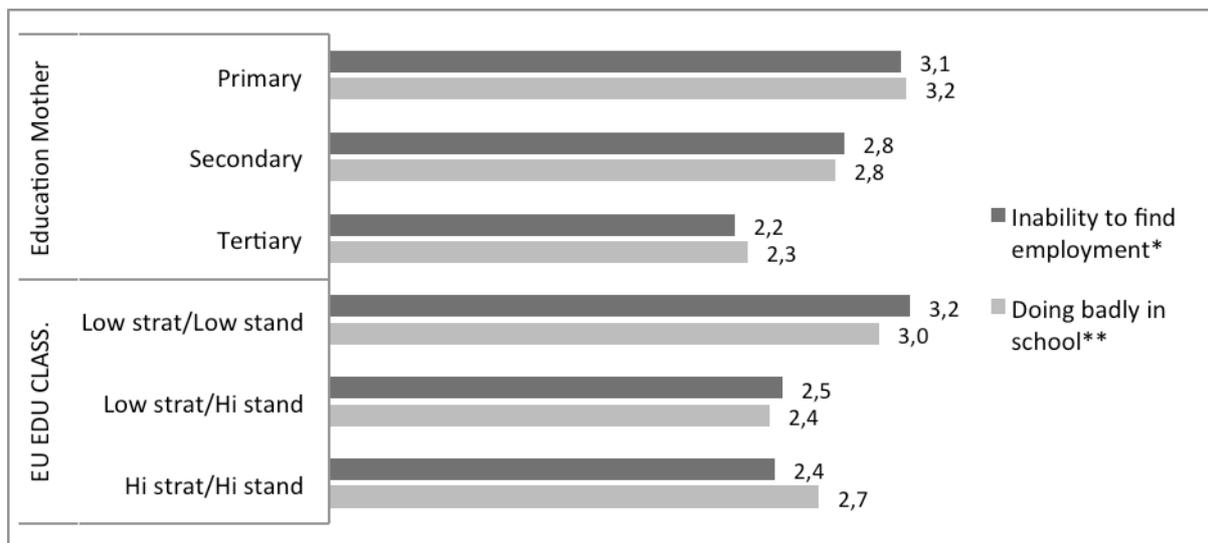
Figure 7, above, shows that Italian parents are substantially the most worried that their child will not be able to find employment, while their PALS score is low on scepticism. Thus, their worries might be more a reflection on the current labour market opportunities than the relevancy of education. This assumption is backed up by the high proportion of Italian parents, who state subjective reasons for education as the most important aspect of education (72%). Parents in Finland are the least worried about their child's employment (6%) followed closely by the Netherlands (5%). Again, due to their very different educational systems; these proportions could be understood in terms of better youth employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the figure above shows, that parents in Italy and France are most often worried about their child's school performance. Again, these results, especially for France, are not in accordance with educational aspirations or PALS scores. Namely, results show that parents in France are very sceptical about the link between education and work, and moreover, they express second lowest educational aspirations among all countries (50% would like their child to achieve secondary level of education and 43% tertiary level) and yet, they often worry about their child's school performance.

Conversely, Finnish parents are considerably less often worried, express moderate educational aspirations and are also less sceptical about the link between education and work.

The following figure shows mean values of parental worries on the scale of 1-5, where higher values signify higher frequency of parental worries.

Figure 8: Parental worries for child’s future: doing badly in school and inability to find employment (Mean values, scale: 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently, 5-Always)



* Allmendinger: $F=115.193$, $Sig.<0.000$; Education Mother: $F=82.767$, $Sig.<0.000$ (N = 3289)

** Allmendinger: $F=54.115$, $Sig.<0.000$; Education Mother: $F=71.362$, $Sig.<0.000$ (N = 3289)

Results show that less educated parents worry considerably more about both variables (inability to find employment and doing badly in school) and that worries steadily decrease as the educational level of mothers increases (statistical differences are significant between all three educational levels). Subjective perceptions and assessments of worries are an important indicator about the educational and career opportunities of different groups of the population. These results confirm that families with higher socio-cultural capital have better opportunities, more alternatives and better access to resources regarding children’s school performance and employment possibilities. Once again, the data confirms the likely social reproduction of educational and social inequalities.

As regards to Allmendinger’s typology of educational systems, worries about the inability to find employment are significantly more frequent in Low strat/Low stand group, while there are no significant differences between Low strat/Hi Stand group and Hi strat/Hi stand group. Moreover, worries about doing badly in school are also higher in Low strat/Low stand group, but here the mean difference between all three groups is significant.

Therefore, the data suggests that the level of worries regarding inability to find employment or poor school performance are related to general conditions or the prospects of the labour market and economy as well as to the level of socio-economic deprivation and socio-cultural capital of the families as opposed to the specifics of national education systems.

2.2.4 Influence of parents

Interviews with parents have shown that they have a very important influence on their children's educational transitions and future paths. The majority of parents are involved in their children's education in many ways: from offering learning and other forms of support such as advice and information, to more direct involvement such as evaluating and contextualising their children's future wishes and hopes, providing a "realistic perspective" and even directly guiding their children's choices. In some cases they even act as "gatekeepers" (see Razpotnik et al., 2012). All of these different forms of involvement importantly co-shape children's views about the relevance of education. Of course their influence varies from case to case, as we have seen above subjective characteristics or the socio-economic and cultural status of families are important determining factors. Moreover, in all countries we find two overarching, opposing parental attitudes – those who support their children in their choices, but do not want to interfere or influence their decision ("children must choose by themselves") and those who interfere and direct their children in their educational careers. In terms of the former, many parents have pointed out that they do not want to interfere in their child's decision (for example in statements such as such as "he has to want it" or "she has to stand on her own feet"), which also illustrates a high parental wish or demand for children's self-realization. The majority of interviewed parents have knowledge about the future plans of their children and are aware of the difficulties that lower secondary students experience with the demands of transition (see also du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012).

In terms of quantitative data we have examined another indirect indicator about parental perceptions of the relevance of education, namely how often they discuss issues like their child's further education/career with them. The analysis has shown that daily or weekly conversations about future education or career possibilities between parents and students occur most often in Italy (71%), while less often in the Netherlands (41%), France (43%) and Germany (46%) – all three countries belong to the Allmendinger group Hi strat/Hi stand, where the biggest proportions of students (compared to other countries) are expected to start working after compulsory education. With the exception of the Netherlands, parents in France and Germany also express the lowest parental aspirations regarding their children achieving tertiary levels of education. In a certain way these results are somewhat surprising as these conversations are less frequent in the Hi strat/Hi stand group, where the educational systems are highly stratified, differentiated and relatively impermeable, meaning that students have to take educational and/or career decisions at an early age. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as the differences between the countries are to some extent also a result of the cultural specifics of familial life, where for example in Italy or Slovenia children's future life and educational trajectories considerably rely on the familial support. However, socio-demographic analysis shows statistically significant differences across the school sample and educational levels of mothers, where daily conversations about their child's future are more frequent among parents from disadvantaged schools and less educated parents (the difference between educational achievement in the parents is notable, 12 percentage points), This could be interpreted as a consequence of more

frequent worries, fears and uncertainties regarding their child's educational and career future, especially due to lower socio-economic-cultural capital and resources.

2.2.5 Summary

This section has examined the parental perceptions about the relevance of education for the future life of their children through various indicators (educational aspirations, wishes, reasons for the importance of education, barriers and worries). Results show that parents in the GOETE sample regard education as *very important* for their children's future, as a great majority (almost 90%) of them would like their child to remain in full-time education after finishing compulsory education and over 60% of them would like their child to attain tertiary educational levels. On the country level, students in Finland and Slovenia are most likely to remain in full-time education; while the highest proportions of students, who will most likely engage in work after compulsory education, are found in Germany, the Netherlands and France. However, educational aspirations and what the students will most likely to do after compulsory education is strongly subjected to the socio-cultural-economic position of the families; students from families with lower socio-economic-cultural capital are more likely to leave education early. Although educational aspirations of socially disadvantaged families are lower than of the more affluent ones, they are still very high; for example, 42% of families where mothers have only basic education want their children to attain a tertiary level of education.

Parents regard education as relevant for *systemic / instrumental / objective* reasons, such as getting a safe job, a secure and good income and socio-economic position in society, as well as *subjective / individual reasons*, such as doing a job according to individual interests, which allow self-realization, fulfilment and feelings of accomplishment. In the findings of qualitative interviews, reasons related to employment were most commonly reported, while in the quantitative analysis subjective reasons prevailed in all countries except Poland. However, the distribution of the reasons is strongly subjected to the socio-economic position of the families; the more parents are affluent or the more socio-economic-cultural capital they have, the more they can afford to plan or think about their child's future in line with their children's interests, desires, abilities. The more parents are socially disadvantaged, the more their wishes, plans and aspirations are subjected to external fluctuations of capital, demands in the labour market and current socio-economic prospects in the society.

Therefore, research results indicate that the *socio-cultural-economic capital* of the families has a strong influence on parental views regarding educational aspirations, most probable future status of the families, access and barriers to education. Although some families express a belief that social inequalities could be surpassed by a good school performance and attaining high and adequate educational levels, the research shows that in general educational and social inequalities are likely to be reproduced.

Although educational aspirations are very high and education is considered very relevant, parents express considerable scepticism about the link between education and job possibilities, which

indicates a parental awareness that in contemporary European society's education alone is no longer a guarantee for later career possibilities or safe employment. Yet, the more educated parents, who are usually also the ones with the most decision making power in governing individual life-courses (in terms of available educational choices and later career opportunities) are less sceptical. Likewise, parents from disadvantaged schools and less educated parents worry about their child doing badly in school or not being able to find employment considerably more often, with these worries steadily decreasing with increased socio-economic status. Nevertheless, some of the socially disadvantaged families regard education as a means of upward social mobility of their children, to attain a higher socio-economic position than their families through education. This confirms that at least some families believe that education is a possible path out of the reproduction of social inequalities.

2.3 Teachers

2.3.1 Teachers' perspective on the relevance of education for students

The contribution of education to social integration is no longer self-evident in the sense of providing individuals with meaningful and secure life chances, the economy with a well-prepared workforce and society with responsible and active citizens. The monopoly of school and the adequacy of the education it provides are being questioned. Against this background teachers feel overburdened by societal challenges perceived as 'invading' school from 'outside' such as poverty, violence and bullying, bad health and risky life styles of students. At the same time GOETE findings have shown that many teachers concentrate on their main task of knowledge transfer and preparation of students for further transitions whereas socializing aspects of education are interpreted as the main task of parents.

But when many teachers see themselves as knowledge brokers what does that tell us about teachers' attitudes to the relevance of education seen from their perspective? How does this effect students' perspectives of their own education and life course trajectories on the other side? To get behind these questions it seems necessary to find out what teachers know about the real life situations of their students This means exploring how teachers deal with students' life conditions and how this influences their attitudes towards the relevance of education and their subjective conceptualization of lessons and contact with students? Not least this seems to be a question of resources and to what extent economic, cultural and social resources matter for the teachers' perspective on why, for what and under what circumstances education is relevant to them?

Drawing on the data from the GOETE project, teachers usually express the relevance of education in terms of its relevance for their students, the main subject of interviews and focus groups. Teachers in all GOETE countries emphasize the twofold character and tasks of education that shape their view of its relevance. In their view it is undisputed and unquestioned that education is about knowledge transfer and the acquisition of social or life skills. The former is based in knowledge and involves

competencies in areas such as language proficiency or numeracy. The latter covers the whole personality and includes behaviour, manners and a general competence in dealing with aspirations in terms of what students can do in their futures. For many teachers both dimensions are intertwined in their orientation to prepare students for entry into the labour market after finishing school. Maybe it is already in the nature of the concept of the relevance of education or the professional self-understanding of teachers, but one can describe the perspective of teachers as utilitarian. Guiding students in a vocational and professional orientation seems to be one of the most important aspects for teachers. To achieve this they emphasise that knowledge transfer on the one hand, and social skills on the other, are the keys to coping well with the demands in transition, with the demands of the labour market and, in more general, to integrate into society. The aim of enjoying learning or having fun at school (as in the case of the UK) seems to be subordinated or irrelevant.

While discussing students, teachers usually draw a difference between students and *socially disadvantaged* students. Teachers tend to view socially disadvantaged students as missing important basic requirements, especially skills, to succeed in school. That is why, in their view, school needs to accept and take over upbringing tasks in addition to traditional academic tasks. This is discussed very critically across the countries. Finnish teachers, for example, understand upbringing tasks as their integral and main task, while in other countries teachers perceive this as a burden (to search for individual solutions and to adjust their lessons to students their regard as socially disadvantaged).

Indirectly connected to socially disadvantaged students many teachers are complaining about a lack of motivation in students, what they interpret as a missing or wrong understanding of the relevance of education. On the other side one can see that teachers know very little about the leisure time of students and the respective relevance of education they develop in their after-school-life as was often expressed by local experts and students. While, in the view of local experts and students, school is considered a place of social interaction, with different elements of youth culture, one can see that teachers accept this socializing aspect, but generally it is not stressed as being important in most of the countries.

All these dimensions are mixed and intertwined in very different ways across the GOETE countries which make it necessary first to highlight teachers' perspective in every country before being able to try to answer the posed questions above.

2.3.2 Teachers' understanding of the relevance of education from a country perspective

Finland

The importance of education seems to be self-evident for Finnish teachers. In Finland (Salovaara et al., 2012) teachers share a strong emphasis on lifelong learning regarding the relevance of education for their students. The basis for this is that students learn to think with their own brains. Practically speaking, for example, students need to learn how to look up information themselves. More generally,

teachers feel that one important task of school is to teach children to live by the rules of the society that everyone has to follow in order to become full members of society. This perspective accepts that school also has an upbringing element. Education is about teaching social skills to students, that means how to be polite, how to deal with setbacks, the ability to discuss, to form one's own opinions on different matters. On the other hand, the relevance of education is shaped by the general requirement to achieve good grades that can decide about the future lives of students. The teachers are aware of the fact that the students might be struggling with unemployment and temporary jobs in the future although they do their best in school. Despite this fact, according to the same teachers, the school gives a (perhaps implicit) message to the students, that everyone who achieves well in school, receives good test results and finishes school with a good leaving certificate, will have a safe future (e.g. in Finland). This attitude can be seen in their efforts to motivate students and provide individual solutions. Although some students are not motivated, individual solutions seem to be of great importance as teachers recognize that students encounter different kinds of challenges in and out-of-school.

"I do think that the comprehensive school is pretty much like that, that there is not terribly much in an unequal position, that if you're poor you get support from somewhere so that you have good clothes" (Teacher 6, Finland).

However, many teachers say that even more individual solutions are needed. Guidance and counselling seem especially important tasks here as teachers say that some parents do not notice that their child has potential to attend general upper secondary. If parents with blue collar jobs are not so interested in getting their child to general upper secondary education then, in these cases, the schools and teachers have an important role in guiding students with potential.

Given the circumstances of Finnish teachers' perspectives on the relevance of education, they emphasize that their teacher education did not provide them with sufficient skills to handle these types of challenges in school, especially with students who require particular support. This informs a view that teacher education should be more practically and less theoretically orientated.

On the other hand, the education system in Finland is based on equality (e.g. classes are not stratified), which makes it difficult for teachers to teach several different subjects (e.g. science and languages) as some students perform better in these subjects than other students. For some Finnish teachers this leads to a paradoxical wish (from an international point of view) for more coherent class compositions divided according to their performance.

In summary, the teachers in Finland stress the relevance of education for students for building a basis of lifelong learning, to become good citizens and to improve their chances on the labour market (although education is no guarantee for getting a job in the future) and the possibility of choosing a profession they like. This is not only important for the students but for the future development of the society.

France

The distinction of the relevance of education in knowledge transfer and social skills is displayed in the perspectives of French teachers too (Jahnich et al., 2012a). On the one hand there are more traditional teachers that understand their work in delivering knowledge. Regarding their professional self-understanding, education in this sense is restricted to teaching and knowledge transfer. These teachers share the opinion that education is important for acquiring academic skills which they perceived as the most important aspect for students' future lives. Many students in France share such a perspective. This point of view is counteracted by teachers with a professional self-understanding and an understanding of education as a duty, that is not only limited to knowledge transfer but concerns students' lives in a more broad way.

“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 4, France).

For such teachers, this means to understand school as a place for socialization and critical thinking, just to name two examples. Some teachers put great meaning to school as a socializing space for young people. Here already the school building is of great importance in terms of school as a socializing space. Functioning and attractive school buildings show students that they are respected, affecting the relevance they ascribe to education. That's way education is not just the transfer of knowledge but also important for life skills.

“For most of our students what we are teaching to them does not make sense and I think they won't use it. Yet, inter-personal skills, relations with others as future citizens, that's more than all the theoretical knowledge we can bring to them” (Teacher 1, France)

Some teachers say that they have to give meaning to their teaching because the teaching contents are not something students are eager to reach for themselves which makes it necessary to relate it to something in their present or future life. Although this second perspective outweighs the first, there seems to be some tensions between these two types of teachers that is not always the case in other countries where teachers seem to integrate both perspectives.

Teachers in disadvantaged schools are faced with other, more concrete problems. In effect, they do not have much opportunity to teach specific topics but need to teach manners first to create a functioning learning atmosphere. Upbringing tasks seem to be the first requirements before teaching subject related knowledge or imparting academic knowledge. At the same time teachers feel helpless in the face of the external factors of their students' social disadvantage. Teachers in France usually have a good knowledge of sociological approaches toward educational inequalities. They often enrich their feelings about the difficulties faced by students and their families with scientific theories and develop quite insightful analysis about the link between social backgrounds and inequality of opportunities or the gap between the culture enhanced at school and the culture enhanced at home. In spite of this awareness, teachers continue to utilise paradoxical discourses about their students. On the one hand they understand the bases of their difficulties, and on the other hand, they refuse to attribute the under-achievement of students to anything else but their lack of goodwill. Obviously, the

gap between scholarship and popular culture remains vivid here. Nevertheless, some teachers experiment new forms of teaching in order to make education more attractive and relevant for (socially disadvantaged) students. For instance they experiment with teaching in small groups (islands) instead of traditional class work which focuses on individual forms of study. They aim at increasing the participation and cooperation of failing and successful students. Some teachers seem to be very satisfied with this new organization of the class, others ignore such new working forms, revealing a reluctance in French (same in other countries) teachers to embrace new teaching forms to.

Germany

Teachers in Germany (Boron et al., 2012) perceive education as the most important aspect of participation in society for students. They understand the school's main task as imparting the knowledge which enables young people to manage their life and prepare for a "normal biography". However, teachers are well aware that their students cannot correspond to this expectation because many of them are socially disadvantaged. Therefore, many teachers focus their work on formal learning settings and understand their tasks as leading their students to certification and helping them to integrate into the labour market.

Teachers in Germany strongly emphasise the importance of vocational preparation, especially for students attending Hauptschule, as one central task of education, assuming that most of these (socially disadvantaged) students will not move on to further schooling but instead find vocational training places. Interestingly, at the same time, teachers in Germany often use the comparison between being a teacher and being a social worker to underline the contradiction between the job for which they "originally" qualified and the mismatch to current daily requirements.

"What we are doing here partially at the moment, is more social work than normal lessons, that's the way it is. But actually I am a conveyor of knowledge and of course I have an upbringing effect in that, but ahm... at the moment it's sometimes the other way round. And that is... but we are not qualified for that." (Teacher group 2, Germany)

Being a "social worker" they understand as undertaking all tasks other than teaching, e.g. talking to parents, management of classroom discipline and cooperating with non-school agencies. Many teachers reflect on this aspect of their job in an especially critical way, considering that this task consumes most of their working time and there is less time left for the "classic" knowledge transfer. Of course it is not only about knowledge transfer, teachers in Germany also acknowledge that many parents are not, or no longer, able to educate and discipline their children, so schools are burdened with upbringing tasks as well.

Young teachers have theoretical claims on the relevance of education in terms of the way they learned it at the university. Often they are confronted with the reality at school, where requirements for learning in groups or individualised learning methods are missing.

Some teachers complain about the dwindling acceptance of the relevance of education in public discourses as broadcasted by the media, and see their students influenced by TV talent casting shows with their implicit message that young people can make it without education.

Many teachers in Germany complain about the bad reputation teachers have in the society and that current educational problems are attributed to the incompetence of teachers without reflecting on where these problems might come from.

Italy

Italian teachers (Barberis et al., 2012) stress the relevance of education in terms of students' life course. Teachers see the need to provide knowledge and skills that are useful for students' further education and also, more generally, for their integration into society. As in other countries, education assumes different meanings to teachers. It is agreed that education is the most important key for social integration of new generations and social cohesion. According to teachers, education must support cultural and cognitive disciplinary achievements, at the same time assuring the improvement of the pro-active skills necessary for social integration at the micro and macro level. That means students should be educated in a broader sense, so it can also help to interiorise the norms and rules of the country.

“School is a gym for life, a gym for training the citizens of tomorrow, learning to interact with all kinds of people, representing different cultures and ways of thinking” (Teacher 17, Italy)

When it comes to family background Italian teachers do not necessarily ascribe the lack of awareness about the importance of education to migrant families, however they recognize it as a general problem. Education is of greatest importance for socially disadvantaged students and their families, Teachers think that socially disadvantaged students themselves are well aware that they have fewer opportunities than young people living in more privileged districts in the city. Students acknowledge that the school tries to help them to nourish their sense of agency, emphasising their personal skills and paying particular attention to students with special educational needs, trying to maintain them at the same level as their schoolmates, also using individualised teaching and learning approaches. However in schools with a higher percentage of socially disadvantaged students, students paradoxically highlight that teachers tend to pay more attention to socially disadvantaged students, lowering the learning objectives and not targeting learning achievements of the not-disadvantaged.

Dealing with educational disadvantage, according to teachers, requires more cooperation with other educational actors. At institutional levels schools should act as a link among the different social stakeholders involved in the process of fighting disadvantage: housing, health, and social assistance. At individual levels, schools should provide these students with cultural curiosity and motivation towards learning. Schools should also engage in developing a sense of belonging, especially (but not only) among migrant children. Teachers in Italy aim to find the best path for each pupil, providing

them with the basic competences needed to 'survive' in the 'unfriendly' environment of upper secondary schools.

At the same time teachers themselves feel that they need to survive as they lack social recognition for their role as teacher in the society in general (similar to Germany).

The Netherlands

Teachers in the Netherlands (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012) regard two capacities as essential for their students to make successful transitions. One is knowledge acquisition and the other is mastering basic social and personal competencies. Both depend on the motivational disposition of the student. On the other hand teachers in lower vocational education emphasize "hand skills" as essential for success in vocational education. However, lower vocational education suffers from a built-in tension: a growing demand for transmitting more theoretical knowledge versus the praxis-oriented character of this type of education. Depending on students' future aspirations either general knowledge acquisition, psychological and personal competencies or less theoretically orientated practical work is the main emphasis of education. Teachers realize that it is their task to develop these three learning essentials in their students equally and feel this to be one of the greatest challenges their profession faces. The only way to manage these difficulties is in successful cooperation with parents, however this is exactly the cooperation they feel is often missing. However, there is much effort to make this cooperation work better. For example, it is planned for class mentors to visit students' homes to increase parental participation. It is also hoped that in this teachers will find parents who can guide other parents, facilitated by training to do so. .

But teachers also stress how the motivational disposition of students can limit the extent to which teachers can practise their profession successfully or not.

Teachers operate to find a sound balance between knowledge on the one hand, and competence transmission on the other, a tension caused by very difficult working conditions. They say that they simply do not have enough time to care for the individual student. They feel caught between, first, their own ambition as a knowledge professional, secondly, the need to compensate for lacking initial parenting (upbringing tasks) and, thirdly, the demands of school administration and exam regulations which are more interested in measurable output factors (success rates of exams, decrease of early school leaving percentages) than in optimally developing the potential of the students, disregarding what teachers really do and need when wanting to help their students succeed.

Preparing students for their coming transitions, Dutch teachers stress how extraordinarily important it is that students develop a stable learning and working attitude, develop trust in their own capacities and talents, develop an attitude of looking further than just one day, realize what it means to make plans and stick to them. Teachers stress how important deliberately taken choices for further education and specific sectors within vocational education are.

Dutch teachers seem to have only vague ideas about the after school life of their students (similar to German teachers). Teachers find it annoying that students pay a lot of attention to their mobile phones. They are confronted with lot of technology and students can do a lot of things at the same time that older teachers just don't understand. Others think that a lot has changed in recent years, not only the students, but also the teachers. When teachers do not understand the lifestyles of their students and vice versa, this could be interpreted as a sort of generational gap in school that influences perspectives of the relevance of education and how it is communicated between teachers and students.

Poland

For teachers in Poland (Błędowski & Fedorczyk, 2012) education has mainly a pragmatic dimension. They do not refer to the value of education *per se* but pay heed to its usability, and this frames the way they describe their understanding of the relevance of education. In the span of knowledge conveyed in the process of teaching many teachers underline that it is essential to equip students with elementary skills that allow them to function in everyday life (e.g. reading, numeracy, communication, etc.).

“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 1, Poland)

Nevertheless many teachers also stress the value of education by referring to its relevancy in terms of social skills, manners, etc. As in other countries attention is given to education in terms of its usability for future employment.

Polish teachers share the same opinion as teachers from other countries, namely that parents do not provide sufficient or effective support for their children. Families with socially disadvantaged backgrounds are especially perceived as not able to provide the support students need. This is why schools, and teachers, have to accept their upbringing tasks, although they have no time to carry them out. This makes teaching difficult and requires ensuring a learning atmosphere in class that makes teaching possible. More than this, teachers think that school needs to ensure cultural education, which for socially disadvantaged students may be the only opportunity, for example, to visit a theatre or travel the country. However, at the same time teachers feel overburdened, especially with how to deal with misbehaviour in class. Some of them think that badly behaved students should be aware of the consequences of their actions and the best way to deal with them is by means of punishment (e.g. community work the school can benefit from).

In Poland sports seem to be an attractive career track for students. Many schools are trying to support this development by providing extra lessons and making teachers available for sports.

Slovenia

For teachers in Slovenia (Razpotnik et al., 2012) education is important for personal (identity and happiness) and socio-economic reasons (employment, career, independence). It is important for students' life in general, but more specifically for their vocational and professional paths. Considering the demands of contemporary society, teachers describe knowledge more as a means and less as a value. The reason for this is that knowledge is no longer "what it was before". Instead there is fierce competition for titles, diplomas, grades, which means that knowledge today is often considered as a means to achieving something else (career, status, money). Consequently, in Slovenia a teachers' professional self-concept is orientated around the need to prepare students for further education, especially in relation to further transitions, to inform and advise students. They believe the role of the school is to teach students how to search for information and how to differentiate between quality and non-quality information.

Although students in Slovenia see education to be very important, however, it is pointed out that the factual knowledge they gain at school has limited usefulness. What seems to be more important is that students learn some useful skills and develop sound working habits. As the majority of the students will attend gymnasiums this is of special importance. Teachers are very critical of the high number of students going to gymnasiums and point out the importance of vocational schools. One problem often cited is that students attend the gymnasium regardless of their abilities, and sometimes they may struggle if there is a mismatch between expectations and ability. They see the reason in a prolonged childhood and the need to postpone important life decisions.

"Still the majority of children decide at the end of primary school on a gymnasium, right? And I think that many children do this because they don't know where, which vocation they would do at the age of 15. Also, they don't have a concrete perception, nor have those desires developed, right, so they postpone it a little. During gymnasium they do mature a little and think they will choose a path more easily." (Teacher group 1, Slovenia)

Nevertheless Slovenian teachers think that nowadays students have better chances to pursue their desired educational paths. Especially students with special educational needs (e.g. dyslexia) have much better chances than 20 years ago. Also, the teaching approaches have changed significantly, from trying to teach certain data a shift has been made towards developing skills and capacities.

Slovenian teachers had a lot of complaints about school reforms, which they think are too many and too often. Many things are changed, often without any insight about the long-term consequences they may have, and with no knowledge of the school system in practice. Teachers are having difficulties keeping track with changes, having to adapt their work all the time. At the same time they believe that they are left out of the decision making process, as decisions about reforms are taken at the high national level, often without asking for their practice-orientated opinion.

Teachers also complain about a general loss of autonomy, increasing interference from parents in teaching and evaluation and parents' protectiveness and child-centeredness.

Unlike the other countries, Slovenian teachers pointed out that upbringing tasks are not especially important in schools, and are mainly quite low in their order of priorities.

United Kingdom

The teachers in the United Kingdom (Biggart & McDowell, 2012) shared a consensus that education is more than just about academia and gaining qualifications. All teachers stressed the importance of achievement and qualifications for the labour market and students' future careers. However, they emphasized that the real goal of education was to develop students into well-rounded individuals. As well as giving young people the tools and skills needed for future education or work, education is also about equipping young people with life skills, to give them the confidence and self-esteem to make informed choices and decisions to progress in life.

“Education is more than just exams...we want to equip young people with life skills so that they can progress throughout their life and be happy and fulfilled adults. 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 and that's probably the biggest challenge, to give them the confidence and the self-esteem.” (Teacher 2, UK)

This is especially important as just education is not enough for (socially disadvantaged) students to get a job, as jobs in disadvantaged areas are scarce. That is why socially disadvantaged students need more out of education in the end.

As is the case in other countries, motivation is an important issue for teachers in the UK, too. They think, that students must be pushed to achieve their targets, and teachers claim that a major task of the education system is not just teaching, but it is about supporting young people and making them believe in themselves.

Difficulties are mostly ascribed to socially disadvantaged family backgrounds, especially in deprived areas. Teachers noted a very poor history of employment, with most of the young people coming from homes where parents do not have any qualifications, and where there may be family histories of generations of unemployment. This creates a real challenge for the schools in terms of student ambition and aspiration and a lack of good role models. A shortage of jobs, especially those in skilled labour, means that prospects for young people have changed over the years. School must therefore prepare them by opening doors via qualifications. Guidance is provided both for academic and vocational routes, therefore teaching styles are varied to ensure the students enjoy learning and remain engaged. This seems to be very important for teachers as they realise that there is an increasing culture where it is perceived that young people can make money and get an identity very easily without having an education (by dealing drugs, other criminal activity, and/or being part of a gang).

2.3.3 Summary

Summarizing the description of the national data above, the following levels of relevance seem to be central. When we are trying to find out something about the self-understanding of teachers and about why many of them see themselves as knowledge brokers, we need to highlight their attitudes in regard to the relevance of education. National data shows that teachers concentrate their efforts on helping students to cope with their transitions into training and further continuing education (functional aspect). At the same time they highlight not only the functional aspects of education as being relevant but stress an idealistic dimension as well. However, they share the opinion that successful transitions depend on knowledge, which, from a teacher perspective, in respect of their orientation of action, would mean knowledge transfer. At the same time teachers feel that they do not have enough time to support their students sufficiently, and they regret the absence of support from educational policy in this regard. Additionally they complain about parents who, they feel, neglect their child rearing responsibilities. Although this is not absolutely clear in the data, there are indications that a predominant functional view of the relevance of education from teachers has an influence on students' perspectives. When it comes to an establishment of an understanding of the relevance of education, teachers are role models for students, as indicated by all reference groups. The problem with such a functional understanding of education, where motivation should derive from the motivation to get a job, is that students don't feel taken seriously. Students need encouragement and not just precise instructions in how to achieve something. In the worst case, such functional forms of motivation can even be too realistic and can trigger "cooling out" processes which can significantly diminish students' potential.

When it comes to teaching, these issues are addressed by teachers in two ways: In some countries (e.g. Germany, Netherlands) teachers limit their lessons even further, restricting them to teacher-centred teaching and the basic principles of social skills respectively, to concentrate on the socialisation and upbringing tasks necessary to work with this type of students. Such a strategy could be interpreted as a coping strategy for dealing with socially disadvantaged families that are not able to cope with educational tasks and problems on their own. In other countries (Finland, Slovenia) teachers are trying to increase parental engagement and involvement. These types of teachers are also trying to organise their teaching in a more free and experimental way, for example by working in groups.

2.4 Teacher Trainers

2.4.1 Teacher trainers' perspective on the relevance of education for future teachers

The teacher trainers' perspective on the relevance of education for young people's trajectories is described on the basis of three assumptions. Firstly, that what student teachers learn in teacher training is important for the relevance of education for their future students. Otherwise it would be

impossible to understand the teacher trainers' voices in relation to the relevance of education for the youth as the trainers talk about student teachers, not – or very seldom – explicitly about students in school. Secondly, because teacher trainers are involved in the development of teacher training curricula, we assume that these curricula represent the teacher trainers' position, making them acceptable for analysis as a source of teacher trainer positions (e.g. standards for teacher training) (although, interviews with teacher trainers remains our main data base). Thirdly, that education should increase the chance of coping with and overcoming educational disadvantage. These basic principles around teacher training are the starting point for the description which follows. This chapter, therefore, will first focus on the education of young people as transmitted by student teachers during teacher training. This requires clarification on the relevance teacher trainers give to the education of students in school, but also, how this is mediated through training student teachers.

The relevance of education from the perspective of the interviewed teacher trainers is judged on a meta-level. The importance of learning and knowledge in school, of acquiring a good education, is widely accepted today (sometimes more by teachers, parents and the labour market than by students). At the same time, the population of students is becoming increasingly more diverse; not only in terms of different migrant groups, but also in terms of more individualized student trajectories which teachers have to deal with. It seems difficult for a teacher to unite all of these different trends and obligations. Teacher training has to cope with similar difficulties, including the diversity among student teachers such as: migrants (although few), part-time students, students entering teacher training from different training backgrounds or professions, second chance students, etc. But how does teacher training account for these increasing complexities? According to GOETE findings (Cramer et al., 2012), analysis shows that there is not much evidence in the curricula regarding these respective differences and new tasks. Some teacher trainers appreciate the effort of single administrations to attract students with the experience of overcoming their own disadvantages (e.g., social climbers and migrant students). Those teachers might offer "better" role models to students from similar backgrounds. Most often, however, teacher trainers do not talk about the relevance of education for students, but for student teachers and their training.

Some teacher trainers locate relevance in the socialisation of children and youths to become responsible and conscientious citizens. If teachers contribute to this outcome of education, their preparation should help them to identify with a professional habitus (e.g., issues of democracy, participation and responsibility). At the same time the contents of teacher training should cover elements that lead to the development of teachers' personality and should not be limited to theoretical knowledge in the subjects. If prospective teachers do not realize the relevance of education for their own careers, they will hardly be able to explain to their students the relevance of education for them. This implies that one meaning of relevance is associated with personal development.

2.4.2 Teacher trainers' perspective on the relevance of education from a country perspective

Finland

Teacher trainers in Finland (Aro, 2011) confirm in the expert interviews that education is first of all important for the student teachers, before it becomes relevant for students, mediated through the teachers once they are in service. For prospective teachers, education is necessary to become a professional teacher. Teaching in class requires being able to use the achieved subject knowledge, appropriate didactic models, teaching techniques and classroom management. These competencies lead to an increased awareness of the relevance of education for students regarding their competencies and achievement. Subject knowledge enables students to have better opportunities in the labour market, which is connected to a potentially higher economic position. There are other issues related to the upbringing of children, e.g. when a student teacher internalises values, attitudes, ethics and behaviour models that contribute to him or her being a role model for his or her future students. Through an awareness of these internalised values the student teacher gains insight that the growth of students as human beings is a precondition to their self-development. The role of a teacher as educator, in this regard, becomes relevant for students who experience their own family's failure. School then substitutes not only cultural capital – it becomes the main source of human capital.

There can also be a large gulf between what is perceived as important in mainstream educational culture versus some youth-cultures or peer groups. For some children and young people the education system offers very little that they find important. Young people then educate themselves (e.g. in painting graffiti, playing music, skateboarding) according to that which they rate as important. For an institutionalised system of education to work smoothly students are required to cooperate with each other and the school independent of whether subjects and lessons interest them or not. This usually works well if parents agree with the usefulness of school and its contents. Education then is relevant for young people to reach their aims regarding graduation, job, wages etc. and has both, an economic and a social perspective. Overall, education is important for students from the teacher trainer's view, if it allows them to cope with educational disadvantage in general and with special educational needs in the particular cases.

France

Regarding the situation of teacher training in France (Becquet & Hardouin, 2011), there were three major aspects highlighted in the reports regarding the relevance of education. Due to an increasing concern about language difficulties, teacher trainers highlighted the importance of being able to communicate appropriately – both, for teacher students and, in a second step, for students. This is not only a precondition for being capable of acting in everyday life, but also for being successful in the labour market. Language expertise contributes to all kinds of resources: it enables individuals to reach higher job positions and therefore has an economic aspect; it is an expression of being part of the

specific national culture and has a social component, because it regulates integration/inclusion of a specific group. The second issue is about the importance of education to enable students to cooperate with each other. This does not only concern the relevance of teaching skills in schools or to prepare students for the workforce, but is important for several, far reaching aims – for teacher students to graduate, for parents and teachers in bringing up their children, for students navigating the education system and to find orientation in a fast changing world. It is very important that different actors agree on the same direction when governing the educational trajectories of young people. Cooperation has an important social dimension: the insight that being a part of a group (society on a meta-level, a class on a meso-level or a working or interest or peer group or family on a micro-level) supports oneself on the way to becoming an adult. Only if the different actors agree with the common aims will a student realise the advantages that result from integration (or sometimes subordination) into a group. The teacher trainers' view highlights the social importance of prospective teachers in helping students to find their position in society. This leads to a third observation of education being relevant for becoming a responsible citizen. This aspect is about the contribution teacher training and prospective teachers make to building a democratic society. It is first of all a social resource if young people are enabled to accept a democratic social system, integrate in it and supports its structure, but it also has a cultural dimension. The acceptance of a democracy is linked to a system of beliefs and values that has to be incorporated into one's own self-concept. The teacher trainers show that the accordance to these beliefs and values are not constitutional but caused by education.

Germany

The German teacher trainers (Bohl & Cramer, 2011) felt that reaching a high-level of education has first of all a socio-economic dimension: it leads to social advancement and is particularly important for families that are financially weak and burdened. Furthermore, education has a social dimension in the sense of enabling individuals to respond to the fast changing society and to be capable of acting in a plural world. While learning flexibility requires teachers to take the pupil's environment into account, the way of achieving identity and orientation relies understanding the world and the societal structures we are living in. This is impossible without education (in school). The predominant field where teacher trainers locate the relevance of education is in cultural issues. They think it is important for students to come to a realistic self-estimation, to be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. This requires that teachers are able to support their students' strengths and compensate their weaknesses. If teachers succeed and offer good learning opportunities for students' possibilities of developing competencies are increased. Another issue in this regard is the importance of education in becoming reflective. If student teachers learn to be reflexive teachers, they are prepared for guiding their students to improve their patterns of action. This process of personality-development requires that education leads to a critical distance, first of all by the trained student teachers and secondly, mediated through the teachers, by responsible students in school. Educational disadvantage shows, that students are diverse regarding their economic, cultural and social resources. Education is an important component of equal opportunities, which is especially important if basic support through the

family is missing and requires compensation. The cultural aspects show that education is important for students to have successful educational trajectories, which means coping with the selectivity of the education system. This is particularly relevant if students are disadvantaged at the beginning of their educational career.

Italy

Teacher trainers in Italy (Cuconato et al., 2011) also mention education as important for social advancement in the sense of increasing financial resources, especially if families are economically weak and burdened. Regarding human capital, it is important that education allows also acquiring subject knowledge that leads to expertise in a specific field. Such knowledge is necessary if one aspires to work in a qualified job. In order for students to acquire the specific subject knowledge, first of all their teachers have to be trained with the most up-to-date and relevant subject knowledge possible. As before, in France, the Italian teacher trainers also highlight the necessity of solving language difficulties through education. This is especially important for migrants whose main language is not Italian who have to be equipped to communicate appropriately. Both, subject knowledge and advanced language skills are key dimensions of education, contributing to a successful educational biography. The chance of successful educational trajectories increases if students are accompanied on their way through the education system. Closely related to language issue is the relevance of education for intercultural commitment that is a precondition for being a citizen capable of acting in an increasingly diverse and plural world. This social dimension is particularly important for young people living in multicultural neighbourhoods which require particular cultural techniques that lead to intercultural commitment. Education is able to react on the challenges of a plural world if it deals with experiences relevant to youth culture and if teachers are able to connect to the youth environment. Another social resource in connection with education is its task to help persons concerned to cope with their disabilities in order to achieve (similar) opportunities in society or in the labour market.

The Netherlands

In the *Netherlands* (du Bois-Reymond, 2011) teacher trainers recognize that education is relevant to increasing opportunities through focussing on individual talents and skills in order to create the possibility of social mobility for those who want a better life than their parents. Besides this socio-economic issue, there are also cultural dimensions of the relevance of education. Cultural dimensions are especially relevant when students have language problems for which they have to compensate.. However, in these cases student must first recognise that knowledge is important for them because it can help to compensate for what they lack e.g. family resources or language.

More complex is the teacher trainers' idea that education should lead to an integral whole. This is possible when education combines specific knowledge with the more general skills needed in the world where students live and will work. The circumstances under which this type of integrated

education can take place occur when theoretical knowledge and practical skills are not isolated from each other, but networked. The social dimension of educational relevance seems to be the most important in the view of the teacher trainers. The baseline is that education in school can keep students safe. School provides them a secure environment they may not have outside of school. Education does not only teach young people to have respect, it also produces “natural” respect, because it enables a person to improve their own skills and to realise others’ skills and respect them. - one will profit from another, if one is able to cooperate with others in the school environment. This not only applies to student-student relationships, but also between students and teachers, teachers and parents, and students and their parents.. Cooperation affects the whole social environment and helps students cope with educational challenges or disadvantage. In this regard, language problems not only have an economic or a cultural element, they also determine the social environment in which young people act. This is about gaining interpersonal competence through education. If teachers and students agree that diversity and heterogeneity can be useful, education can help to develop strategies where everyone can profit from the others.

Poland

The teacher trainers in *Poland* (Błaszczuk et al., 2011), as in the other countries emphasised the importance of education in gaining the professional qualifications that would enable them to get a well-paid job to finance daily life. At the same time, the relevance of education is much more about increasing human capital, which can result in a good job. Education also has to guarantee that one is able to cope with individual challenges. Therefore young people need to be appropriately supported requiring teachers to adjust to the individual needs of every student. One strategy for teachers to help students perform better is to explain strategies of learning and to accompany individual learning paths. This not only leads to better knowledge, but also improves the development of personality. If teachers have the know-how and the capacity to support individually then education becomes more relevant for their students. The main issue affecting all kind of resources - economic, cultural and social - is the conviction that education is relevant to cope with (educational) disadvantage by compensating deficits in the family (e.g. financial capital, cultural capital, language fluency, levels of integration etc.). Schools have to connect with the “real” life of students and their circumstances in order to provide relevant education in this regard. Teachers have to realise their individual deficits and provide support to compensate these deficits in order for them to catch up with students with greater economic, cultural and social resources. Only schooling can fulfil this function.

Slovenia

In *Slovenia* (Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2011) teacher trainers conspicuously do not mention the economic relevance of education. They locate the importance of education solely on a cultural level. Education has the function of increasing students’ skills and abilities to enable them to access and improve their own knowledge and understanding. The precondition for this is that teachers give effective lessons.

Increasing personal skills and abilities is about improving attitudes and habits in order to be a responsible citizen. Education also has to stimulate an interest in students of on-going development and the acceptance of the necessity of life-long-learning. A further skill mentioned as important by teacher trainers was self-organization to be able to cope with the challenges of daily life in order to increase one's possibilities. The final goal is to find a position in society and to become independent. Therefore ICT skills are more and more relevant, especially to use ICT appropriately and responsibly.

Such an abstract understanding of education reveals that, first of all, student teachers have to acquire the respective skills themselves before they can guide students on their way of achieving them. Teacher trainers also highlight different social aspects of relevant education. It is important that education leads to increased independence in order to be able to reflect one's own views and values. Prospective teachers have to be trained to be a role model in this regard, and closely related to this is the idea that education could increase tolerance, understanding and acceptance of different ways of life, such as religious conviction or homosexuality. A tolerant attitude requires knowledge about society and its rules and mechanisms, and the ability to orientate one's self in a fast changing world. Cooperation is an important technique to learn because the benefits from co-operating with others enable the development of personal responsibility and conflict resolution skills.

United Kingdom

Teacher trainers in the United Kingdom (Mellor, 2011) agree that education is important in order to increase the commitment to collaboration, but they highlight the issue of efficiency which is related to the socio-economic aspect of education. This is also the way they legitimise knowledge and competence as important outcomes of education, because these aspects are decisive in gaining a good position in the labour market. Once again what students have to learn first of all increases their cultural resources (human capital). Education improves their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, which are seen as basic skills and knowledge in daily life. These basic skills can be improved through teaching, effective learning techniques and providing a safe and well equipped learning environment. The social dimension of education has relevance, to guarantee the student's health and well-being through teaching about topics which affect their health (e.g. nutrition, drugs, excessive lifestyles and stress). Students need a mission and purpose to pursue a goal and they need guidance on their way. Being a responsible citizen also requires exposure to experiences which cultivate values and attitudes that develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and others. Therefore teachers have to demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from the students. In the end, education should lead to fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships that allow a social environment that supports students. A key to reaching this goal is effective communication, so that others understand one's interests and belongings – not only for the purposes of discussion and debate, but also for mutual understanding. Linked to students learning is how to recognise and respect the contributions of parents, teachers and others. If someone wants to receive compliments, she or he has to learn to be thankful and to recognise the strengths of others. If a conflict arises,

students have to be able to mediate different opinions or solve problems resulting from diversity or achievement.

2.4.3 Summary

Retrieving and summarizing the description of all country level data reveals several themes of the relevance of education. Firstly, the relevance of education as an instrument of increasing the feasibility to get a (good) job relative to the starting point of the student's familial economic background (e.g. reproducing the status of an academic family, social climbing due to a better education than one's own parents or financing life) becomes clearly visible from the teacher trainers' perspective. Secondly, human capital is based on acquiring knowledge and skills in specific subjects as well as soft skills like communication. Human capital or cultural resources have a close link to economic resources because they are necessary to increase one's economic position (e.g. achievement in subjects or general knowledge). Another aspect of relevance is personality development in general, the consolidation of values, beliefs and attitudes (e.g. self-identity, religious, philosophical or epistemological beliefs). Furthermore, social resources, such as a social network, intercultural skills, ability to cooperate, responsibility, respect or tolerance (e.g. a supporting family or a social network/environment) are seen as important. Another social dimension of relevance is the student's identity and behaviour as a democratic citizen (e.g. learning about the perceived benefits of living in a democracy, showing responsibility for general or public affairs). Furthermore, In the teacher trainers' view, the everyday life of youths and youth culture determine what is important for students (e.g. self-education based on intrinsic motivation: relevance to what I am interested in, for instance hobbies like sports, music, computer etc.). The last essential aspect of relevance is that education produces safety in the sense of physical integrity in daily life (e.g. drug prevention, nutrition advice or even getting students off the streets away from crime).

2.5 Local level experts

2.5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse relevance of education in the perspective of experts on the local level. Experts on the local level are experts interviewed within the GOETE project. In this chapter, we want to illuminate the different views local experts perceive regarding education; (1) How is education relevant for young people and in what way according to experts?

Local experts usually work very closely with parents, schools and the students. Local experts are persons who are most relevant in the transition phase for young people and who are involved in the daily lives of students. Therefore we want to (2) illuminate experts' perspective on making education more relevant for socially disadvantaged young people and young people from different backgrounds.

Moreover, we want to illuminate (3) the roles of the school and the home, but more importantly, how the motivational habitus of the learner is stressed by experts in the discourses of lifelong learning. How do the local experts feel that students with different backgrounds and socially disadvantaged young people can best be supported in the transition phase? To what extent do socio-economic, cultural and social resources matter for the local experts' perspectives on why, for what and under what circumstances education is relevant for them?

2.5.2 Main tasks of education according to experts – why is education relevant?

In the different local environments there are different kinds of educational professionals and it is very difficult to summarise a common vision about the relevance of education. First of all, there are different kinds of experts on the local level in the different European countries. In different countries there are different divisions between practitioners. For example in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy class teachers are responsible in guiding students in their educational trajectory in addition to the subjects they teach. In Finland, France and Slovenia there is a specialized practitioner whose task it is to guide students. In the UK these tasks are the responsibility of a specialized practitioner from outside the school.

In this chapter, we define an expert as a person who is most relevant in the transition phase for young people and who is involved in the daily lives of students. We distinguish between internal and external experts. We define an internal expert as an expert who works inside a school and an external expert as one who works outside the school. In some countries it is difficult to distinguish between internal and external experts because an expert might have both roles. For example in Germany school social work and outreach youth work may coincide in one person: a social worker is employed at a community centre as well as works part-time as a school social worker (Boron et al., 2012: 42).

During the last decade a broad discussion has developed on the national and international level about the necessity of improving education and making it accessible for as many young persons as possible. The discourse of lifelong and life-wide learning in formal and non-formal learning contexts emphasizes the need of advanced society for ever better qualified participants in societal and economic life. The function of education is therefore not only to produce educated human capital to serve economic needs, but equally importantly, to socialize the future generations for a life in complex societies. This discourse requires that students should acquire broad general knowledge before specializing in a vocation and profession. These claims about lifelong learning influence opinions and attitudes towards education (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 164-166.)

One unanimous finding of the qualitative empirical research is the great and obvious importance of education today; all respondent groups in all countries seem to agree that education is very important, although they provide different reasons for its relevance. It comes as no surprise that educational actors are abundant in their display of the value, function and manifold aspects of education. However, practically all actors stress the twofold tasks of education, that is to say: knowledge

transfer/acquisition, and the development of social, mental and behavioural properties in the student's personality. (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 82.)

Further, it came to the surface that all participants, implicitly or explicitly, have internalized a hierarchy of knowledge by which general education is regarded as being more valuable than vocational education, and there is more social status and better prospective for the futures attributed to it. There is, however, a difference across the countries in how vocational education is valued, in Finland the value of vocational education seems to be higher than in the other countries. One explanation for this is probably that after vocational education a student has about the same opportunities to continue to higher education as students studying on the more academically oriented upper secondary level, general upper secondary education.

There is also an interesting difference in how parents in some countries rely on the school providing sufficient education, whereas in other countries parents see the need for private lessons in addition to the school curriculum. There is, for example, an interesting difference between two comprehensive education systems with low stratification and high standardization according to Allmendingers typology (Allmendinger, 1989), the Finnish and the Slovenian systems. In Finland no participant discussed the use of additional private lessons, in contrast to Slovenia where there is a wide-spread usage of additional private lessons, where parents hire instructors to prepare their children for tests and improve their school performance.

Different actors have different views regarding the relevance of education. Teachers and experts think in terms of matching system needs and system resources. Matching needs and resources is not only an expression of an instrumental perspective but includes intrinsic values of education as well: teachers and other professionals realise their task is to motivate students to learn which shows, among other things, in mentor hours which allow for a more individualized advice (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 164-166).

School youth workers and psycho-medical personnel seems to be more concerned with the problems and problem behaviours of students and therefore stress the importance of competence training, while labour market related experts are more focused on vocational competencies. It appears that the more integrated school education and the work of intern and extern experts, the less big are differences in the definitions and evaluations of educational relevance, and vice versa (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 121).

Other experts see a discrepancy between the relevance systems of teachers and parents. Both sides have high expectations regarding their role in giving young people an understanding of the relevance of education. Unfortunately, they see almost no possibility or room for discussion between the two groups on their expectations, and on concrete measures.

Experts, who do not have to stick to a school curriculum, see the relevance of education in a self-contained learning process. Especially in Germany the area of youth work in all three cases studies is

based on different (voluntary) projects that aim at the overall personal development of young people (Boron et al., 2012: 36-37).

Education is seen as relevant on the individual and the institutional level. Methodology and teaching approaches are related not only to students' achievements of school subjects, but also the transmission of tools and skills aimed at social integration (in particular teachers and experts focus on the building of relational and life skills as very basic steps in the implementation of disciplinary topics). For example in Italy a substantial part of the interviewed experts underline these aims: school is considered as a reference institution not only for students but also for families, who can in several cases find answers to their socio-economic needs (e. g. school providing money for school books) or other kinds of additional social services there. According to teachers, at the *institutional level* school should act as a link among the different social stakeholders involved in the process of fighting disadvantage: housing, health, and social assistance. At the *individual level*, schools should provide these students with cultural curiosity, the desire to be better and better, to achieve higher goals (because at this very young age they are very often already de-motivated). Schools should also engage in developing a sense of belonging, especially (but not only) among migrant children (Barberis et al., 2012: 65).

In all countries there seems to be an emphasis on developing students into well-rounded individuals, equipping young people with life skills to give them the confidence and self-esteem to make informed choices and decisions to progress in life. Although many experts believe that the main task of schools is to provide knowledge and to prepare students for further education, many experts also emphasize the role of informing and advising students. Experts want students to learn how to search for information, how to differentiate between quality and non-quality information, how to communicate and develop an interest in the world.

“Whatever is happening in society, and whatever my children face and whatever these children face their learning is fundamental to being able to face that: 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)

The discussion on the relevance of education is closely linked to a discourse of preventing marginalization, e.g. preventing unemployment. In the UK for example, the main task of education seems to be to assist young people in obtaining the qualifications needed for labour market entry. (Biggart & McDowell, 2012) The counter discourse is finding the right trajectory for the individual. For instance, in the case studies in Finland we can see how guidance counsellors and transition phase workers seem to be struggling between these two discourses (Salovaara et al., 2012: 29-30).

“As I have pointed out to young people [...] work or do something, in some way; if it feels too hard to struggle with books, then go to vocational education and try to learn at work or finish your studies with apprenticeship training... or something, so you won’t be left out without an education... Because I say, even though you may train as a hat maker, you have completed some

vocational education, it tells something about working life. That you are trainable, you have that something.” (Expert 1, Finland)

“It is good to notice that this isn’t the field which, which is ‘my thing’, one has to respect that the young person knows best himself.” (Expert 2, Finland).

In Slovenia, teachers and especially internal experts at school (psychologists, social workers, school pedagogues) also see their role in counselling, guiding (especially in relation to transition to secondary school) and motivating the students, yet many state that the role of the family and parents here are very important; some reflect that their influence is even too big, as students rely considerably more on their opinion and guidance than on those of experts, trained to counsel for transitions; they also report that the influence of experts on these decisions is decreasing in recent years (Razpotnik et al., 2012: 43).

2.5.3 Experts’ perspective on making education more relevant for socially disadvantaged young people and young people with different backgrounds

When asking experts who they regard as disadvantaged, there seems to be a consensus regarding this across different countries, although we can also find differences among the different case studies. In general experts find the term disadvantaged very complex. Many experts define disadvantaged students as students that come from socially weak or problematic families or have immigrant backgrounds and/or special needs. However, some experts, (e.g. in Finland, Poland) do not necessarily regard students with immigrant backgrounds as disadvantaged. There are other features which they regard as making a student disadvantaged, although some students with immigrant backgrounds may also possess these features. Many experts also put emphasis on the exceptions, e.g. that many students manage very well despite of their immigrant background. For example in the Netherlands, there are many Turkish girls who are very ambitious in climbing up the educational ladder and are usually supported by their families (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012: 33). In Finland, Asian girls were regarded as very high achieving students in one school by internal experts.

Within the Italian school system ‘disadvantage’ is generally divide into two main areas: (1) certified disability regarding mental and physical deficits; (2) Non-certified disadvantage (social unease causing problems of integration into school and subsequent learning difficulties). Regarding the latter, most experts consider it the result of a more comprehensive *family distress* resulting from all sorts of problems. These are often linked to scarce economic resources, difficult family relationships, a parent in jail or unemployment. Moreover, other experts highlight the problem due to the incapacity of some parents to take responsibility and assure competent parenting because of their almost total lack of cultural tools.

There is a deep gap between the disadvantage experienced by individuals and certified disadvantage for the purpose of social benefits or school assistance. The Italian context has been characterised by recent trends of reducing resources to support socially disadvantaged students. This situation affects both areas of disadvantage. It is especially difficult to intervene in favour of migrant students. In this

regard, a special case is represented by Roma students, who are considered by Italian experts as the group which faces the greatest problems of integration. Students have difficulty in defining disadvantage in terms of economic, cultural and social inequalities, instead considering it merely in terms of school performance. And, in terms of school performance, they think school success and failure depends on personal engagement: if you want to obtain better marks, just work and learn more! The role of the family is also recognised in supporting or not supporting children with problems at school. Students recognise two categories as disadvantaged: migrant students, whose problems generally relate to the Italian language, especially during their early period in Italy, and students with mental deficits.

A successful integration seems to be described as assimilating students into the majority population by teaching the national language and imparting their rules, laws, norms and values. When it comes to young people from a migrant background, experts often say that these features are seen as crucial for successful integration and are therefore the main tasks of education.

Language seems to be an important barrier in gaining equal access to a school of the students' choice. Good language skills seem therefore to be the most relevant subject to study in all countries, meaning a good knowledge of the national language. Students with migrant backgrounds seem to be regarded as disadvantaged because, in many cases, they have inadequate language skills in the language spoken by the majority population. This is also one of the subjects which seems to have the greatest relevance and influence in the students' educational life courses.

Language is, however, not only important for students who do not speak the majority language as their native language but also for students who are native speakers. In the Netherlands it is evident that a lack of fluency in Dutch has an enormous impact on the future careers of children. Students with migrant backgrounds may not achieve the level of results which reflect their true ability in the national CITO tests because of inadequate skills in Dutch. The CITO tests, experts say, test mainly language skills and the knowledge of the content (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012: 56).

Students with migrant backgrounds are seldom seen as a strength, although exceptions can be found. When immigrants are seen as a strength, the emphasis seems to be on enriching the culture with different traditions and values and not on the richness of a multilingual culture:

"Well, I see it like this, that immigrants are not an impairment to our school, they often come from intact homes, their social problems are anyhow smaller than among us, that in many respects they have strengthened our school, that even though there is language problems and then cultural problems and yes also a wearing of strengths can be distinguished and other things, it can be a strengthening vantage (Teacher 7⁹, Finland)

Language is not the only factor that has a negative impact on the opportunities students have in getting access to further studies and finding a profession of their choice. In all countries experts seem to find it difficult to cope with students from another background; Dutch experts say e.g. it is difficult to

⁹ Special education teacher, who is also a vice principal. In this quote he comments from his function as vice principal.

communicate with the parents (here the language issue is still dominant), families are closed up in their own culture and habits, watching only Turkish TV (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012: 33). The family background seems to be of great importance, a family background which is not the same as the mainstream population seems to be regarded as more challenging to deal with. Therefore it is not surprising that, for example, Italian experts claim that one aim of education is to foster skills useful for social integration (Barberis et al., 2012: 61).

2.5.4 The role of school, home and motivational habitus of the learner

Local experts usually work very closely with parents, school and the students. They are often in a mediating role between the school, family and society (e.g. labour market), e.g. guiding students in or outside school, collaborating with the school and home. Therefore, we can assume that local experts have a well reflected idea about the need and relevance of education for socially disadvantaged students in their future life as well as how the collaboration between the school and home functions.

In all eight GOETE countries, we can find inequalities in the education systems. No education system, comprehensive or differentiated, has succeeded in erasing social inequalities. Socially disadvantaged students are more likely to enter vocational rather than academic streams, and much more likely to end up as early school leavers, and eventually to be unemployed. Also, the share of socially disadvantaged students being able to access the highest performing secondary schools (for example those with the highest proportions going on to tertiary education), is much lower than for those from more advantaged backgrounds. These outcomes are 'unintended' but nevertheless persistent and almost universal across the eight countries (Dale et al., 2012.). Experts in all GOETE countries are aware of these inequalities and therefore many see it as an important task of the school to reduce or compensate social inequalities, especially in cases where the student does not receive support from the family:

“... and not every home has appropriate conditions to stimulate a child in right directions” (Expert 1, Poland).

A differentiated school system and early selection is one important feature which is regarded as putting students at a disadvantage. Many experts claim that a unified school system, or even no separation in different school tracks, is important to avoid early selection and therefore early disadvantage (Boron et al., 2012: 63).

Schools have an important role in making education more relevant for socially disadvantaged young people according to many experts. Experts acknowledge that it is very important to :

'I do not know, actually, I would like to take those children for a tour around Poland and the World to make them aware that it is worth to study because they can see something out there.' (Expert 2, Poland)

In all countries, experts agree that schools have an important task, not only in providing education to students, but also in compensating for social inequalities. According to experts:

“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.” (Expert 2, Germany).

In Finland, great emphasis has been on providing all students with equal opportunities and extra support has been focused on students who encounter challenges in school. This way of thinking is now starting to change; with the emergence of the opinion that talented students also need to be supported in schools. There is a great emphasis on providing individual solutions for everyone. Local experts in Finland and Slovenia are, however, concerned about “students in the middle”, who remain without support. “Students in the middle” are coping too well to receive any additional support, however are not perceived as talented enough to receive the support for talented students.

Youth workers in Germany (Boron et al., 2012) stress that young people have enough energy to achieve their own targets. As times are hard for many of them these targets cannot be put in the classical terms of education. They understand that for (socially disadvantaged) young people accumulating money could be more relevant in the short term because this enhances their reputation. According to youth workers education needs to be understood more broadly and society needs to rethink how it can use the energy young people have in order to help them to integrate into society.

In Italy, according to experts and teachers, one of the most negative aspects of the Italian school system is caused by the mismatch between the end of lower secondary school and the compulsory school leaving age. Experts and teachers agree that the more schools are open, offering a broad range of activities, the easier it is to take students off of the streets. But in order to achieve this goal schools need more teaching staff and more human resources,, which are instead being drastically cut to save money, day after day. Schools also lack cooperation with social services; it exists at a formal level, but social workers come to school, listen, write reports, without playing an active role, proposing or accepting a common strategy (Barberis et al., 2012: 69-70).

According to experts in all countries family background is important in supporting students in finding education relevant. In Finland local experts seems to think, or want to believe, that all students have equal opportunities, however they might recognize that some students struggles more than others due to, for example, a problematic family background. In other countries there seems to be a stronger discussion regarding the socioeconomic capital and its influence on future opportunities. A weak socioeconomic background is also regarded as having a negative impact on how students perform in school and how they are motivated to learn. Parents in malfunctioning families often have only elementary education and do not see the need of education for their children (Expert 8, Poland). Students deprived of support at home have the least chance as more important than the parents' education level, is their parent's attitude and interest in their education and their perception of its importance (Expert 7, Poland). Italian experts say that one problem is that some parents are not capable of taking responsibility or assuring competent parenting because of their almost total lack of cultural tools. On the local level, efforts to 'institutional caring' are done in many ways, often through

personal additional time and energies and creativity. However, no promising developments are visible at the national/institutional level (Barberis et al., 2012).

Mounting achievement demands call for the enhancement of motivation: motivational management is seen by pedagogical professionals and external experts from youth work as an indispensable prerequisite for students to cope with their transitions and establish a sense of the relevance of education for their further lives (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 164-166).

There seems to be a consensus that students have to be motivated to manage school; e.g. the student has to want to learn and educate oneself. Motivation seems to be the factor that drives students forward despite a challenging family background or socioeconomic difficulties. Many experts acknowledge that some students are just more motivated than others, regardless of their starting points. But why are some students more motivated than others and how do they find motivation? What can schools and internal and external experts do to support students in finding motivation?

The support from the family is regarded as very important for motivation; if the parents do not feel education is important then the student won't either. Of course there are exceptions, which are clearly stated in many of the interviews. In some exceptional cases, according to a Finnish principal, sometimes a difficult background or a bad financial situation might even increase a student's aspirations and motivation. In Finland, parents seem to have great confidence in the school, for example that the school provides sufficient education and information for the students in the transition phase. Parents seem to rely on the expertise of experts in schools and on teachers to provide sufficient education. The negative aspect of this confidence in schools leads in, some cases, to a lack of communication between the parents and the school, because parents expect the school to handle many of the tasks regarding the educational guidance of their child.

Often, there seems to be an outsider who has had an impact on the student's educational trajectory, where the student has been made part of a network or been given the support they need. For example a student who has been given the opportunity to work as a babysitter abroad and after his return has enrolled in, and completed, a programme for educators in with the aim of working in kindergarten one day (Expert 8, Slovenia).

Money can also be a motivating reason to attend school and achieve. In Finland, some parents pay their children if they perform well in school (Salovaara et al., 2012: 64). In Glasgow students get paid to stay on in post compulsory schooling by The Education Maintenance Allowance and for some students in Glasgow, for instance, 'it is the only reason they come to school'. The Education Maintenance Allowance is still available in Scotland but may be cut in the future. According to some experts this may affect students' decisions, or ability, to continue on with school, but interestingly not according to students (Biggart & McDowell, 2012: 47-48).

Motivation is something which has to be constantly worked on to uphold it, not only from the side of the student, but the teacher as well. This is true not only at the individual level but also at the systemic

level when it comes to accessing structures and transitions. Learning motivation relates to participation as we have extensively documented in a previous project (Walther et al., 2006). Both are crucial for the relevance of education. For instance, in Finland there exist so called 'weighted curricula', which give students the choice to follow subjects of their liking, such as computer science, music, language or the arts. Interests and hobbies can thus be brought into the formal curriculum and may serve as a springboard to further (general) education. In countries like the UK, Italy or Germany learning motivation is stimulated through non-formal courses and extra-curricular activities offered in the youth work or community sector (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 164-166).

Generally the experts are usually committed to the task of underlining the importance of the relevance of education, especially to parents. In fact, in many parents' opinion the results of learning are of such paramount importance that other learning modes are regarded as almost irrelevant.

We cannot avoid underlining the influence of mass and personal media which play a significant role in young people's everyday lives (for example in Italy experts put this in conflict with the lack of educational commitment of some parents). This is another relevant trend, which schools have to deal with, educating toward an active and critical usage of technologies instead of letting students grow into passive users. Italian local level experts express concern about the fact that young people spend a lot of time at home, principally in front of the TV, video gaming or surfing the web. In their view, this reduces the opportunity of experiencing more relational and interactive learning activities, such as playing outside and interacting with peers (Barberis et al., 2012).

2.5.5 Summary

The understanding of the relevance of education is shaped by an ambiguity. There is a social or systemic dimension that mainly aims at the formal relevance of educational attainment and there is a more individual or subjective dimension that stresses the non-formal relevance in terms of key competences. While both dimensions of relevance become visible in the data, the social/systemic relevance of education tends to be dominant.

In general the experts consider the harmonious development of the subjects as the aim of education. The educational process has the goal of providing cultural and practical tools that can help young people to achieve a positive social integration as well as the development of their personality.

"Knowledge transfer and preparation of the students for further transitions is the main task of teachers; socializing aspects are the main task of parents; so it always was and so it should be to guarantee optimal educational results; successful transitions depend on such a division of tasks. More specifically language proficiency and numeracy are mentioned as indispensable knowledge". (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 83).

Two main topics were raised in the expert interviews. The first is related to the separation between knowledge transfer and social aspects of education. From this perspective when there appears to be a good connection between the two aspects, experts are optimistic about the opportunity to achieve

positive educational goals which have always been a feature of educational philosophy (like in the reform movement). The second topic emphasises that

“under given circumstances in contemporary schools and with an ever more diverse student population, (it is) extremely difficult if not impossible to unite both functions of education” (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 84)

“Actors who opt for a division of tasks – teacher for knowledge, parents for education – can again be divided in two factions: the ‘complainers’ and the ‘compensators’. The first ones are majority, they complain heavily that a healthy home education is lacking in many of their students and that they as teachers cannot therefore do their job properly. Ever more students sit in their classes who do not even have basic proper behaviour, and that is most definitely due to failing parental homes. It is not their business to compensate for these lacks; that must be done by psychological and other inside and outside school experts” (ibid.).

Many experts stress the link between school-family-community as essential for learning. This point is in accord with the major importance of motivated learning in postmodern societies and as reflected in the discourses of LLL which stresses the motivational habitus of the learner (Mørch & du Bois-Reymond, 2006).

In all countries, the school has an important role in the social integration of students. Experts stress that aims, methodology and teaching approaches are related not only to students’ achievements of school subjects, but also the transmission of tools and skills aimed at social integration. The school has an important role not only for students, but also for families, who in several cases find answers to their socio-economic needs there. The more integrated school education and the work of internal and external experts, the fewer the differences in the definitions and evaluations of educational relevance, and vice versa.

Relevance and coping are related to each other: a hierarchical concept of educational relevance, more precisely of different levels of education, causes stress for all actors involved in the system; not only are the students under pressure to achieve but their teachers too, who have to prove that the system works or make up for it if it doesn’t (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012: 164-166).

While the experts have a greater focus on the social aspects of the educational process, this cannot be considered separately from the achievement of disciplinary skills. We can conclude that only a truly integrated education system can fully realize the elements of relevance in education considered by the experts.

2.6 High-level experts

2.6.1 Introduction

The aim in this chapter is to analyse (1) high-level experts’ perspectives on the relevance of education and (2) how conceptions of the relevance of education to socially disadvantaged young people both

inform and are shaped by high-level governance. High-level experts are decision makers, policy makers and policy commentators interviewed within the GOETE project (see chapter 1.3).

We want to analyze how high-level experts identify the main forms of the perceived relevance of education, and for whom. For whom is education relevant and in what ways? Who benefits, directly and indirectly, from educational programmes designed for and directed at socially disadvantaged young people? We want to examine how high-level experts frame the balance between educational outcomes for young people as crucial for the young people's individual and personal development, and, more instrumentally, as an issue for overall national economic/social policy; reducing the number of unemployed, keeping them off the streets, improving the 'quality' of the work force, etc. And in particular, we want to try to ascertain how far these are seen as mutually compatible aims.

According to GOETE findings, the relevance of education can be found on an individual/subject centered level, on a societal level/society centered level, and an economy-centered perspective (see Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012; Amos et al., 2012). In this chapter we will look further into these perspectives and see how high-level experts in the different GOETE countries - decision makers, policy makers and policy commentators - describe, justify and legitimise the relevance of education for young people. Is education relevant on an individual level, for example in order to provide the individual with better opportunities and to prevent the individual from becoming socially marginalized? How are the potential outcomes, both beneficial and harmful, of education related to different demographic groups – 'natives'/migrants, etc.? Or is education regarded as relevant on the societal level; in order to maintain the welfare state, reduce the number of unemployed, help maintain social cohesion, etc.? What similarities and differences can be found in different countries?

Associated with these 'multiple objectives' we will seek to show how and, in what terms, high-level experts conceive the problem of educational 'relevance' for socially disadvantaged students— what wider issues are seen as relevant in high-level experts' discourses? Through what kinds of educational processes and avenues are seen as potential 'solutions' to the 'relevance' issues for such young people? To put it more bluntly, what kinds of educational programs are seen as being helpful/appropriate/relevant for disadvantaged young people and what kinds of differences in the nature of the perceived problems emerge?

In the introduction to this chapter, we pointed to three very significant elements that have shaped, oriented and set limits to conceptions of, and priorities in, relevance, for those involved in high-level governance. One was very important and far-reaching changes in the labour market, impacting opportunities open to young school leavers. The second was the changing nature of high-level governance itself, and its relationship with other levels of educational governance: high-level governance, that is to say, is operating within a new and relatively unknown and untested context. This is directly related to the third element of the changing context of educational governance in Europe, which concerns the delegation of responsibility – but much less commonly of authority and resources—from government level to regional and local level. As a result, the transitions and

trajectories of socially disadvantaged students has become increasingly complex, with individual schools and even school systems finding it difficult to manage them by themselves, which also shapes the idea of relevance in multiple ways.

While this may potentially create more space for diversity and choice the negative side of this development is that governments rarely allocate sufficient financial and personal means to carry out the policies constructed at high-level governance, putting schools in all countries under severe pressure to do their job with less resources.

2.6.2 How high-level governance frame questions of the relevance of education

We can outline the nature of these shifts and their relationship with the wider contexts that frame understandings of high-level governance of education most effectively by taking up the argument advanced by Jessop (1999), that since the 'trente glorieuses' – the 'golden age' (1945-75) - for social democracy in Western Europe we have experienced a fourfold movement in the relationship between politics, economy and society, each of which has implications for the high-level governance of educational relevance.

The four changes Jessop (1999) indicates are: a shift in the relationship between the economic and political spheres from one that saw the state providing strong support for the (national) economy, particularly through Keynesian techniques of demand management, to the current situation, where the role of the state is confined to creating a legal and political infrastructure that provides the maximum possible latitude for the development of markets, which he refers to as 'Schumpeterian'. In terms of the form of social security, he contrasts the earlier 'Welfare' state with the contemporary 'workfare' state. In the earlier case, the locus of economic activity was 'National', and in the later stage it was 'post-national'. Finally the basis of governance changed from a '(national) State' to a '(transnational) Regime', with the whole complex registered as a shift from a KWNS to a SWPR, which itself can be seen as part of a Global Knowledge Economy, where 'Knowledge' is taken as a distinct and necessary factor of production in itself.

This is an effective way of indicating the key changes that have taken place in the governance of education, and associated expectations of the possible contributions of education. It opens up ways of recognising what we might call the 'context of context' of educational relevance, and one of the crucial influences on the discursive and institutional opportunity structures that both shape and constrain conceptions of the expectations and challenges of education, from which conceptions of relevance are derived.

So, a key point to note is that in the GKE discourse, *relevance* – a term intrinsically associated with and linked to an assumption of a national economy, with a range of specialist jobs, etc. – is challenged by the conception of *excellence*, because this is (seen as) the key element in competitiveness, the key basis of the GKE. In the State of the Art report (Parreira do Amaral et al.,

2011), relevance was associated with the division between academic and vocational occupations, from which we might infer that individuals slip neatly, and relatively passively, into pre-existing occupational slots for which their education has prepared them. Similarly, *employability*, in the sense of everyone being responsible for their own employability may come to replace relevance for the socially disadvantaged. Thus, H-L references to 'relevance', for instance in Italy indicate a continuing attachment to an outdated, more or less Fordist, economy shaping the links between school and work, rather than a GKE.

Note also that excellence is the currency of league tables (in UK at any rate, and probably others, too), while PISA also reflects 'general excellence' rather than relevance – something that clearly underlies the debate and the "relevance-aligned" shift in Germany (Amos et al., 2012).

What this means is that in a sense we have to begin by asking first what falls within the scope of the relevance of education as reflected in the foci and mechanisms of its governance, and then what is the hierarchy of these areas of relevance? We tend to take it for granted that equipping young people for a productive role in the labour market is the chief criterion and the main form of relevance for the education of socially disadvantaged young people, but this in itself can take different forms. One instance of this is the changing meaning of employability, especially as 'real' labour market opportunities for young people are in decline. In effect, the meaning of employability has shifted from 'demand-led' to 'supply-led' assumptions about what constitutes labour market relevance in the education of young people. This results in a shift from vocational preparation, in the sense of equipping young people with the skills needed to do a particular job, to an emphasis on the development in individuals of competences, skills and attributes that will contribute to making them employable.

We see abundant evidence of these shifts which exemplify very effectively the ways that modes of governance, at various levels of the education system, simultaneously reflect and shape conceptions of what is a relevant education, and for whom. They are clearly evident in the national case study reports (Salovaara et al., 2012; Jahnich et al., 2012a; Boron et al., 2012; Barberis et al., 2012; du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012; Błędowski & Fedorczyk, 2012; Razpotnik et al., 2012; Biggart & McDowell, 2012). One very good example of this is found in the UK report, where the school in Glasgow has as its target that all school leavers will progress to 'positive destinations' – effectively any destination that does not lead to NEET (Not in Employment or Education and Training) status - and maintains and embeds the young people's employability related skills, competences and attributes. While the programmes and the conditions to bring this about were conceived, at the school level this was done as part of the full realization of a City-wide programme of services to continue this process post school.

One notable way in which GOETE has addressed the issue of discursive and institutional opportunity structures has been through the idea of transition regimes. The State of the Art report (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011) generates a number of hypotheses based on the differences between transition

regimes, and especially Allmendinger’s standardisation/stratification typology, and one major task of the high-level governance analysis (Dale et al., 2012) is to test those hypotheses.

The main relevant hypothesis for this section concerns the nature of the relationship between the hypothesised transition regimes and the ways that they frame conceptions of educational relevance. The proposed typology linked regimes and concepts of relevance as follows:

Table 14: The conception of the relevance of education according to transition regime types

Regime Type	Conception of Relevance
Universalist (FI)	Personal Development
Liberal (UK)	Employability
Employment-Centred (FR, GE, NL)	Vocational/Academic
Under-Institutionalised (IT)	Vocational/Academic
Post-Socialist (PL, SL)	Global Labour Market

However, it seems from the evidence provided in this section, and the findings on which it draws, that the hypotheses contained within the typology are only partially substantiated. Certainly the Finnish case is the closest to a Universalistic type, but ‘personal development’ now seems closely linked to the conception of the Education and Youth guarantees, which do seem to have a vocational emphasis. The UK comes closest to the hypothesis, with a possibly intensified liberal approach which prioritises employability, with perhaps an even greater emphasis on individuals’ own agency in these matters. It is in the transition regimes that are associated with ‘academic/vocational’ (e.g. based on an assumed mental/manual division of labour and occupations) that the data most challenges the hypotheses. However, this is not to say that these countries do not continue to comprise distinct groups – there does seem evidence for the Italian characterisation, for instance. Rather, the relationship is undermined by the changing nature of national labour markets, which, as we have tried to show in this section, no longer generate labour market structures that fall easily into the mental/manual division. As noted in the State of the Art report, Allmendinger’s regime types were generated over 20 years ago, so it is not surprising that hypotheses based on them no longer hold so strongly in this area. Much the same is the case with the post-socialist group, which clearly posed a major challenge for the State of the Art report.

2.6.3 High-level experts views on relevance of education

In this subchapter, we look at how high-level experts regard education as relevant, for whom and why. Among high-level experts we can distinguish between different perspectives on why education is relevant; that is if education is regarded (i) as relevant for the national economy, in order to ensure

survival in a competitive world; (ii) to prevent unemployment and exclusion among youth or compensate for social inequalities; (iii) as relevant for the individual, in order for each young person to reach all of his or her potentials. Different experts think in different terms on why education is relevant, and among countries we find a wide range of perspectives on the relevance of education in different contexts. .

Education is regarded as basic capital for the future of the national economy in a globally competitive world, or as German high-level expert state:

“Education is the most important capital here for Germany and even for Europe it is crucial, that we invest in education. In my opinion this is not spread wide enough in the population” (Expert 1, Germany).

“Our society is short on raw material resources, it needs the people’s brains” (Expert 5, Germany).

The same perspective can be seen in Finland:

“We have woods and lakes and then there are people. And the people and the education form quite a big keystone” (Expert 10, Finland).

In Finland an ageing population is also discussed by high-level experts and is often a theme in policy documents regarding the importance of securing access to education. This perspective can easily be connected to the economy perspective; education is regarded as important to educate future taxpayers in order to make up for the future shortcut of the labour force, which is due to the aging of the population (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 47).

In all countries, experts also see the task of education to reduce or compensate for social inequalities, as well as or rather than to prevent them:

“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” (Expert 2, Germany).

Education is either relevant in order to make sure that all children become self-sufficient citizens who are able to support themselves economically (e.g. Expert 2, the Netherlands) or it is the task of the state/society to guarantee that all young people complete compulsory education and receive a place in upper secondary education or training, as seems to be the case in Finland (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012).

Experts see the school as an institution which has an important task to complement in educating and supporting the child if the home has not got the adequate skills. Education is, according to many experts, that factor which offers the chance to compensate and reduce social inequalities. For example, the emphasis of children’s access to preschools in Poland is on children from rural areas, special educational needs children and children of national minorities (Buchowicz & Błędowski, 2012):

“... and not every home have appropriate conditions to stimulate a child in right directions” (Expert 1, Poland).

In Finland, education is regarded not only as important on an individual level, in order to prevent a young person from being marginalized, but there is also an emphasis on the cost to society if an individual is marginalized (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 46-48).

From a subject or individual perspective, education is regarded as relevant in order to support students to become autonomous persons who can develop all their potentials. Interestingly, this perspective seems to be stronger among local experts although we can also find the perspective among high-level experts: a high-level expert in Germany for example argues that

“Concerning education I still have a classical ideal. So firstly education has to bring benefits to the single human being. It has to bring the individual forward. In the life what he desires, in his reflections” (Expert 8, Germany).

In Finland the emphasis on supporting students to be autonomous persons is stronger among local experts, for example an external expert from Finland argues that:

“It is good to notice that this isn’t the field which, which is ”my thing”, one has to respect that the young person knows best himself.” (Expert 2, Finland).

Among high-level experts the subject perspective seems to be more connected to finding any place in education or training for young people, in order to prevent them from becoming marginalized. For example another Finnish expert suggests that:

“there should be a focus on finding a place in education for everyone. That is the primary goal. But of course there is always someone for whom the school is not an option then of course some kind of job so that one does not remain wandering the streets”. (Expert 10, Finland).

These three perspectives are overlapping. For example in Finland, education is regarded as relevant on the societal level in order to maintain the welfare state, and the welfare state is dependent on the labour force. The welfare state, or the Nordic welfare model, is in turn regarded as important on the individual level, i.e in order to prevent marginalization of individual subjects. (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 46-47). Experts emphasise the importance of supporting the individual in receiving a place in education because without education there is a greater risk of being marginalized. Education is regarded as relevant for the individual by securing equal opportunities for everyone, e.g. securing employment opportunities for the individual (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 51).

High-level experts agree that education is very relevant in society and that education has an important role in social integration, though, as is evident throughout this chapter, they have a range of views on what that is. Some high-level experts seem to believe that education has an important role in integrating students in the society e.g. with migrant backgrounds. High-level experts think that the tasks of school may be to socialize the young generation and make them socially acceptable (Expert 5, Germany). In Slovenia one expert states that the integration of migrant children is a bit forced as the migrant children have to immediately acquire the competences based on language learning. According to her, migrant children cannot express their cultural identity in Slovenian schools, but have to subordinate it to the homogeneous culture and language. Furthermore, the expert states that

teachers in Slovenia seem to lack proper education in order to offer migrant children a safe multicultural environment (Expert 10, Slovenia).

In all eight GOETE countries, high-level experts are concerned about socially disadvantaged students and aspire to decrease social inequalities. However, in all eight GOETE countries, high-level experts also want to invest in a good quality education. In the different countries we can find two distinct, and sometimes opposing, discourses; a discourse of quality and discourse of equality. This is quite explicit in the Netherlands, for example. High-level experts in the GOETE countries seem to be struggling between these two discourses and thinking that the possibility of supporting both discourses is rather remote. The emphasis on the two discourses differs among the GOETE countries as well as the perceived capacity to influence the educational system.

In Finland we can find evidence of the emphasis on equality this in previous government programs and other official documents (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012). However, there seems to be a recent change in the discourse towards a more quality based system. High-level experts seem to struggle between these two mandates. A statement made by one of our high-level experts expresses this:

“The comprehensive school became explicitly a school for all, an equal school, so perhaps it in the early stages came to head in that direction. Although, it probably was not anyone's intention. It is a pretty brilliant idea that the whole age group is in the same school. But in its content it would be possible to consider opportunities for a variety of needs, perhaps even more as now. Now, this has been handled by giving support for those who need support in learning or in other things. But it is at the same time important to remember that it is not anything taken away from someone if we support everyone (the weakest and the most talented). And not to forget the large number in the middle. Even there there is a wide variety of individuals.” (Expert 10, Finland)

It has been speculated that the comprehensive school system was saved by the great results Finland received from PISA (e.g. Expert 3, Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 46). However, the recent trend is leaning towards an increased emphasis on talented students. There seems to be a demand for more specialized education for not only students in need for extra support, but also gifted students. In Finland's current education policy individual needs have recently been acknowledged, not only in supporting the young people in the weakest position, but recently in supporting talented students. . There are more specialized schools in upper secondary education and more weighted curricula in lower secondary schools (Järvinen, 2000). The emphasis in education has shifted from equality towards the guidance of individual choice (Kivinen, 2006). Moreover, the Finnish National Board of Education has started a project for the development of gifted and talent's education in Finland.

In Poland we also find the same concern regarding both talented students and students in need of support. One high-level expert argues that too much emphasis has been placed on average students and the aim should now be to support extraordinarily talented students or special educational needs students who deviate from the average:

Polish school is still too much oriented towards average students and such students cope with education the best; but extraordinary talented students or special educational needs students who deviate from the average in one or the other side, they cannot adjust themselves to the system (Expert 7, Poland)

In Slovenia, on the other hand, we can find a concern about “students in the middle”. A lot of attention is given to those who: are performing poorly, have special needs, are disadvantaged or, conversely, are the highest achievers (Razpotnik et al., 2012: 49).

In France the educational system is criticized by one expert for only supporting the students who are managing well. This expert states that the goal of education is to select the best students while the school system is under equipped to cope with the rest (see Expert 18, France).

In Italy it is argued that the primary and lower secondary schools are inclusive, which is credited to past reforms aimed at creating an effective comprehensive system (Expert 4, Italy). There is, however, an over-representation of low-status families in vocational education, and a lack of equal opportunities. However the discourse also works the other way around: there are many middle class Italian students that could perform much better in a vocational path, while they choose general education (Expert 11, Italy).

In the Netherlands there is a strong discourse on stressing the support of quality education with an emphasis on supporting students who manage well, while social inequalities are seen as a distinct matter. This approach is captured in the expression by the current Education Minister that:

“the quality of education is more important than the fact that a child is enrolled in a black or white school” (...) “It is good when people from different cultures meet, but for me, as the Minister, fighting segregation is not a goal”. (Koşar Altinyelken & du Bois-Reymond, 2012: 45-46).

2.6.4 High-level experts Views on Reducing Inequalities in the Educational System

In the Netherlands the education system is based on an early selection process. At the age of 12, students transfer into secondary education; pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO). The option is determined based on a national test, CITO, and teachers’ advice. High-level experts are resistant to large structural changes in the current national educational system. For example, none of the interviewed experts supported the introduction of a comprehensive school system, although they agree that this could mitigate some of the negative effects of segregation (Koşar Altinyelken & du Bois-Reymond, 2012: 58).

In Germany, there is an awareness of the mechanisms reproducing social inequality, especially by the selection of students at a very early stage. There also seems to be resistance to any changes to the system. There is some denial about the existence of mechanisms that reproduce social inequalities and claims that social stratification is mirrored by the education system are not interpreted as unjust and unjustified inequality, but rather as mirroring different potentials and possibilities in achieving. (Amos et al., 2012: 48-56.)

In Finland, several transition phases are seen as a risk for social marginalization. The general discourse is that with each transition phase the risk of dropping out increases (Julkunen & Salovaara, 2012: 44-45). This problem is especially acknowledged as a risk for migrant students because they often face more transition phases than young people from the mainstream population due to enrolment in 1 year preparatory classes for national language study. The logic seems to be that a comprehensive school system decreases the risk of marginalization because if the number of transition phases is reduced to a minimum it decreases the risk of dropping out. On the other hand, some students aiming for vocational studies are relieved that they can finally escape the curriculum they face in compulsory education. Some of these young people were relieved because they had received a weak leaving certificate or had no interest in “reading” e.g. studying theoretical subjects. However, they wouldn’t want to make the transition sooner (Salovaara et al., 2012: 45).

In the Netherlands one expert suggested that a comprehensive system might succeed in a country where the student population is homogenous, such as in Finland. However, in a country like the Netherlands, where there is a substantial migrant population, a comprehensive system would lead to many quality related challenges, and may not produce the same results (Koşar Altinyelken & du Bois-Reymond, 2012: 29).

In all countries deficiencies in language skills are emphasized as the most important barrier to education. Students with migrant background who have insufficient skills in the host country’s language are at a disadvantage compared to native language speaking students. Therefore, the native language might be regarded as one of the most relevant subjects taught in school. For example, in the Netherlands the CITO test emphasises skills in Dutch and, therefore, it seems to be the most relevant subject for students with insufficient skills in the native language. A student’s language skills very much determine their educational trajectory. Experts say that the CITO tests assess mainly language skills and the knowledge of the content (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altinyelken, 2012: 56). This barrier can be found in other countries. However, in countries where the selection into vocational or general upper secondary takes place some years later, e.g. Finland, the students are afforded extra time to practice and learn the native language. On an individual level a system based on early selection seems to be working well for high achieving students with adequate language skills. However, students who would have the capacity to perform well in a more demanding programme do not get the chance if their native language skills are not sufficient at the time of the selection.

Moreover, although sufficient language skills might help in accessing education, sufficient language skills do not guarantee success. Social issues are often a barrier or as a high-level expert puts it:

“We can’t get the girls to come into secondary school, they work the benefits system and there’s a big issue around poverty, there’s families who we provide with free breakfasts because they’re not being fed at home” (...) “I mean English gives them, the access to English is obviously a barrier to them, but there’s a mountain of social issues around the Roma community and that’s the same Europe wide, it’s not unique to Glasgow” (Expert 12, UK).

2.6.5 Summary

In this section we have attempted to analyze the relevance of education in the perspective of high-level experts and how conceptions of the relevance of education to socially disadvantaged young people both inform and are shaped by high-level governance. This requires recognition of European and national levels, but also of how their preferences and framings are modified at other levels of governance and practice. This raises a number of difficulties because not only is 'Relevance' a complex and 'fluid' concept but the space it occupies also changes, following wider social/political/economic developments. In the cases we analysed relevance can be seen as one component of wider and related shifts in the education lexicon. We have noted a number of these shifts in this report – from 'at risk' to 'marginalised', from 'inequality' to 'individualism' to 'social exclusion', from 'unemployed youth' to 'early school leaver', and we have attempted to show how the *space* for 'relevance', rather than merely the precise way that the space is occupied, has changed over the past 30 years.

Similarly, we have to bear in mind that while the relevance of education for employment remains dominant, conceptions of employment are shifting, in several ways. Similarly, relevance for social cohesion is recognized and important, but conceptions of it have changed, for instance as a result of migration, so that it, too, becomes much more multi-faceted and complex.

We also have to bear in mind that questions of relevance can be, and should be, asked in respect to subjects: Relevant for individuals? For societies? Relevant for what collective goals and aspirations? Relevant for what economic endeavours in a globally competitive world? These are quite different orders of questions, the responses to which seem rarely, if ever, to have been examined for compatibility and mutual contradictoriness, a consideration that cross-cuts and complicates questions of lexicon.

A further level of complexity is added by the fact that what we might call 'relevance tests' are applied at different levels, for instance determining what is relevant to a migrant youth is quite different from determining what is relevant for the economy or for the community. We find this, too, in the discussion of the conceptions of relevance in teacher education, which might be seen to be located almost in a vacuum in some countries; to the point where we have suggested that it is at the level of practice and experience that conceptions of relevance are constructed. Nevertheless, it was possible to point to two groupings of countries in this section, those placing more emphasis on questions of educational disadvantage – Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Slovenia, and those – the remainder – placing less emphasis on it.

However, we also have to take into account that high-level governance does not directly 'control' educational activities or conceptions of educational relevance; it is always mediated through other levels of governance. In this process high-level governors are able to set goals but they also need to enable the chances of their attainment in various ways. This is especially noted in the Italian case,

where it appears that central policies rarely come with any resources for their implementation. Another crucial feature of the multi-level nature of governance is that both discursive and institutional opportunity structures may vary at different levels of governance – and this can cause considerable confusion, albeit that it is rarely recognised, between different uses of the same term, in this case relevance. We found considerable evidence of this in the case of teacher training, where conceptions of relevance seemed rarely to be considered the business of high-level governance.

In some ways the issue of the relevance of education might be seen as the most important challenge to high-level governance, since this is typically where accountability for the contribution of education systems ultimately rests. We hope that this brief account of the multidimensional complexities involved in ‘governing relevance’ will contribute to a more complete understanding of the place of multiple relevance(s) in educational transitions.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused on the different actors’ perspectives regarding the relevance of education for young people who are in the transition phase from lower secondary to upper secondary education. The different actors – students, parents, teachers, teacher trainers, local experts and high-level experts – have different views on how and why education is relevant for young people. We can also find many differences, as well as similarities, on the country level and according to the characteristics of the respective education systems (differentiated or comprehensive). Nevertheless, the various argumentation and reasons found across the respondents reveal one common opinion: education and educational choices have a significant influence on the future lives of students.

One of the most apparent and common reason for the relevance of education is its link to the labour market. Even though the majority of respondents are aware that education offers no guarantees for a successful and stable position in the labour market many actors, nevertheless, regard education as crucial to ensure a place in the labour market, and in order to prevent exclusion from it.

Although students and parents have different ideas about how education is relevant for students, and how it can influence on their future life courses (some highlight more individual or subjective reasons, such as self-realization, fulfilment and feelings of accomplishment, while others more systemic or instrumental reasons, such as secure employment, sufficient income and assuring desired socio-economic position in a society), they generally express high educational aspirations and ascribe education a significant role in their future lives. Moreover, results show that the context (e.g. education system) has a great role in affecting the relevance students ascribe to education, as it provides the student with a frame of reference of what is possible to achieve and how to achieve it.

The relevance of education differs in the different countries. In some countries it is about choosing one’s educational trajectory, while in other countries it is more about trying to avoid ending up on the

wrong trajectory. For instance, in countries with well-developed apprenticeship or work placement training (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands), students may choose to enrol in full time education or enter the labour market after compulsory education, while in other countries full time education is considered as the only real option (e.g. Finland and Slovenia). Students might be sceptical about the link between education and work and future success, however they acknowledge that education is the only option and is important for other reasons (social, cultural symbolic) and see that attaining an education as high as possible, is something that they must achieve. Students from Poland and France are the most sceptical about the links between education and work. However, Polish students see that education is something they must achieve and therefore they want to receive as many qualifications as possible. French students, on the other hand, see also apprenticeship training or a full time job as an opportunity after compulsory education. In differentiated and stratified educational systems some educational routes to higher education are not available for students in lower tracks, they are “beyond” expectations and cannot, therefore, necessarily be seen as an indicator of low aspirations of students and parents.

Family background is also of great importance in how students regard the relevance of education. It is evident that student's with parents who have achieved higher levels of education have higher educational aspirations themselves. Also, highly educated parents are the least sceptical about the link between educational level and job opportunities.

The school context is of great importance as students in disadvantaged schools seem less likely to aspire to a university education. Teachers in all countries complain that parents are not supporting their children as much as they should, which is cited as a problem most apparent among socially disadvantaged families. In schools where many students are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds teachers complain that a lot of their time is used on upbringing tasks, which is essential in order to first create a learning atmosphere that makes teaching possible. High-level experts are aware of the great role school has in social integration and see the role of the school as important in order to compensate for social inequalities. However, not all experts agree that this is a task for the school, instead seeing teaching and educating students as the main task, while decreasing inequalities in society is considered the responsibility of other institutions and professionals.

Teachers are facing new trends and obligations as the life course of students becomes more individualized and de-standardized. Teacher training is facing these challenges and has an important task to adjust to the changing needs of teachers' competencies. It is acknowledged that the relevance of education for students is mediated through teachers and many teachers are also the role models to students as it is clear that they have an upbringing and guiding role. They may not want this role, however, many teachers, as well as students, parents and experts, still see these roles as important, in particular for students who do not get sufficient support and guidance at home.

While students, parents and teachers think more in terms of the subjective value of education, that is what the education can offer and provide to students themselves, experts, and in particular high-level

experts, are more aware of the demands of the labour market and the relevance of educating young people for the right professions. Experts in schools, who work very closely to the students, find education as a self-contained learning process. Experts and teachers are aware of the challenges young people will face, e.g. challenges to find a job and increased unemployment. Among high-level experts we can also find these two discourses: on one hand high-level experts find education relevant for the individual in order to prevent their exclusion or to reach their potential, on the other hand, high-level experts who are aware of the changing labour market structure needs.

3 Exploration of actor viewpoints on the relevance of education from a theoretical perspective

Having analyzed and discussed different actor views on how and why education is relevant for young people, this next chapter highlights the actors' perspectives in terms of theoretical concepts that were elaborated in the introduction, to grasp the theoretical idea of the relevance of education. This type of analytical strategy provides a frame of interpretation for how to combine different actor perspectives and translate them into conclusions for further school development in Europe. The theoretical concepts used are different and cover several distinct schools of thought. These are the concept *Bildung*, that refers to an interpretation of the relevance of education as a form of self-cultivation (3.1.); the concept of learning as social practice, that refers to the relevance of education in terms of its embeddedness in social life worlds with various forms of interactions between the actors (3.2.); and the concept of social and cultural reproduction, that gives an interpretation of the relevance of education in terms of theoretical explanatory models of social disparity (3.3.).

3.1 The relevance of education in terms of the concept of *Bildung*

As elaborated in the theoretical background, human development and pedagogical interactions cannot be grasped by the English term 'education' sufficiently in terms of the active contribution individuals have on their own education and learning processes. The individual always refers to the world as an objective culture and transforms it into individual personality or subjective self-identity. Therefore, what is grasped by the notion of '*Bildung*' is education as an end-in-itself for the individual. However, the analysis of the relevance of education for different actors mirrors more recent trends in educational policy, namely to understand education as the provision and acquisition of a certain set of skills, that is the practical abilities and competencies that are interpreted as being useful in terms of occupational qualification and hence better life chances. In the following all analysed actor perspectives and their interrelations will be elaborated with the focus of how they perceive the relevance of education in terms of the theoretical concept of *Bildung*.

From the *students'* perspective the definition of education and the belief in its relevance are important for their educational trajectories. Motivation to do well in school, to carry on after compulsory schooling, or to drop out, depend on the importance that young people assign to the point of getting an education, as well as on their 'objective' possibilities of being able to do so (Walther, 2009). Therefore, students had different ideas as to what they will do with their current level of education and what it can do for them at this stage in their lives (move into work or get further education) due to their education system and the relevance they assign to it in their context. Students from countries with more differentiated education systems were happier to leave education after compulsory school, showing a perspective that education is not the only route towards a socially recognized and subjectively satisfying future. Those within more structured systems were more likely to aim at higher

levels of education. Overall there was a variation of student perspectives across the countries in relation to thoughts on the relevance of education and to their feeling of active participation in society, as a responsible contributing citizen. It is obvious that both educational systems and theoretical concepts of education influence students' decisions. However, there are interesting contradictions. Students who appeared to be more sceptical about the links between education and access to the labor market (e.g., Germany and Slovenia, in both of which access to elite secondary education is highly contested) stressed that education was more than just a means for accumulating economic capital, emphasising cultural and social aspects of education as well. This could mean that it helped them to become rounded citizens who could contribute to their society. On the other hand, students who believed strongly that education opens doors into good careers stressed heavily the systematic interpretation of education for labour market entry, economic capital and material wealth (big house, lots of money).

Parents regard education as very important above all for students themselves, especially as key for labour market entry. They talk mainly about the importance of having a job according to their own individual interests, e.g. jobs that would instill self-realization and feelings of fulfillment and of accomplishment in their children. Thus, we could say that parents regard education as an important path (especially through providing knowledge, skills and competencies), which allows their children to actively participate in the social and economic world (especially in the labour market). This reveals that the parents' perspective is driven by the socioeconomic security of their children. In order to gain this security students need resources that they can transfer to become active agents of their own future, however, at the same time parents do not often refer to what their children could do, or how they contribute to the society, but instead focus on how they can benefit from education in terms of opportunities, participation in society and future life in general. This seems to be the biggest difference from the perspectives of teachers and experts.

According to the concept of 'Bildung' *teachers* refer much more often more to the reflexive process of their students, who in their mind should realise their human potential and should become subjective agents by actively exploring the material and social world. Mainly this is reflected in teachers' perspectives that show an understanding of school education, not only as institution where they have to impart knowledge to students, but also accept their upbringing tasks. The aim is to help students to become active citizens who will influence the development of future society and become part of, and participate, in that society. At the same time teachers stress that school is a place for socialization and critical thinking, important that is a influences which will how young people participate in, and shape, the world. The interesting aspect of the teachers' perspectives is that it mirrors the contents and values of their own education to become a teacher. This can be seen in the understanding of relevance of education from teacher trainers' perspectives.

The *teacher trainers'* perspective reveals that one dimension of the relevance of education is that teachers should guide students on their way to becoming a active members of society, respectively

making them an integrated part of the social community in the sense of a responsible and reliable citizen. The relevance of education is much more than delivering knowledge and skills, it is about motivating students to develop their own interests and enthusiasm in understanding the world as well as giving them values that lead to an attitude that what an individual contributes to a democratic society matters. Education is about preparing students to become independent citizens with their own beliefs and values, according to democratic values, who are able to act on that basis and contributes to the further development of society. One can see the links to the teachers' perspective clearly here. Also, experts are stressing the idealistic aspect of education and with this the idea of Bildung is stronger than it is found in the perspectives of students and parents.

Local experts regard education as very relevant for students in relation to their active participation in society. In all countries local experts see the task of school as developing students into well-rounded individuals: to equip them with life skills; give them the confidence and self-esteem to make informed choices and decisions to progress in life. Local level experts wish students to become self-sufficient citizens, and to develop their full potential. Practically all actors stress the twofold tasks of education, knowledge transfer/acquisition and the development of social, mental and behavioral properties in the student's personality. In Finland, for example, guidance counselors work very closely with the students, to try to find the right educational path for them. The aim is not only to find a path which takes into account the restrictions appropriate to their leaving certificate, but also to find out what the student is interested in and where the student could develop these skills. On the other hand, school youth workers and psycho-medical personnel seems to be more concerned with students' problems and problem behaviors and therefore stress the importance of competence training, while labour market related experts are more focused on vocational competencies. So one can say that although the idea of Bildung is recognized by local experts their perspectives are always connected to their concrete working field. On the other hand, the perspective of high-level experts is more homogenous

The idea of Bildung, appears in some of the discussions with *high-level experts*, especially in Germany. Many high-level experts regard education as relevant in order to support students to become autonomous people, who can develop their full potential. A high-level expert in Germany argues that "Concerning education, I still have a classical ideal. So, firstly education has to bring benefits to the single human being. It has to bring the individual forward. In the life what he desires, in his reflections". In other countries the concept of Bildung does not seem to appear as clearly. In France, for example, several experts explain that one problem is that there is no consensus on the objectives of the educational system, the only clear objective of the educational system is to transfer core knowledge.

In summary, one can see that the role of education in terms of the concept of Bildung varies according to the actors. For entrepreneurs, the role of education is to provide an educated work force; for parents, it is to provide a well-paid job; for students, it is to create achievement; for teachers, to transmit culture and values. Yet these perceptions are sometimes in competition. However, the most

interesting aspect of this analysis is that students and parents both stress the future occupational aspect of education much more, whereas the idea of Bildung is widespread among the other actors.

3.2 The relevance of education in terms of the concept of learning as social practice

The theoretical perspective used in this chapter is concerned with the social conditions of education and, in a broader sense, with the educational conditions of social life. It is clear that education is negotiated in social life and experienced in interaction with (significant) others. Social relationships are key to understanding the subjective identity-building processes, internalized learning habits, and experienced norms, values and practices. At the same time formal learning depends on its integration with the individual *lifewide* learning biography, so much of the relevance of education is negotiated in out-of-school contexts. Moreover, the simple idea behind a concept of the learning of social practice is that family, friendships, peer groups or youth cultures provide various forms of support in different contexts, with different functions and meanings and different consequences. The perception of support forms part of the social learning of young people because it reflects social experiences that influence the understanding of the relevance of education. At the same time social discourses are influenced by the meanings of the relevance of out-of-school contexts and the perception of (educational) support, and thus they influence social learning processes themselves. All three dimensions: out-of-school context and their meaning for social learning (see 3.2.1); perception of support as part of social learning (3.2.2) and social discourses as influence of social learning (3.2.3), will be further explored in what follows.

3.2.1 *Out-of-school contexts and their meaning for social learning*

Students find the formal curriculum boring, overloaded and too concerned with abstract subjects; they yearn for more practical experiences outside the classroom. Out-of-school life usually finds no, or very little, recognition in school. One of the many consequences of such an unbalanced curriculum is the perpetuation of social inequality. A broader curriculum would benefit all students, but particularly socially disadvantaged students (and their families). Yet the GOETE data shows some examples of schools which do try to make up for too much restriction to formal curricular learning, by turning to community resources. In some cases this is counteracted by parents.

Focusing on *parents*, one can see that socially disadvantaged parents in particular give less importance to informal learning. The results show that in most schools the value and incidence of out-of-school learning is reserved to privileged parents who can provide their offspring with diverse leisure agendas which incorporate learning capital (music and ballet lessons, foreign language courses, sport and ICT clubs). In school and in the classroom the formal curriculum is so tightly organised that there is little or no room and financial means for out-of-school projects or fieldtrips. This is the case in both

comprehensive and selective schools. Many students complain about it, which shows us again the importance of out-of-school contexts in students' perspectives on the relevance of education, while parents' perspectives tend to be connected to lack of resources, which could also be a realistic coping strategy for dealing with school demands and wishing for better future chances for their children. Both school perspectives and teachers' views are more meritocracy-driven.

Teachers stress the importance of education in terms of participation in wider society, which could be described as the most important aspect of social contexts in their (professional) view. However, they know very little about how students spend their leisure time or the conceptions of the relevance of education they develop in their after-school-life. School is considered a place of social interaction, with different elements of youth culture. Teachers accept this socializing aspect of school, but in almost all countries this aspect is not stressed as being important. Teachers are faced with other problems, such as behavioral problems, which they ascribe to the out-of-school lives and activities of students. As a result, for many teachers working with especially socially disadvantaged students, teaching means to teach manners. They emphasize the need to create a functioning learning atmosphere so that students can better relate to those learning contents later in their training and occupational life. Here again, a perspective on education as qualification and allocation becomes visible. In some countries, teachers experiment with new forms of teaching in an attempt to make education more attractive and relevant for (socially disadvantaged) students. For instance, they experiment with teaching in small groups (islands) instead of class work which focuses on individual forms of study. A variety of methods like group work or project work or outside school practice is common in most of the countries, though teacher-centered teaching remains dominant. Overall teachers' perspectives could be described as concentrating on more school-related contexts when it comes to the relevance of education, and so they seem to largely overlook the out-of-school activities and contexts of students. This is mirrored in teacher education.

In the view of the *teacher trainers* the social environment, which is strongly influenced by the students' peer group, is not as important in how education becomes relevant for young people. The students' social environment is widely neglected, not only in the view of teacher trainers, but also in the reality of school life. While teacher training curricula may proclaim that teaching has to take the students' interests and experiences into account, such proclamations seem rhetorical, because they are often limited to cognitive learning and instruction and do not account for an awareness of the students' "real" living conditions or their background contexts. On considering the teacher trainer's perspective on the relevance of education in terms of social practice of the individual as active learner situated within social contexts, it becomes obvious that preparing individuals in problem solving and coping with everyday life is not a priority. Preparing student teachers to handle the social conditions of students' education and the educational conditions of social life seems to be widely neglected not only in the teacher trainers' perspective but also in the organisation of teacher training and its curricula. This suggests that, issues arising from the concept of students as individual learners are still not very

prominent in teacher training (thinking of contents like individual teaching, handling heterogeneity, diagnosis), as the evidence of the project clearly show.

Local experts, who for the most part do not work directly in schools, recognise the importance of out-of-school contexts because, from their point of view, different social contexts inside or outside of school motivate students in their educational life trajectories. There are examples in countries like the UK, Italy or Germany where motivation is stimulated through non-formal courses and extra-curricular activities provided through the youth work or community work sector. Such influences can also be seen in an example from Slovenia, where a student who was given the opportunity to work as a babysitter abroad enrolled in, and completed, a programme for educators after their return with the aim of working in kindergarten one day. Another example can be found in Finland where the so called 'weighted curricula' give students the choice to follow subjects of their liking, such as computer science, music, language or art courses. Interests and hobbies can thus be brought into the formal curriculum and may serve as a springboard to further (general) education. Therefore, it is not surprising that experts on the local level find it very important to increase individual learning plans for students and to find new ways of supporting students' individual needs. In Finland, for example, it is considered very important for schools to include access to extracurricular activities for students, for example after school clubs. The national policy has, however, been to abolish after school clubs because of a lack of resources. However, there has been a great increase in specialized lower secondary schools and specialized general upper secondary schools (Järvinen, 2000).

Out-of-school contexts seem to be very important for the relevance of education for every reference group. This can be seen in national implementations of all-day schools, such as those in Germany, where all-day schools may compete with other institutions such as sports clubs and churches. There are also examples of unassuming forms of all-day schools, leaving students space for other activities. However, there is no one model providing policy guidelines of what kind of personnel should be employed and how the different professionals should cooperate. In many cases the personnel involved are not restricted to professionals but includes parents, students and other voluntary workers.

3.2.2 Perception of support as part of social learning

Parents, friends and siblings were the people students would most commonly turn to for support when facing problems in their life (such as a relationship issues, drinking, being unhappy), with the mother being the main parent students would talk to. School-related people do not rate very highly as people to talk to in regard to non-school related issues (McDowell et al., 2012). Friends were reported to be the main support mechanism with 21 per cent of students reporting they would turn to a friend when in need of help. Similar results were found in relation to support with school problems, but here we see an increase in students who would turn to school related staff, if facing challenges at school (struggling with school work, bullying, etc).

Overall, the majority of all student respondents (94%) think that in cases of problems with their school work students would seek advice from their mother, friends (74%), father (74%), or teacher (68%). A closer look in terms of the socio-demographic groups of parents shows the expected correlation, the less parents are educated and the more they are socially disadvantaged, the less they think that children will seek advice from them in the case of problems with school work (McDowell et al., 2012). This indicates that parents and friends provide the most important support for students, both in the case of problems in life in general as well as problems with schoolwork. When families are so much more important than other groups and experts for educational coping and well-being, the reproduction of social (educational) and economic disadvantage is even more likely. Without strong support networks, especially in terms of help with schoolwork, these students are in very vulnerable positions and face a higher risk of failure or poor school performance. All this has negative consequences on their plans and options for future educational trajectories and *life courses* as well as to *access to the next educational levels*.

Research results show that parents have a very significant influence over their children's education and thus importantly co-determine their attitudes regarding the relevance of education. Their involvement takes many forms: from offering learning and other forms of support, advice, information, to a more direct involvement such as evaluating and contextualising their children's future wishes and hopes, providing a "realistic perspective" and even directly guiding their children's choices. In some cases they even act as "gatekeepers" (cf. Razpotnik et al., 2012). While the level of influence varies from case to case, the subjective characteristics or socio-economic and cultural status of families are important determining factors. Two overarching, but opposing, sets of parental attitudes were found – parents who support their children in their choices, but do not want to interfere in their child's decision ("children must choose by themselves"), and those who interfere and direct their children in their educational careers. Moreover, quantitative results have shown that across the researched countries conversations between parents and students about future education or career possibilities are very frequent: 53% of parents in the overall sample report that they have discussed this issue with their children on a weekly or daily basis. This reveals the perceived importance families place on their children's future life and educational trajectories and indicates how strong the parents' influence might be.

One clear and well recognised pattern is that an increase in parental education in general increases the educational aspirations of their children. Students who have parents with higher levels of education (e.g. past compulsory schooling) are more likely to want to go onto further/higher education themselves, which could be a result of parental support, influence or pressure to do so. Parents' expectations for their children's life chances can have consequences for the educational decisions the students take. Conversations between parents and students about future education or career possibilities are very frequent in all researched countries. This shows how the future life and educational trajectories are an important concern in the sampled families and, furthermore, indicates that parents have an important influence on the educational decision-making of students. Therefore

students' who inherit the attitude that education is important for a good career from their parents may be able, and more motivated, to advance further than those who have not. They have learnt from their parents that education is crucial for employment, especially for higher status occupations.

Overall *students* across the EU countries gave positive reports about the support of their peers the encouragement and interest they received from their teachers, and the friendliness of the classroom environment (McDowell et al., 2012). However, differences were found between disadvantage/affluent school students who reported higher levels of positive teacher-student relationships in their schools compared to those in average schools. When Allmendinger's education system typology was considered significant differences were found for both positive teacher-student and student-student relationships. Low stratified/low standardised groups report the most positive student-student relationships and student-teacher relationships. The low stratified/high standardised group has the poorest level of student-teacher relations but describe better student-student relations. So it is evident that schools that differ in socioeconomic status and education typology can affect the strengths of relationships that students have with each other, and with their teachers. These differences may affect how a student feels that he/she can cope in school. Those with more positive relationships in school feel happier to talk to staff or peers than those who do not.

The interaction between students and teachers seems to be very important as teachers are role models for students, as indicated by all reference groups researched in GOETE. Teachers stress the motivational disposition of students as being very important for their academic and vocational success. Teachers also stress that the motivational disposition of students can impact teacher practice and, consequently, a successful or unsuccessful professional career. On the other hand many teachers recognize the need to motivate students as one of their core tasks. In some countries aspiration can be replaced by a pragmatic motivation, where teachers guide students toward what they perceive as achievable for their futures instead of toward their unrestricted plans or choices. The problem for students with such a functional understanding of education, where motivation should derive from the motivation to get a realistic job, is that students don't feel taken seriously. Students need encouragement and not just precise instructions on how to achieve something. In the worst case scenario functional types of motivation have lowered ideas of what is 'realistic' and can trigger a "cooling out" processes that can significantly slow down students' potential.

Another characteristic aspect of the interaction of students and teachers is that teachers seem to have only vague ideas about their students' life outside school. For example in the Netherlands and Germany teachers find it annoying that students pay a lot of attention to their mobile phones. Teachers feel intimidated when confronted with lot of technology they cannot relate to and don't understand. When teachers do not understand the lifestyles of their students, and vice versa, this could be interpreted as a sort of a generational gap in school that influences the perspectives of the relevance of education and how it is communicated between teachers and students.

The *teacher trainers'* view implies that it might be more often the parent's expectation that students perform well in the education system than the students'. Teachers focus on good achievement, but in the end they are not fully responsible for their student's trajectories as students have to cope on their own, at least when they leave school. In this process parents play the most important role in motivating and supporting their children during their educational transitions. Thus it is very striking that, according to the analysis, teacher training does not contribute very much to equipping student teachers for parent-teacher conferences or working with parents.

Local Experts often focused on disadvantage factors, which influence education success. Consequently, experts underline, much more than parents and teachers, the importance of policies and practices that support socially disadvantaged students in their educational process. Moreover, experts appear to give less importance to the school results of those students and are more interested on the opportunity to provide social and individual care. From this perspective positive assumptions in terms of a good family relationship, integration into the school environment, coping skills for language difficulties (for students with migrant backgrounds) and good relationships with peers, are the basis for a successful schooling process. The local expert's job also focuses on involving parents, especially in socially disadvantage environments where parents are often insufficiently conscious of their role as fundamental supporters of the educational process. In some cases local experts assume the role of 'adult reference' for teenagers, when parents are not sufficiently present in this task. In terms of supporting and working with students, local experts in a pedagogical perspective use the students group as a context to promote learning. The real issue is not the interaction between peers - which is a natural process- but promoting cooperation, avoiding destructive conflict and tensions, and focusing on learning motivation. Local experts have usually developed considerable expertise in this area. A good school/class atmosphere is regarded as important for improving learning by some local experts who work closely with students. The school may improve the class atmosphere through different exercises or anti-bullying programs (Finland).

According to a *high-level expert* in Germany, students should be involved in school choice and should not just listen to what parents want. Parents always want the best education for their child. If young people feel unsupported they regard the world as an adversary. Therefore it is essential that parents to support the school because, otherwise, it is the school that sets their borders/limits and possibilities. One expert in Germany believes that the children should have the last word, although he also recognizes that this is unrealistic. A new understanding is needed of the role of parents. For example, it is not the parents who should help with the homework, but school should assist in this through full-day organisation, while parents provide an interest in what happens at school. Moreover, a French high-level expert, emphasises the need to trust the parents and to treat them as co-educators, recognising that parents in the current system are completely powerless. However, in the French system a centralised administration notably lacks the room for manoeuvre (needed to cater for such different territories) for the regional administration and for schools.

The school overall has to enhance its relationship with parents and although such enhancement is recognised in all GOETE countries, there is little or no evidence that anything is being done to enhance the school's relationship with parents. In Slovenia, one expert believes that the relationship between parents and teachers has become absurd, since parents exploit legal means for what they believe are their rights. Another Slovenian expert says parents have unreal expectations from their children.

3.2.3 Social discourses as influence of social learning

Education systems were found to have an effect on students' attitudes to further education, providing evidence that institutions' particular ways of thinking and doing can influence future generations of what they find to be important in their next transition stages. Considering the results from the student data, Allmendinger's classification showed that the way that education systems are organised has a relatively strong influence on students' perceptions of the relevance of education in their lives and their motivations and feelings of scepticism with respect to what education can deliver in later life. Allmendinger's classification is intended as a typology that links education systems to labour market outcomes and indeed the extent to which education systems are differentiated into different tracks and standardised highlighted many commonalities in the data. In particular the low stratified and high standardised systems stood out (represented by Finland and Slovenia) as the places where in general the most positive dispositions towards education were observed. This provides evidence that the context of the education system can directly affect the importance students assign to education and affect their motivation to remain in lifelong learning.

In terms of the wider, societal context, *parents* are mostly concerned about the future placement of their children in society. They show very high educational aspirations for their children and hope education will provide them with good opportunities on the labour market, both in terms of instrumental socio-economic position in society as well as subjective satisfaction with their jobs. Although their educational aspirations are very high, with socially disadvantaged families especially hoping that their children will attain better positions for themselves and have a better life than they had, those aspirations and opportunities are strongly related to socio-economic positions in the society. Research results thus indicate that despite high hopes that education could enable social mobility; educational inequalities are most likely to be reproduced. Parents are also quite skeptical about the links between education and job possibilities, which shows that parents are aware that education alone is no guarantee for later career possibilities or secure employment.

Here the interaction between teachers and parents seems to be very problematic. Teachers complain a lot about parents, who from their perspective do not discharge their upbringing tasks. Teachers also complain about a general loss of autonomy, with increasing parental interference in teaching and evaluation, and protectiveness. For example, in the case of Slovenia parents see their children as discriminated against or treated unfairly by teachers. For teachers this necessitates an emphasis on

guidance and counseling tasks because, according to some teacher respondents, some parents do not recognise that their child has the potential to attend general upper secondary school.

At the same time many *teachers* complain about the bad reputation they have in society, and that current educational problems attributed to their alleged incompetence, without reflecting on where these problems might come from. Teachers lack social recognition for their role as teachers in the society. At the same time many teachers feel confronted with the demands of school administration and exam regulations which are more interested in measurable output factors (success rates of exams, decrease of early school leaving percentages) than in conditions of school life and working conditions. It is, therefore, no wonder that teachers complain about school reforms, which they think are too many and too often. From their experience a lot of things are often changed without any insight in long-term consequences and no knowledge about the school system in practice. Teachers find it difficult to keep track of all these changes, as they have to adapt their work all the time. At the same time they believe that they are left out the decision making processes, as reforms are made at the high national level, often without asking for their practice-orientated opinion.

Linked to the cultural dimension of education, which is prominent in the *teacher trainers'* view, there is the societal expectation that schools are responsible for educating students in both knowledge production and the development of basic skills. Teachers are supposed to be experts in instruction and learning and have to prepare students for all necessary skills needed in the vocational sector. In the meantime, it seems, teachers may monopolise preparation for the labour market, while parents and other family members, as well as educational institutions outside school (e.g. churches), play a more and more of a secondary role.

The relevance of the social dimension of education might also be improved by the interaction of *teacher trainers* with teachers in service, educational policy and the public experience, as it becomes more and more difficult to keep young people out of risky situations (crime, drugs, social deprivation and neglect etc.). It is increasingly the case that preparing young people to act responsibly in a diverse world is a more important goal of school and education than it used to be. Schools and teachers are key players that mediate between all actors directly involved in student's trajectories and transitions (advising and supporting students and parents, discussing problems occurring in the relationships between students, cooperation with school social workers and school psychologists, arranging internships etc.). This interpretation leads to the notion of school and teachers being the crux for intermediating the possible definitions of the "relevance of education".

The societal context is the field where educational efforts could find either strong support, or significant obstacles. When local experts get spaces and resources for supporting educational process – during school time, but also outside of school – or when they are able to activate this net of social actors, the social environment becomes a 'Local Educative System' (Frabboni, 1988).

In Finland the emphasis on supporting students to be autonomous is stronger among local experts, for example an external expert from Finland argues that:

“It is good to notice that this isn’t the field which is my thing” (...) “one has to respect that the young person knows himself best.” (Expert 2 Finland)

In countries with a strong early selection system, such as the Netherlands and Germany, there is a strong emphasis on meritocracy. For example, in the Netherlands great emphasis is placed on advancing students according to their intelligence and ability, this aspect of education policy seems to be very strong, with for example, ethnic differences not being seen as a concern of education policy, where social inequalities are seen as a separate matter. The expression by the current Minister in the Netherlands is an example of this:

“the quality of education is more important than the fact that a child is enrolled in a black or white school (...) It is good when people from different cultures meet, but for me, as the Minister, fighting segregation is not a goal” (Dale et al., 2012: 59).

Among high-level experts the subject perspective seems to be more connected on finding any place in education or training for young people, in order to prevent them from become marginalized. For example, there should be a focus on finding a place in education for everyone. This is the primary goal. But of course there is always someone for whom school is not an option, and in this case some kind of job is preferable to wandering the streets.

In a "communities of practice" perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991), school and families have to develop a good partnership, an educative alliance to provide a positive and integrated background to support the growing process of young people. Sometimes (e.g. in Poland) teachers claim their role is becoming more often one of a social worker. In our European society care and support - traditionally provided to children by the family - is progressively decreasing, especially in economically disadvantaged situations. Moreover, school and teachers (e.g. Italy) are losing their social status and, in the meanwhile, because of the economic crisis, many countries are reducing their financial support to the welfare state. These situations strongly restrict the possibilities of developing the alliance between schools and families in which experts could give their professional help. When school has to cope with many different issues and the family cannot represent a solid stakeholder for children, it becomes hard for experts to perform their role. Luckily, in the most of the cases, the situation is not that bad yet, but we have to underline the present and attempt to stimulate the consistent development of communities of practice.

3.3 The relevance of education in terms of social and cultural reproduction

We have referred at several places in this report to the importance of social class, in terms both of defining educational relevance, and of being able to realize the aspired-to relevance. In this subchapter, we want to try to understand the nature and consequences of those social class

differences more deeply. To do so, we will draw on the very well-known work in this area of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu.

3.3.1 Bourdieu's idea of cultural arbitrary as analysing frame for the understanding of the relevance of education

Two of his concepts are especially useful in the case of the relationship between social class and the conception and realization of relevance. The first refers to his view of how relevance is constituted. For Bourdieu and Passeron, conceptions of relevance would come under the heading of 'cultural arbitrary'. They define it thus: "In any given social formation the legitimate pedagogic action, e.g. the pedagogic action endowed with the dominant legitimacy, is nothing other than the arbitrary imposition of the dominant cultural arbitrary insofar as it is misrecognized in its objective truth as the dominant pedagogic action and the imposition of the dominant culture." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990: 22). That is to say, there is nothing intrinsic in the nature of the dominant culture. Rather, it is the result of the ability of particular group or groups to impose their own conception of 'culture', which may be expected to reflect their own interests. Thus, as David Swartz puts it, "all cultural systems are fundamentally human constructions that stem from the activities and interest of particular groups and that legitimate unequal power relations among groups" (Swartz, 1998: 86). However, Swartz goes on to argue that these cultural arbitraries are not arbitrary in their social consequences. Rather, they function to "differentiate and legitimate inegalitarian and hierarchical relations among individuals and group" (ibid).

So, what makes the dominant cultural arbitrary dominant, is that its legitimation comes not from any intrinsic value, but from the degree to which it expresses the objective interests (material and symbolic) of the dominant groups or classes, Bourdieu and Passeron emphasise that it is largely the educational system that institutionalizes these cultural arbitraries, for instance in the form of making them into qualifications, and by making the allocation of those qualifications appear as results of individual ability (or the lack of them). The specific content of the dominant cultural or linguistic form – or cultural capital – is less important for Bourdieu's theory than the mere existence of an arbitrary standard which is recognized as legitimate even by those unable to perform it. Lower-class students do not in general possess these traits, so the failure of the majority of these students is inevitable, but explained as 'natural' rather than socio-politically constructed. Therefore, for Bourdieu, educational credentials help to reproduce and legitimate social inequalities, as higher-class individuals are seen to *deserve* their privileged access to them.

"... it [education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one." (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 32)

The habitus is a system of durable (once formed, they last throughout the lifetime) and transportable dispositions inculcated by objective structural conditions (such as family background and experiences and ways of seeing the world), in the sense that individuals are disposed, not determined, to act in a

certain way based on previous experience (Bourdieu, 1990). Crucially, the habitus is seen as being embodied, and as generating practices for members of particular social groups (and it should be noted that all social groups have their own habituses, not just the socially disadvantaged; indeed these habituses are what distinguish the academically, socially and economically successful). People's habitus is acquired as part of their socialization, a set of dispositions which reflect central structural elements. Importantly, they are structures of perception and appreciation simultaneously structured by objective social conditions, and structuring these conditions through the generation of flexible practices.

Most importantly, Bourdieu sees school as a productive locus of habitus, which gives rise to patterns of thought which organise reality by directing and organising thinking about reality by directing and makes what he thinks thinkable for him as such and in the particular form in which it is thought' (1971, 194-5), so that 'it may be assumed that every individual owes to the type of schooling he has received a set of basic deeply interiorised master patterns' (ibid, 192-3).

Thus, together, the cultural arbitrary and the habitus powerfully, though not automatically or definitively, shape conceptions of educational relevance. In essence, the cultural arbitrary means that everyone is led to want the same things, and the habitus means that they all have different and durable, capacities to achieve those ends. However, it is important to note that the cultural arbitrary and the habitus are not experienced in the same way at all times and in all places. As we will see in the remainder of this subchapter, they are implemented in different ways, at all levels of governance and practice, though necessarily remaining within the limits set by the two structuring forces.

Drawing on the GOETE data we see those with 'high' cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital are privileged in schooling, where children who do not have such capital available are educationally disadvantaged. Indeed we see *students* whose parents have relative higher positions in the social hierarchy on the basis of financial funds, power and prestige, aim to achieve higher levels of education by carrying on past lower and upper secondary schooling into Higher Education. Overall, we can see an association between parental socio-economic class and its influence on their child's future plans in regards to their higher/further education decisions. Students interviewed wanted to follow in their parents' footsteps in terms of occupation; however, class 1 type jobs are the most popular in the majority of countries even when parents hold lower sales and service positions. This indicates that within each country (with the exception of Finland) students are aspiring to get occupations in higher level or lower level management positions; jobs which all require further and higher education. So although there is some effect of parental occupation group on students' aspiration, many aim higher than the jobs their parents actually hold. This could be a result of parental support, or pressure, encouraging children to achieve the best job they can. Motivation behind getting one's education and a good job as result may be as a means for upward social mobility. It could also be a result of the message transmitted from high-level governance that anyone can succeed in school through hard work and application.

Almost overriding habitus at one level, in the form of educational aspirations – an indication of the power of the cultural arbitrary that places the highest emphasis on economic achievement – *parents* regard education as very important for their children's future. A great majority (almost 90%) of them would like their child to remain in full-time education after finishing compulsory education and over 60% of them would like their child to attain tertiary educational level. Reasons for the high relevance of education are systemic/instrumental as well as more subjective/individual; nevertheless, the majority of the stated reasons are most commonly related to the future employment of children. In terms of systemic/instrumental reasons, attaining a diploma (certificates), getting a safe job, securing good income and good socio-economic positions in a society are most prominent. Socio-cultural-economic capital of the families has a strong influence on parental views regarding educational aspirations, most probable future status of the families, access and barriers to education. Although some families express a belief that social inequalities could be surpassed by a good school performance and attaining high and adequate educational levels, the research results show that on the general or overall level, educational and social inequalities are likely to be reproduced. As one can see, habitus remains highly influential at the level of educational practice

Teachers' perspective of the relevance of education is dominated by an understanding of education as knowledge transfer. Therefore in their view especially knowledge based skills such as language proficiency or numeracy are most important for students. Dutch teachers in lower vocational education, even emphasize "hand skills" as essential for being good and successful in vocational education. Teachers are well aware of the demands of the labor market today, that's why they try to impart skills that students will need for their transition into training and employment. Also the aim of teachers could be described by guiding students in vocational and professional orientation. On the one side they are willing to give extracurricular support when needed, on the other side they stress the importance of certificates what students need to realize themselves. This seems to be the most important aspect for teachers' action orientation and the basis for their professional self-understanding.

According to the *teacher trainers'* perspective, the relevance of education is most often seen as increasing specific content knowledge and professional skills, which means developing human capital and respective cultural resources. This dimension covers all kind of knowledge acquired in the several subjects as well as methodological skills (learning how to learn) or professional skills (being able to communicate appropriately). It is undisputable that education (at school) has to qualify young people for the labour market and that it has the function to allocate students to several occupational areas through giving them knowledge and skills as well as giving them vocational guidance. This dimension might be the most obvious, not only because different actors agree with this understanding of education being relevant, but also because it legitimates school and teacher training through a visible and measurable function.

Local experts acknowledge the influence of the socioeconomic position or family background. Many experts state that a weak socioeconomic background has a negative impact on how students perform in school and how they are motivated to learn in school. According to experts, parents in malfunctioning families often have only elementary education and do not see the need of education for their children. Students deprived of support at home have the least chance and more important than the parents' education level are their attitude and interest in the child education and the value of importance of education. Italian experts say that one problem is that some parents are not capable to take responsibility and assure competent parenting because of their almost total lack of cultural tools (Barberis et al., 2012). In Finland local experts seems to think, or want to believe, that all students have equal opportunities, however they might recognize that some students struggle more than others due to, for example, a problematic family background. In other countries, there seems to be a stronger discussion regarding the socioeconomic capital and its influence on future opportunities.

In all countries the support from the family is regarded as very important in how motivated students are about education; if the parents do not feel education is important, the student won't either. According to some local experts, cultural, social and economic capital of families strongly influences the abilities of families to make informed decisions. Thus there is an emerging trend towards the confirmation of family status, ambitions and social, economic and cultural capital. Parents have considerable influence on their children's educational transitions. In all countries we can distinguish between different attitudes among parents according to experts – those who support their children in their choices, but do not want to interfere or influence their decision, and those who interfere and direct their children in their educational careers, as well as parents who don't have the means and capacity to guide or support their children due to lack of knowledge, lack of language skills in the language used in the school or due to personal problems; e.g. mental problems, drug or alcohol abuse. In some exceptional cases, a difficult background or a bad financial situation might even increase the aspirations and motivation of a student to study. These cases seem however to be rare exceptions.

According to local and *high-level experts*, the school has an important role to play in reducing social inequalities or compensating for them, especially in cases where the student does not receive support from the family. A differentiated school system and early selection is one important feature which is regarded as putting students in a disadvantaging position. A unified school system and later, or even no, separation in different school tracks is claimed as important by many experts in order to avoid early selection and therefore early social disadvantage (cf. Boron et al., 2012: 63). It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the two types of schooling are the direct result of high-level governance, as, are equally importantly, issues like school zoning.

3.3.2 Bourdieu's forms of capital as an analytical frame for the understanding of the relevance of education

Bourdieu distinguishes three main forms of capital associated with education; cultural, social and economic capital. He draws attention to the nature of their importance when he writes 'the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the set of constraints, which frame how the world works, and shapes the chances of success for different forms of knowledge and practices' (Bourdieu, 1997: 46), in a sense echoing the distinction between cultural arbitrary and habitus.

Economic capital is the most obvious of the three. It is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights. We should note here that there are rather different types of money, and ways of converting other things into forms that are monetarily valorisable. This is important, for not all the goals of education are intended to be, or seen to be valorisable in the form of money, as we will see below.

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: (1) in the *embodied* state, e.g., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body. Here, the notion of cultural capital is very close to that of habitus. (2) in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods', which include the usual overt symbols, such as books in the house, in some forms of IT, in pictures, instruments, etc. And (3) in the *institutionalized* state, of which educational credentials are the clearest example, representing publicly levels of attained cultural capital. But we should also notice that holding the first – and aspects of the second – form of cultural capital can also be a means of accessing other forms of cultural capital, such as feeling at ease with professionals such as teachers, and being able to gain access to crucial information, for instance about the means of accessing desirable schools. It may be in these ways that parental cultural capital most differentiates different social classes.

Finally, *social capital* is related to membership in groups or association which, in itself provides a form of 'credential'. It is the basis of and continuity of the value of 'who you know'. However, once again, this form of cultural capital is not confined to those rich in the other forms of capital. Social capital is, for instance, essentially what holds communities together, and the basis of distribution of other forms of capital within the group. So, for instance, particular migrant groups may become associated with particular jobs, or trades, often passing them on within families.

The Economic perspective

However, given all more general perspectives elaborated above, it is clear that *students'* motivation to either continue or drop out of education were influenced by their own interpretations of the relevance they assigned to education. Examining students' perspectives as to why they felt education was, or was not important, highlighted some differences between those with a mainly subjective interpretation (France) and those with a systematic interpretation of education (UK), and there were of course students who held both views (Slovenia, Finland, Germany). In order to fulfill societal functions as

qualification, allocation and integration, education needs to provide skills, knowledge and competencies and the students seemed to recognize all these factors as relevant aspects of education. Students in every country acknowledged not only the economic capital of education (money and assets) but cultural, social and symbolic capital to the extent to which varied across the 8 countries, And though they are not necessarily conscious that these forms of capital had shaped their own views, this in itself constitutes another particularly powerful aspect of the forms of capital.

Many students were driven by the external systematic reasons for education – gaining economic capital – aiming for a good job that equates as one that provides money to buy material possessions (e.g. UK). The type of job desired by the student can affect the aspects of education they see as relevant with regard to the contents and direction of certain occupations, as well as the level of qualifications required. Curricula and qualifications represent access to different levels in the occupational hierarchy, with jobs in the higher ESeC levels requiring more education than those in the lower levels. Students demonstrate awareness of this. And although confidence is not extremely strong in any country that these types of jobs will be secured, many still aspire to get these professional level jobs. The concerns that students have about not getting qualifications needed to get such jobs, or even getting the education level needed but not being able to secure a job due to job shortages in every country, due to the current economic climate, are recurrent themes. Results from the PALS scores indicates that the students in the GOETE study are aware of underemployment issues and that education does not necessarily lead to employment (Colley et al., 2002; Walther et al., 2006; Machacek & Walther, 2008). It does not, however, prevent these students having such ambitions, and acknowledging the importance of education in achieving their dreams.

In the view of *parents*, children's future employment and subsequent economic position in society is the single most prominent reason for the relevance of education. It is also regarded as "the most promising way" to secure a safe and stable employment in the labour market as well as a tool towards better and independent socio-economic position of children, especially for the socially disadvantaged families. However, although educational aspirations are very high and education is considered very relevant, parents express considerable scepticism about the link between education and job possibilities, which indicates a parental awareness that in contemporary European societies education alone is no guarantee for later career possibilities or secure employment. Yet, most educated parents, who are usually also the ones with the most decision making power in governing individual life-courses (in terms of available educational choices and later career opportunities) are less sceptical. They recognize and strive to pass on the educational advantages they have. Likewise, as expected, parents from disadvantaged schools and least educated parents considerably more often worried about their child doing badly in school or not being able to find employment, while such worries steadily decrease with higher socio-economic status. Notably, educational aspirations and opportunities are strongly related to the economic position of the families; for example, what the students will most likely do after compulsory education is strongly subjected to the socio-economic position of the families; students from disadvantaged schools (21%) and from families, where mothers

have the lowest level of education (26%), are considerably more likely to engage in work than students of affluent schools (7%) or those, where mothers have tertiary education (5%) (see Table 12 in section 2.2). Thus, students from families with lower socio-economic-cultural capital are more likely to leave education early. Although educational aspirations of socially disadvantaged families are lower than of the more affluent ones, they are still very high; for example, 42% of families, where mothers have only basic education, want their children to attain tertiary level of education. Despite high educational aspirations, only 72% of parents with basic education believe their children will continue with the secondary level of education, in contrast to parents with tertiary education, where the proportion is substantially higher (94%) (see tables 12 and 13 in section 2.2).

Drawing on *teachers'* perspectives one can conclude that teachers consider all capital dimensions of education as being relevant for students. As could be shown above in this report, in teachers' view the pragmatic, functional dimension of education is dominant. That means the main task of education is to provide knowledge that gives young people a better chance on the labor market so they can care for themselves and become full-value members of the society. This attitude and understanding of the relevance of education could be interpreted in terms of their teaching methods, their supporting forms and contents as well. Lessons and support are more organized in terms of knowledge transfer and less on self-reflection and reasonable thinking. Also this can be interpreted as implicit aim to make students able to accumulate all three types of capital by themselves. Of course teachers cannot provide economic capital but they have the possibility to provide social and cultural capital that students can and should expand in their life course in order to enhance their economic capital as well.

The *teacher trainers'* idea of education being relevant for one's economic position (prestige) and one's financial resources may result from the knowledge of social statistics and from the general experience that a good position usually requires a higher degree and professional training. Thus, the economic interpretation of the relevance of education is always linked to the opportunities on labour markets, and/or possible social mobility, or at least a protection of the social status of the family (parents). Discussing the issue of qualification and allocation it soon became clear that all teacher trainers agree that education in the sense of delivering knowledge in order to prepare students for their future occupation is a basic function of school and therefore a main duty of teachers. This might be seen as especially significant in terms of research hypothesis and results. If any group might be expected to recognize the wider aims of education, one might have expected it to be the teacher trainers.

Local experts are well aware of the insecure labor market young people will face in their future life. Local experts seem in many cases more concerned than students and parents themselves about unemployment and find education as extremely relevant for young people's future employment. Local experts find education very important in order for the student to get a job. Many local experts think in terms of matching system needs and system resources. Matching system needs and system resources is not only an expression of an instrumental perspective but includes intrinsic values of

education as well: teachers and other professionals realize their task is to help students keep up learning motivation; that shows, among other things, in mentor hours which allow for more individualized advice. Education is important, according to local experts, in order to enable people to support themselves, to avoid unemployment and prevent the young person from becoming marginalized. Parents are aware that their advice is not always appropriate for the current labour market situation, or they are convinced that they have too little knowledge to discuss options with their children. In such cases experts have more influence and parents leave the responsibility of guidance to school and experts in school.

According to many of the *high-level experts* interviewed, education is important from an economic perspective for the individual, in order to make sure that all children become self-sufficient citizens who are able to support themselves economically. At the same time youth unemployment has become a major cause for concern across Europe and for the EU. One way in which this is evident is the heavy recent emphasis on the need to reduce early school leaving. Parallel to this one can see that education is regarded as a means of providing basic human capital for the future of the national economy in a global competitive world. One German high-level expert stated that: "Education is the most important capital here for Germany and even for Europe it is crucial, that we invest in education. In my opinion this is not spread wide enough in the population". Another German expert stated: "Our society is short on raw material resources; it needs the people's brains". The same perspective can be seen in Finland in an interview with a high-level expert, who states: "We have woods and lakes and then there are people. And the people and the education form quite a big keystone". The same perspective is found in many Finnish documents, e.g. in Government programmes. Education is regarded as relevant in order to maintain and develop the knowledge society. An emphasis on developing the knowledge society is recognized e.g. in the Government programme from 1999 by Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen. In the Government Programme it is stated that a knowledge society is built in Finland. Finland and the future of the Finns are strongly depended on know-how, the ability to use knowledge and the ability to create new innovations. It is also argued that lifting up the level of know-how supports the development of Finland as a civilized nation and the competitiveness of Finland. In Finland ageing of the population is also discussed by high-level experts and is often a discussed theme in policy documents regarding the importance of securing access to education. This perspective can easily be connected to the economic perspective; education is regarded as important to educate future taxpayers in order to make up for the future shortcut of the labor force, which is due to the aging of the population. Surprisingly this is rarely mentioned, even in discussions of migration.

The Cultural perspective

Cultural capital operates in two distinct ways. *First*, it essentially specifies the nature of the cultural arbitrary – what is considered good and worthwhile in a society; and we should note that this is not wholly confined to the economic, but can also include other goals of education, such as living fulfilling lives, promoting active citizenship, and so on. These are as much part of the cultural arbitrary as are

economic ambitions, though certainly not as powerfully promoted. *Second*, cultural capital in the narrower sense of educationally useful goods, experiences, expectations, etc. is very important in allocating life chances and shaping life courses. It also shapes conceptions of relevance. As we noted above, while almost everyone seems to subscribe to the same concept of relevance, their understanding of it, and their ability to attain it, are heavily shaped by their cultural capital. This, of course, is experienced through the habitus. Beyond these, one of the most interesting aspects of cultural capital is that it has long ceased to be exclusively an academic term or concept. As we see below, this is clearly evident in the responses to the idea from the various GOETE constituencies who sometimes interpret cultural capital in somewhat non-Bourdiesian ways.

Students' perspective of culture, in other words what it meant to be a citizen in their country, the ideologies and beliefs of their country, was not really at the forefront of their thinking in regard to the relevance of education. Students in Germany and Finland did refer to the importance of being a good citizen that education taught the skills that everyone needed in order to contribute actively to their culture. However first and foremost all students were driven by the economic and social pathways that education opens.

Parents regard education in terms of educational qualifications as very important and have very high educational aspirations for their children as more than 60% in the overall sample would like their children to attain a tertiary level of education. However, differences between countries are substantial; aspirations for achieving tertiary level of education are the highest in Slovenia and in the Netherlands (in both countries almost 80% of parents), while France and Germany are the only countries where more parents would like their children to attain "only" secondary education (slightly less than 50% of parents). However, exploration of the reasons behind educational aspirations has shown that parents regard education as important above all to prepare their children for their future employment, both in terms of their ability to choose jobs according to their interests and feelings of accomplishment as well as provide them good socio-economic positions in society. Knowledge as valuable in itself is important, but considerably less often mentioned by parents – in a way, knowledge itself is subordinated to the 'certificates and diplomas' and to the future prospects these certificates can bring to children and young people. Other statements related to the cultural perspective of education are rather singular, for example Italian parents have highlighted that education is important to learn the language and to prepare children to become a good citizens. Some Slovenian and Finnish parents, as another example, have mentioned that children are not always aware of the importance of knowledge and education.

It is somewhat striking how infrequently *teachers* refer to the cultural capital students bring into school in terms of other languages or cultural background. Instead, many of them complain about a lack of language proficiency or ignorance of norms and values of the respective country. So the cultural perspective of the relevance of education of teachers is mainly shaped by accumulation, extension and assimilation of cultural background of the school and the country. In this perspective a functional

and a more idealistic aspect are integrated. Some form of cultural capital is needed for participation in society and to be able to find training or a job by showing that one is a “normal” and full-value citizen.

Although mentioned by *teacher trainers* in every national case, socio-economic aspects (having a good job, etc.) seem to be of secondary importance, because they assume an increase of human capital. Such cultural resources as a product of education in family and school are highlighted by the teacher trainers as very important. Often they talk about language problems that education has to solve (Italy, Netherlands, Poland) or about the compensation of lacking family resources (Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland). To increase cultural capital, education needs a twofold strategy: activating the potential that lies in every single student (e.g. by diagnosing the best individual learning strategy) and effective teaching (e.g. by handling heterogeneity appropriately while choosing teaching methods). Both have to be framed by values and attitudes that provide a framework for developing basic skills. At the end there is the vision of equal learning opportunities and outcomes.

Also among experts, the cultural perspective of education is not the most prominent feature in their thinking regarding relevance of education. However, in all countries, we find experts who stress that schools, mainly teachers, have an important part in teaching also cultural values to students (see also 3.1. for the concept of ‘Bildung’ as a particular form of cultural capital). *Local experts* share in many terms the same view teachers have regarding the perspective of cultural capital. Local experts recognise cultural capital as very important for participation in society and in many terms this seems to mean an assimilation of cultural background and cultural values. According to many experts, the school seems to have an important role also in social integration of students. They stress that aims, methodology and teaching approach are related not only to students’ achievements in school subjects, but also to the transmission of tools and skills aimed at social integration. When it comes to young people from a migration background, one main task of education according to many experts is to teach the national language and impart the rules, laws, norms and values of the mainstream population because this is seen as crucial for a successful integration. Language is seen as an important barrier in gaining equal access to a school of students’ choice. And this can be interpreted as implying that cultural capital concerns more than the distribution of opportunities for academic success, as we see in the following paragraphs.

Language is not the only factor which has a negative impact on the opportunities students have in getting access to further studies and finding a profession of their choice. In all countries, experts seem to find it difficult to cope with students from backgrounds different from their own; Dutch experts, for instance, say it is difficult to communicate with the parents (here the language issue is still dominant), because families are closed up in their own culture and habits, watching only Turkish TV (du Bois-Reymond & Koşar Altıyelken, 2012: 33). The family background seems to be of great importance. A family background which is not the same as the mainstream population seems to be regarded as more challenging to deal with. Therefore it is not surprising that e.g. Italian experts claim that one aim of education is to foster skills useful for social integration.

The school has an important role not only for students but also for families, who can in several cases find answers to their socio-economic needs or other kinds of additional social services there. School has the function to socialize the young generation and make them socially acceptable, according to some German experts. Only the school has the opportunity to form the children in a way other institutions cannot. A French expert also insists on the fact that knowledge is not only acquired at school. She claims that schools should take into account the students' assessments the non-formal learning acquired out-of-school (in a life-long learning perspective). Nevertheless, she does not find any support to develop this idea as assessment remains a competence of teachers and Ministry.

The Social perspective

In briefly setting out the idea of social capital above, we referred to its potential basis in communities; indeed, it could be said to be what makes communities into communities. More narrowly interpreted it clearly contributes to an explanation of class, gender and ethnic stratification in all our societies, as a means of enabling the already privileged to retain and extend their privilege. However, the very attendance at school can be seen as a highly relevant means of accumulating social capital, through a wide range of civic and public learning, even if it only includes things like learning how people eat food, for instance. And this means that we should look for both these polar types of social capital at work in the countries and schools we studied.

All *students* were aware that occupations are differentiated in a hierarchy of power and status, and that education is key to getting a job that can offer higher social status (e.g. Slovenia) providing symbolic capital of having credentials. Students who were quite sceptical about the links of education to work (economic capital) found it to be relevant for other reasons (social, cultural, symbolic) and embraced a more subjective interpretation of the relevance of education. Case study data demonstrated that they view education as extremely relevant for other reasons, such as gaining communicative competence and life skills, and for upward social mobility. From the perspective of the theory of social mobility, one's belonging to a social class is not fixed for the whole life course – she or he is able to move up or down in the social hierarchy (Schüren, 1989). Today, this kind of vertical mobility is strongly connected to occupational change. This was especially true for females, who aimed for higher education levels than their male counterparts, and see education as a means of independence and self-provision and status (e.g. Netherlands).

In *parents'* view, the social dimension of education, especially in terms of the future social position of children, is a very important dimension of education and closely related to economic position; it is often not easy to distinguish between these two dimensions in parental accounts of the relevance of education. For example, in many countries, more socially disadvantaged families understand education as a sort of a family project of 'social mobility' (for example Turkish families in Germany and the Netherlands, some parents in France, the UK, Poland, Slovenia). These families regard education as the most promising strategy to reach a higher social and economic standing for their children. In relation to this understanding, many saw education as being able to provide 'a better life than they

had'. This wish was explicitly stated by socially disadvantaged parents in the UK, France, Poland and Slovenia; many of these parents had left education too early for various reasons (financial reasons, family, migration, dislike it, was not regarded as necessary, etc.) or those, who are unemployed or working in poorly paid positions. What is most important in this respect is that these families believe that education is the right and possible path out of the reproduction of social inequalities. Nevertheless, socio-demographic analysis has revealed highly distinctive patterns as parents with more socio-economic and cultural capital express considerably higher educational aspirations. The differences between these groups of parents are extremely high, for example, 81% of parents with tertiary education and "only" 41% of parents with basic education would like their children to achieve tertiary education. Such vast differences in educational aspirations are certainly not innocent. On the one hand they are the reflection of not only the perceived relevance of education in terms of different social or cultural capital of families, but also of the different educational possibilities and opportunities that are available to the different families in contemporary society and educational systems – largely as a consequence of high level governance, especially in respect to the first transition. They thus point towards the confirmation of Bourdieu's thesis on the social reproduction of capitals, e.g. the reproduction of educational inequalities, which then leads to overall reproduction of socio-economic inequalities.

As we can see further in our data *teachers* know relatively little about their students. They are better informed about their (occupational) aspirations, which they often deem as being unrealistic (and which goes along with their support and motivation for realistic vocational training in regard to socially disadvantaged students). On the one hand this may be seen as the reason for teachers' motives, on the other hand it tells us a lot about their understanding of the relevance of education: In their view education is less a means of social mobility for socially disadvantaged students, and much more a means of maintaining the current social status and avoiding further deleterious consequences, for example in drug problems etc. Here again one important question comes into play: the knowledge teachers have about their students' lives is much too general. They think they know that they are from difficult socially disadvantaged family backgrounds, that they have language deficits and/or are migrants, that they are displaying behavioral problems and that they are not getting enough support at home. They think they know this because they attribute this to many students from these socially disadvantaged districts and schools that are labeled as disadvantaged. But at the same time teachers know very little about these districts as usually they are living somewhere else and have to refer to general assumptions or even prejudices.

Teacher trainers think that the social dimension of education is important to the cultural relevance of education. It is highlighted that students, parents and teachers agree with the same aims and have to cooperate for gaining successful educational trajectories (Finland, France, Netherlands, Slovenia). Sometimes the social environment of young people hinders congruent aims of all actors – therefore education in school has to take the life situation and environment of students into account (Finland, Germany, Italy, UK). This is an increasing challenge for educators in a more and more plural world

(Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia). Teachers are seen as role models for students' trajectories on the way to become responsible citizens, which is a major goal of education.

Local experts are aware that the social dimension of education is very relevant, and that the future social and economic positions of students are closely related to each other. Education is important for students' integration in society, as well as in order to prevent social exclusion. Education is very relevant in order to prevent exclusion by providing the student with a sufficient education in order for the student to manage in the labour market and get a job. Local experts acknowledge that the school has an important task regarding the social dimension, in particular for disadvantaged students or students with migrant backgrounds. The task of education is regarded as reducing or compensating social inequalities.

In countries with selective education systems, such as Germany and the Netherlands, experts, as well as other actors, are more aware of the disadvantaged social position students might find themselves in if they fail to receive qualifications high enough to provide them with a place in general education. In comprehensive systems the emphasis on general education is not as great, although also in some comprehensive systems, for example Slovenia, we can find a great emphasis on general education, but these are mostly the views of parents and students. In Finland, which has a comprehensive education system, experts do not feel that it makes a huge difference if a student is situated in vocational or general education, because the student can always change his or her educational path later. The most important thing after lower secondary education, according to Finnish experts, is to be attached somewhere, in any school – vocational, general or additional comprehensive education – in order to prevent exclusion.

In a societal perspective, the task of education is regarded as reducing or compensating social inequalities.

“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” (Expert 2, Germany).

In Finland many experts state that education is relevant in order to prevent marginalization among youth. Also in other countries the same discourse emerges from the discussions with high-level experts; in the Netherlands one expert explains that education is relevant in order to make sure that all children become self-sufficient citizens who are able to support themselves economically and also in Poland and France the aim of reducing and compensating social inequalities with education emerge. These can be seen as particular versions of self-help and workfare initiatives. Most high-level experts seem to believe that education is an instrument to decrease social inequalities for the individual in the future and the school has an important role in integrating students, e.g. with migrant backgrounds, in the society. School provides not only education but is also regarded as relevant in the tasks of social integration, reducing social inequalities.

However, we need also to appreciate that educational credentials do not translate directly into economic and cultural capital. We have only to consider the earning gaps between males and females, white/black/Asian and non-white people, with identical qualifications to recognise that; white, middle class males are able to valorize their qualifications much more lucratively than any other group and that is the case across all GOETE countries. To put it more generally, while formal qualifications as such are important for everyone, the form and contribution of their relevance differs according to social class, gender and race. The mechanism through which this comes about can be broadly referred to as social capital. On the one hand, "The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent [...] depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu, 1986: 249), and on the other it is the intangible outcome arising from the range of interactions within such groups. In other words, it is who you know (and to a degree, who you are; gender, ethnic background, etc.) and not what you know.

3.3.3 Summary

Two conclusions may be drawn from this sub-chapter. One is the predictable – and correct – conclusion that the conjunction of the cultural arbitrary and the embeddedness of habitus produce quite different conceptions of relevance in education. Though we have to recognize that the conceptions and practices of educational relevance that operate within this framework are certainly not completely deterministic, though nevertheless quite predictable. The structure of the labour market clearly discriminates against women, migrants, the under-educated and numerous other groups. However, the picture that emerges is not wholly bleak. For instance, for some migrants the cultural arbitrary they encounter in Europe is much more open and flexible than that they left behind. Beyond this, one very striking thing that emerges from the evidence in this chapter is the number of 'non-labour market' references to the relevance of education. These include maintaining social cohesion, addressing social/behavioural problems (drugs, etc.), enabling social ascent for migrants, making 'responsible' citizens, and above all reducing social inequalities, which is widely seen as the only way that many of the problems of education and society can be reduced, and ensuring that educational failure does not lead to social exclusion. There are even hints that a different conception of educational relevance could lead to schools becoming involved in forms of individual and social capacity building, that are not reduced to, or dependent on, success in the terms framed by the cultural arbitrary and the habitus.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter different understandings of the relevance of education were elaborated in terms of their interpretation according to theoretical perspectives. The theoretical concepts are coming from different schools of thought – theory of 'Bildung' (3.1.); concept of learning as social practice (3.2.);

concept of social and cultural reproduction (3.3.) – but have been put in dialog with different actor's perspectives here.

'Education' and 'Bildung' are two different concepts that refer to the same topic. While 'Education' within contemporary social and policy discourses regards the provision and acquisition of a certain set of skills, which means more practical abilities and competencies are interpreted as being useful in terms of occupational qualification and hence better life chances; 'Bildung' sees education as an end-in-itself for the individual. The analysis of the relevance of education of different actors, mirrors more recent trends of educational policy in the view of a restricted concept of 'education' as previously defined, much more than the 'Bildung' perspective. From this analysis the role of education varies according to the actors: while students and parents stress much more the future occupational aspect of education, for enterprises education has to provide an educated work force, whereas the idea of Bildung is widespread for all the other actors. These perceptions are sometimes in competition.

In terms of the concept of learning as social practice, social relationships are key to understanding subjective identity building processes and internalised learning habits, norms, values and practices. In the analysis above, the understanding of the relevance of education is influenced by three dimensions that cover all types of social learning conceptions: (a) out-of-school context and their meaning for social learning; (b) perception of support as part of social learning; (c) social discourses as influence of social learning.

Focusing on out-of-school contexts and their meaning for social learning, we can affirm that there is usually a gap between out and in-school contexts in terms of what education is relevant. Despite out-of-school contexts seeming very important for the relevance of education for every reference group, students' out-of-school life usually does not find much recognition in school and these lopsided learning demands has the consequence of the perpetuation of social inequality.

Regarding the perception of support as part of social learning, an increase in parental education in general increases the educational aspirations of their children. Therefore, parents not only have an important influence on educational decision-making of students but they share their understanding of why education is relevant. This is why the school as institution needs to enhance their relationship with parents. Although, such enhancement is recognized in all GOETE countries, there is little evidence of how this is reflected in the understanding of the relevance of education when it comes to support in school.

Focusing on social discourses as influence of social learning, the way that education systems are organised has a relatively strong influence on students' perceptions of the relevance of education in their lives. Moreover, there is the societal expectation that school is responsible for educating students in the sense of producing knowledge and initiating the development of basic skills to spend into the labour market. Despite that, students from GOETE countries perceive the contradiction that a good education will lead to secure and attractive careers, with the experiences of older peers in their

communities who are either unemployed or have to compromise with underemployment. The students are aware that education does not necessarily lead to employment, despite working hard at school. This topic is raised also in parents' view and they concerned about the future placement of their children in society even for those who show very high educational aspirations for their children.

Research results thus indicate that despite high hopes that education could enable social mobility; educational inequalities are most likely to be reproduced; but we cannot forget that the relevance of the social dimension of education also regards preparing young people for being able to act responsibly in a diverse world. For this goal, from the research emerges the importance of interaction between adult actors and institutions involved in the educational process. Experts in particular underline the importance of a deeper efforts' integration within the educational system of a country, in terms of cooperation between school, families and other professionals, but in their view this aim is perceived as very far to reach. School and teachers are key players that mediate between all actors directly involved in the trajectories and transitions. This interpretation leads to the notion of schools and teachers being the crux for intermediating the possible definitions of the "relevance of education".

To define "relevance of education" in terms of social and cultural reproduction, it is necessary to understand the nature and consequences of social class differences. In this regard, in this chapter we used Bourdieu's ideas of 'cultural arbitrary', 'habitus' as well as 'forms of capital' as an analysing frame. Bourdieu distinguishes three main forms of capital associated with education, cultural, social and economic capital. Drawing on the GOETE data, it is clear that students' motivation to either continue or drop out of education were influenced by their own interpretations of the relevance they assigned to education.

We see that in contemporary societies students with 'high' cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital are privileged in schooling and motivation of students is influenced by parental socio-economic class. Even with some variations across the 8 countries, students generally acknowledged not only the economic capital of education but also cultural, social and symbolic capital. In their perspective, education is key to getting a job that can offer higher social status, and students who were quite sceptical about the links of education to work (economic capital) found it to be relevant for other reasons (social, cultural, symbolic) and embraced a more subjective interpretation of the relevance of education. Parents regard the social dimension of education especially in terms of future social position of children. For them, this is a very important dimension of education and closely related to economic position. Drawing on teachers' perspectives, we can conclude that teachers consider all capital dimensions of education as being relevant for students. In teachers' view cultural capital is needed for participation in society and a functional and a more idealistic aspect are integrated.

Overall there seems to be – analytically speaking – a difference between students and parents perceptions of the relevance of education, compared to the perspectives of teachers, teacher trainers and experts. Although relevance is not limited to the labour market; it tends to be reduced in effect to getting a credential, of almost any kind, especially by students and parents. Teachers, teacher

trainers and experts have a more idealistic understanding that stress more the cultural dimension of education as an end-in-itself for the individual, but the way they deal with their professional challenges is closer to students' and parents' perspectives again.

4 The relevance of education in relation to education systems

Drawing on the results elaborated above, this chapter will explore: (1) young people's and parents' subjective accounts and experiences regarding their attitudes, expectations and aspirations towards their continued participation in education; (2) its relevance to their future life plans and the motivational processes behind students' educational decisions; and (3) the circumstances under which education is relevant for them. These will be explored in relation to Allmendinger's (1989) classification system. To focus on students and parents is very important, since these two actors, compared to the others researched in this report, understand relevance more in terms of functional aspects of education, essentially in terms of its importance for their future occupational life, and less in terms of the ideals of 'Bildung' or cultural capital, for example. At the same time – and this is something that has been pointed out in this report above (see 2.6.) and needs to be kept in mind for this chapter – the Allmendinger typology is based on high-level decisions made in all countries and so does not seem to map on to the differences found.

Allmendinger Classification of Education Systems

This section focuses on the way in which education systems are organised and how this impacts on young people and their parents' experiences within education using Allmendinger's (1989) classification of standardised/stratified education systems as an analytical tool. The different actor perspectives are now interpreted with regard to this typology of transition regimens (Allmendinger, 1989 outlined in chapter 1) which allows consideration of the way in which education systems are organised and how this impacts on young people and other actors' views and experiences of the relevance of education. The classification of standardised/stratified education systems allows the involved countries to be clustered into relatively even groups, so that more than one country was represented by each educational typology, allowing comparison between the classifications.

Table 15: Types of Education Systems in GOETE

Countries	France	Germany	Italy	The Netherlands	Slovenia	Finland	UK	Poland
Degree of Differentiation (tracking)	Low	high	Low	high	Low	Low	Middle	Low
Level of Standardization	High	high	low	high	high	high	low	low
Level of Stratification	High	high	low	high	low	low	low	low
Free-choice	No	No	Yes	no	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

The eight EU countries taking part in the GOETE study can therefore be categorised by Allmendinger (1989) and student response rates from each country consisting of each typology are as follows:

Table 16: Composition of Countries by educational system typology by student participation (Allmendinger)

Allmendinger classification	France	Germany	Italy	The Netherlands	Slovenia	Finland	UK	Poland	Total (N) weighted
Low Stratified / Low Standardised	-	-	33%	-	-	-	34%	33%	2409
Low Stratified/ Hi Standardised	-	-	-	-	50%	50%	-	-	1584
Hi Stratified/ Hi Standardised	33%	33%	-	33%	-	-	-	-	2395

Table 17: Composition of Countries by educational system typology by parent participation (Allmendinger)¹⁰

Allmendinger classification	France	Germany	Italy	The Netherlands	Slovenia	Finland	UK	Poland	Total (N) weighted
Low Stratified / Low Standardised	-	-	50%	-	-	-	*	50*	938
Low Stratified/ Hi Standardised	-	-	-	-	50%	50%	-	-	938
Hi Stratified/ Hi Standardised	34%	33%	-	33%	-	-	-	-	1407

To assess the value of the Allmendinger classification of education systems as a methodological tool as a means of categorising data and accounting for student/parent perspectives on education, a small sample of the key findings outlined in chapter 2.1 and 2.2 are discussed further in this section (a full examination of data in relation to Allmendinger can be found in McDowell et al., 2012). Where the Allmendinger typology does provide a potential explanation for differences across student and parent perspectives in relation to educational systems, data is also examined at country level in case this was an implicit influencing factor (e.g. welfare systems, cultural background, citizenship).

In order to assess the extent to which one's education system affects one's perspective of the relevance of education, certain variables ascertained from the student survey (see chapter 2.1; McDowell et al., 2012) and the parent survey (see chapter 2.2 and 2.3) are examined here in further detail. These include why students were attracted to a certain occupation; why parents wanted their child to 'do well' in school; students' satisfaction and enjoyment of school; and the similarities/differences of day to day teaching styles and strategies used in the classroom.

¹⁰ UK parental data were excluded following consideration of the small and biased sample.

The main reason why students' chose a particular job differed according to the nature of their education system. Students in low stratified and high standardised education systems were less concerned with income when choosing their future career. Instead they were influenced by retaining a job that was of interest to them regardless of pay (22%) and an important job that gave feelings of accomplishment (15%), whereas 40% of students in the low stratified/low standardised and high stratified/high standardised systems would chose a job based on income. To explore whether this was a direct influence of the education system, country level data was considered. This revealed differences between the countries located within Allmendinger group 1 (UK, Italy and Poland) and group 3 (France, Netherlands and Germany) which may offer a more substantial effect on students' attitudes to future career pathways. Their feelings may actually be a result of the welfare systems in the countries in which these educational systems are located, as outlined in chapter 2.1. So getting a job where money is good enough to provide for oneself is important in these countries as welfare provision is quite low and often unequal. Therefore economic capital is important to these students.

In terms of parental reasons for children attaining desired levels of education, statistically significant differences were found in terms of Allmendinger's classification, where instrumental or systemic reasons (income and safe job) are considerably more important in group 1 (UK, Italy and Poland), where they account for almost 40% of all reasons, than in the other two groups, where their share is lower, approximately 25% of reasons. However, a closer country level analysis reveals significant differences between the countries within each group, which cannot be explained by differences in the respective educational systems. For example, subjective reasons for education (especially that a child would have a job which gives feelings of accomplishment, and a job according to his/her interests,) appear as most important in the Netherlands and Italy. On the other hand, Poland, which is in the same Allmendinger group as Italy, is the only sampled country where systemic reasons are more important than subjective reasons. Instrumental reasons are also relatively high in Slovenia. While the educational systems of these two countries are very different, these results could be a reflection of the systemic changes that have occurred in the last two decades, which have substantially changed the patterns and opportunities for employment in these countries and rendered them considerably more unpredictable and uncertain than before. When exploring whether students wished to remain in school after compulsory schooling, education system was found to have a significant effect (chapter 2.1). 81% of students in the low stratified/low standardised cohort thought they would remain in full time education (UK, Italy and Poland) This can be compared to 77% of students in low stratified/high standardised group (Slovenia and Finland) and only 58% of students in high stratified/high standardised group (France, Netherlands and Germany) who want to stay on in school. These differences may be explained by the expectations these students have of their capabilities in relation to their education system. This difference is significant, illustrating the way in which education systems may affect a student's future transitional plan. Education systems may play a role in the future transition expectations of the students, with gaining further academic education perhaps of less relevance in high stratified/high standardised education systems than others. Furthermore in highly stratified systems it is very difficult for students who are selected into vocational education to go on to

higher education. Therefore students in such stratified education systems may not see access to university as an option and are more likely to engage in work after compulsory education (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). Students within highly stratified highly standardised systems had the lowest level of people wanting to remain at school despite the close connections between education and the labour market within these systems; they were also more sceptical about the future relevance of education, at least in comparison to students in low stratified and high standardised systems. Students in low stratified and high standardised systems had a high proportion of young people wanting to remain at school, and were least sceptical about the future relevance of education to their careers. This demonstrates a link between education system and students' future aspirations, what they feel they are capable, and, in a sense, permitted, to achieve.

This apparent effect of education system on students' transition plans is supported by parent data. According to Allmendinger's typology, parents of children in countries with low stratification and high standardization systems (Slovenia, Finland), and low stratification and low standardisation systems (Poland, Italy), would claim that their children were significantly most likely to remain in full time education and therefore least likely to start working. Where both standardization and stratification are high (France, Germany, the Netherlands), a higher proportion of parents thought that their children were going to enter into employment after compulsory schooling. Therefore, in terms of parental educational aspirations, Allmendinger's typology was statistically significant in terms of what parents wish their children will most likely do after compulsory education. These results are confirmed by the perceived barriers, which are standing in child's way to attain desired level of education; these are the highest in Poland and Italy (group Low stratified /low standardised) and considerably the lowest in Finland and Slovenia (group Low stratified / High Standardised). Furthermore, in terms of educational aspirations for attaining different levels of education we can again find statistically significant differences between Allmendinger groups, where aspirations for tertiary level education are considerably lowest in group 3 (France, Germany and the Netherlands) and highest in group 2 (Finland and Slovenia). However, country level data shows two exceptions: parents in the Netherlands have the second highest aspirations among all countries, while Finland shows the third lowest aspirations for tertiary education. Therefore, differences in respect of at least parental aspirations for tertiary level education cannot be fully accounted for by the differences in the educational system, since, when broken down, country level differences are evident within Allmendinger typologies.

To assess the direct daily effect their school, and one's education system structure, have on young people's perspectives on education, a student's typical school day was assessed by asking students how often they performed certain school activities, such as listening to the teacher, using computers in class and having group discussions. Each school based activity showed a significant difference between the frequency of performing these activities across the three education typologies, for example working on worksheets and activity sheets (reflecting the teacher's teaching style). Major differences were found between low stratified/low standardised groups and low stratified/high

standardised group school activities. Whilst for low stratified/low standardised students, working on worksheets and activity sheets (active learning/learning by doing) was reported to be a rare occurrence, for low stratified/high standardised group students this was a frequent part of their teacher's teaching strategy and the pupil's daily work technique. This shows a difference between all the schooling activities directly linked to the education system. However, using Allmendinger to explain such differences is questionable when taking country level data into account as differences were found within-group in two of the Allmendinger groups. For example, the countries in low stratified/low standardised group (Italy, Poland and UK) show a difference between frequency worksheets/activities sheets are used in the UK in comparison to Italy and Poland. Overall, the UK cohort claim for 20% of the time they never or almost never work on worksheets and activity sheets. Only 51% of students in Italy and 66% of Polish students claim they never or almost never do this, showing between-country differences within the Allmendinger group. Thus, whereas we can claim that for students in low stratified/low standardised groups working on worksheets is a rare occurrence, this is more suitable for Polish and Italian students rather than those in the UK. We also see this differentiation for high stratified/high standardised group students who were found to do this type of school work quite frequently. This is true for students in Germany, where 72% claim they do it fairly often or very often and in France, where this increases to 90%. For students in the Netherlands this figure is only 18%, with 41% claiming they never or almost never do this type of learning activity. Countries comprising the low stratified/high standardised group (Finland and Slovenia) were found to have similar results. This provides further evidence that although Allmendinger acts as an explanatory tool to account for some student/parent perceptions on the relevance of education, though the type of education system cannot account for all differences/similarities. Attitudes and perceptions toward education are also shaped by country and perhaps cultural beliefs and differences.

To address parents' thoughts about the relevance of education in terms of future work options we have also utilised questions from the PALS assessment tool (Relevance of Education for Future Life) (see McDowell et al., 2012 for more information on this scale). PALS scores show that parents in the Low stratified/Hi Standardised (Slovenia and Finland) group are significantly less sceptical than those in the groups Low stratified /Low standardised (UK, Italy and Poland) and Hi stratified/Hi standardised (France, Netherlands and Germany) (while there are no statistically significant differences between these two groups). Finland and Slovenia are also the countries where most children are expected to remain in full time education and least children are expected to enter a labour market early. However, a closer look at the country level data shows that parental scepticism seems to be more subject to the labour market circumstances or general socio-economic situation in respective countries, than to the characteristics of different educational systems. Thus, where parents in Poland and France are considerably most sceptical (both representatives of different Allmendinger groups), parents in Finland are substantially less sceptical, and the other four countries (Slovenia, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy) express similar levels of scepticism, further demonstrating that the form of education system is not always a dominant influence on perspectives on education,, but that what is happening

in the participants' country (e.g. economic climate, labour market changes) also has a great influence in shaping perceptions.

Allmendinger's typology of educational systems on first inspection appears to explain parental worries about their child's inability to find employment, or doing badly in school. The parents in the Low stratified/low standardised group worry about these issues the most. However, when further examined, these results may be explained by country differences rather than education typology. For example, parents from Italy (Low stratified/low standardised group) appear to worry substantially more about their child's inability to find employment, being poor and doing badly in school, than the other two groups in the low stratified/low standardised group cohort. These higher mean scores from Italy increase the overall mean average of the low/low group. Moreover, Allmendinger scores also show that parents in the Low stratified /high standardized group are least worried. However data at the country level show that in the case of Finland and the Netherlands parents are less worried about their child's school performance and future employment. Slovenia, which belongs to the same Allmendinger group as Finland, shows significantly higher parental worries in all three indicators. Therefore, the data suggest that the level of concern about the inability to find employment, being poor and poor academic achievement, are not directly explained by the specifics of the educational systems in the individual countries. Instead these concerns may be more related to the general conditions / prospects of the labour market and the economy of each country, as well as to the level of socio-economic deprivation and socio-cultural capital of the families.

In terms of the results from the student and parental data overall, Allmendinger's classification of how education systems are organised has been a relatively strong predictor of many of the key variables examined to assess student and parent perspectives on the relevance of education. As Allmendinger's classification is intended as a typology that links education systems to labour market outcomes, the extent to which education systems are differentiated into different tracks and standardised highlights many commonalities in the data when examining perspectives on relevance and why education is seen to be important. Allmendinger's typology appears to account for scepticism towards the relevance of education for students, although not for parents (perhaps as they are more knowledgeable about current economic climates and labour market difficulties than their children), in terms of whether a student wishes to enter into University or the workplace after compulsory schooling. From the parental perspective the education system can account for what parents think their children will most likely do after compulsory education. According to parents from Low stratified / High standardized group (Slovenia and Finland) students are most likely to remain in full education, while it is among the High stratified /High standardised group (France, Netherlands and Germany) that we find the biggest proportions of parents who think their children will most likely start working. In terms of access to education, perceived barriers are the strongest among parents belonging to the Low stratified /Low standardised group (Italy and Poland) and the lowest in the Low stratified / High Standardised group (Slovenia and Finland). In particular the Low stratified and high standardised

systems (represented by Finland and Slovenia) stand out where the most positive dispositions towards education were observed (cf. McDowell et al., 2012).

However, on further examination of the data, within the Allmendinger groups differences were often observed, showing that specific national issues could, on occasion, better account for some of the student/parent perspectives, such as parents' concerns for their children in terms of future employment, their educational aspirations, parental scepticism about the relationship between school and work, students' main reasons for choosing a job, and their daily school activities. Such perspectives appear to be more directly affected by the economic climate of each country and current labour market concerns than whether the education system is standardised or stratified. Overall, education system accounts for some of the participants perspectives on the relevance of education, but country level affects must also be taken into account.

5 Discussion and conclusions

This report has been concerned with multiple perspectives in addressing the following questions: how important is education for young people (“how relevant”)? For what reasons is education seen to be relevant (“why and in what sense relevant”)? As students are surrounded by a plethora of different actors that may have similar or different views on their educational trajectories, chapter two examined the different interpretations and understandings of the relevance of education within and between each group of actors (students, parents, teachers, teacher trainings and local and high-level experts), whilst chapter three explored several key theories (e.g. Humboldt, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Bourdieu, 1983) that may provide an account for such perspectives. Chapter 4 explored the influence of educational systems and their impacts on young people and their parents’ experiences within education using Allmendinger’s (1989) classification of standardised/stratified education systems as an analytical tool.

5.1 Relevance of Education in Contemporary Society

The first chapter of this report outlines the wider issues in students’ education that are considered to be relevant in discourses concerning education, especially surrounding those from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds. It addressed the types of educational processes and programmes that exist to promote education to young people, but also the problems and limitations that education systems (especially visible in highly stratified systems) can cause in terms of young people’s access to future education and the potential of education (and whether they even think it possible or necessary). For such socially disadvantaged students, chapters two and three addressed the kinds of educational programmes put in place to act as solutions to the relevance issue for these young people, whether they are realizable, and have any effect on the perceived problems they face. This current chapter will now provide a collaborative discussion of our findings in the preceding chapters.

A number of similarities and differences in perceptions of the relevance of education have been found not only among the different actors (and their socio-economic positions), but also between and within countries and educational systems (Allmendinger, 1989); these have been explored in detail in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Regardless of the various argumentation and reasons for the relevance of education there is a commonly shared view across the majority of the respondents that education and educational choices have a significant influence on the future lives of students. Here the link to the labour market is seen as crucial, despite the fact that the majority of respondents are well aware that education is no guarantee for a successful and secure position in the unstable and ever changing labour market.

At this point we recap the main findings from chapter 2. Students evaluate the relevance of education in relation to their life course, and to their future transition plans. For the majority of young people,

education is relevant for achieving skills and certificates in terms of opportunities for their future career and for forging good relationships with their peers in their school environment. In terms of influence, students' opinions on the relevance of education have largely been influenced by their parents' opinions (section 2.1 and 2.2), but also by their educational system and the current economic climate in their country (section 4). Although some students also mentioned contributing to their society, students in every country mentioned some form of economic influence as to why they needed an education (see chapter 3 for further discussion).

For parents, the 'relevance of education' largely means to provide their children the knowledge, necessary skills and educational certificates, which would offer them prosperous and secure future possibilities and opportunities, especially in terms of access to the (insecure and rapidly changing) labour market. As with students, education was seen first and foremost as key to ensuring a good and secure socio-economic position in society. However, to assert that parents mainly view education from the instrumental perspective would be a considerable understatement, as parents have largely emphasised the subjective side of future employments, such as feelings of accomplishments, fulfilment, enjoyment in future professions, where the path towards such rewarding employments is precisely through attaining high and relevant education (section 2.2). Although some of these families believe the education is the right and possible path out of the reproduction of social inequalities, the research results show that overall educational and social inequalities are likely to be reproduced (cf. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; see chapter 3 for further discussion).

Teachers in all GOETE countries emphasize the twofold character and tasks of education that shape their view of its relevance. In their view it is undisputed and unquestioned that education is about knowledge transfer and about conveying social or life skills. The former is really knowledge based, such as language proficiency or numeracy. The latter covers the whole personality and includes behaviour, manners or general competence in dealing with aspirations in terms of what students can do in the future. For many teachers both dimensions are intertwined in their orientation to make their student able to find a job after finishing school. To achieve this they think that knowledge transfer on the one hand, and social skills on the other, are the keys to better cope with the demands of transition, with the demands of the labour market more generally, and to be better able to integrate in society. The aim to enjoy learning or to have fun in school (as in the case of the UK) seems to be subordinate or irrelevant (see chapter 2.3). Indeed this perspective has passed onto students, as demonstrated in section 2.1 and throughout chapter 3.

For experts, the relevance of education is judged on a meta-level. The discussion on the relevance of education is closely linked to a discourse of preventing marginalization, e.g. preventing unemployment. Experts underline that aims, methodology and each school's teaching approach are related not only to students' achievements of school subjects, but also the transmission of tools and skills aimed at social integration (see sections 2.6 and 2.7).

Chapter 4 demonstrated that teaching approaches varied across each education typology, with teachers adopting different teaching styles (at the local level) affecting how students enjoy, and therefore succeed or fail, in certain topics (outlined in chapter three considering Wenger's (1998) social learning theory). This highlights a serious issue caused by the fact that the relevance of education carries different meanings depending on different actors' perspective, as underlined in the chapter 3. As outlined above (for further detail see chapter 3), the relevance of education carries different meanings for each group of actors. Such different definitions often cause misunderstandings between these main groups. This lack of integration of views and therefore the practices of these actors could make it difficult to create and maintain a proper, cohesive, educational alliance to support students, especially those who are socially disadvantaged. The relevance of education and what it entails may, therefore, be related to many levels and areas of concern; it may be applied to systems as well as to individuals. As a multi-faceted term, it refers both to actor's or stakeholder's positions on systematic relations on a societal level between education and economic performance, or between education and political participation. Therefore, the question of whether education is relevant might be answered very differently by the large array of actors of whom the education arena is comprised. The relational dimension of relevance is confirmed by Dale et al. (2012), who illustrate the negotiation and definition processes indicative of the controversies regarding 'relevance'. Behind the general question addressing the relevance of education, there is the more specific one: what kind of education is relevant for whom (Dale et al., 2012: 161-162). These uncoordinated viewpoints of relevance highlight an important aspect related to the relative differences between the various actors in the field in relation to how they should address problems in education (i.e. access, equality). For instance, parents often delegate educational and learning support of students to the school (e.g. in Italy this problem has often raised), and, on the other hand teachers complain about insufficient support by the social care system (e.g. in Poland often teachers emphasise that they have to play the role of social workers). But schooling is not the one and only point to assure young people's educational success. In fact, the connection between the educational efforts of families, schools and other professionals is fundamental to support students in their development (chapters 2, 3). However, as chapter 2.2 demonstrates, there exist major differences in parental attitudes to schooling based on factors such as economic differences, which in turn has a direct effect on their children's perceptions, wishes and goals in future life.

This issue concerning the gap/distance/divergence of intents and purposes is also due to communication difficulties and reflected in the inconsistency of models and practices of education. In this context it is very difficult for students, families, schools and institutions to reach the same conclusions in relation to the relevance of education.

This is clearly observed in the gap between theory and practice in education; between legislation and concrete educational practices; between public discourse and concrete commitments to address disadvantage in education (Dale et al., 2012). We can also assume there is a distance between political systems and what experts consider 'relevance' means in education (chapter 3). In fact,

experts often complain about a lack of connection between their ideas as experts and policy makers' decisions. As a result of these different ideas about the aims of school/relevance of education, for policy makers the school is still seen as an institution of social control rather than as a tool for empowerment and the reduction of social injustice. Different perceptions among diverse stakeholders about the main goals and outcomes of education, as well as the relevance of any specific educational and training processes, leads to different approaches which favour knowledge, or technical and economic goals, or sociological aims. Furthermore, different approaches entail differences in opinions in relation to the selection of methodologies and indicators to use. In this respect this present report has highlighted this multidimensional, multilevel view of "Relevance" and the complex conceptualisations and approaches this suggests.

Formulating a coherent and agreed upon definition of the "Relevance of Education" is fundamental in order to address educational policy and practice thorough the process of rationalization:

"(...) schooling in the modern sense is a historical product, it was founded and developed in specific circumstances which are no longer the main forces shaping present society. It is therefore not implausible to ask the question of how our organization should change to meet new challenges. The first finding with regards to the country reports studied therefore is that in no country is the relevance of education for society fundamentally questioned. In all countries, on a high-level governance level, is education taken as a given as it is. A presence whose legitimacy and adequacy to serve societal ends is not to be questioned. Everywhere we find reform of the current systems not radical reforms experimenting with entirely novel modes of organization". (Dale et al., 2012: 166)

If we consider the official documents of International Institutions (e.g. Treaty of Lisbon, 2007), we can assume that education is seen as a fundamental building block of European social policy; but if we look at the financial commitments of the countries and of the European context in general – which is decreasing year by year, with some exceptions – we can legitimately have some doubts about whether this is still the case.

A largely shared opinion was that the investment in human capital leads to an increasing professional and working productivity, and in the OECD's report "Education at a glance" (2005) it is estimated that an increase of education in the average year in OECD countries in the long run leads to a steady increase of economic output of 3-6 %.

In fact, with regard to the EU-27, the annual report of the OECD on the characteristics of the education systems of the member countries ("Education at a Glance", 2005) reported a general increasing in public resources devoted to education. On average, each OECD country allocated annually to the education sector 6.1% of GDP or 13% of public expenses, for an investment in training of each individual student of more than \$ 7,000 (OECD, 2005).

Shortly before the economic crisis, in the period 2001-2006, public investment in education had remained stable overall, representing about 11% of total public spending, approximately 5% of the total GDP ("Education at a Glance", 2006). In response to the crisis some governments have taken specific measures to avoid diminishing funds for education and safeguard the reforms implemented

over the past decade, but this is not so everywhere. After 2008 the economic crisis has pushed many European governments to break the expansion of education spending, despite the Lisbon Treaty (EC, 2008b).

In the development of indicators, their interpretation and analysis of data from previous editions, the OECD has long insisted on the importance of increased investment in education. Within the last report ("Education at a Glance", 2012) the OECD prudently underlines that a comparative analysis of trends in spending per student shows that in many OECD countries spending has not kept pace with the increase in school enrolments. Since the recent global crisis began in 2008, there has been no data available to show clearly the overall extent of changes to educational expenditure per student, although it is reasonable to assume there has been an effect. However, according with PISA 2009, we can confirm that the ten countries with the majority of students still at level 1 (the lowest) are the poorest in the world, and that countries with the majority of students in the higher levels (from 3 to 6) are the 34 OECD countries with the highest GDP; but PISA 2009 shows that countries with a low GDP may also have high scores, if the percentage of GDP devoted to education is high.

Considering the state level, one could conclude that the relevance and importance given to education is usually reflected by financial efforts in the field of education and less by empty commitments and official declarations of the priority of education.

European societies are built on the trust that school systems and their professional personnel play a fundamental role in educating every child according to her/his abilities and inclinations and on a less formal level. Education in the form of schooling is still considered as a means to adapt the individual to rapidly changing societal demands and hence indicates societal advancement. While schooling is still the educational core, it is no longer the sole organization involved. Furthermore, this will increase with relatively new trends such as individualization and inclusion and the demand for multi-professional teams to work together on site. Thus, more time and effort will be needed to make education a relevant experience for all young people and teachers' efforts need to be combined with other educative professionals within society to create a collaborative and successful approach.

During the 1990s, much of the focus on the relevance of education had been on the importance of increasing the opportunities and the number of children and youth able to get a basic education, with much less attention being paid to the outcomes of the educational process. While access to schooling is guaranteed to everyone in Europe, school success is not (if success is seen as what so many of the actors in this current study view it as: entry into the labour market and financial security): it could be argued here that success for all is impossible in an inherently competitive institution like education.

"In Europe too many young people are being left aside the labour market, and Europe cannot realize its full potential and provide 75 % of its working population with a job if it is not used the talents and skills of all its citizens. Euro found estimated at over EUR 100 billion the cost of the exclusion of young people from education and the labour market across 21 EU Member States in 2008 – or 1 % of the concerned countries' GDP (...) Over the past two decades, the poverty of

young adults and families with children has risen, while the youth unemployment rate is still above 20 %” (Goffart et al., 2012: 8).

More recently, since 2000, within international education discourses the theme of the quality of education has become dominant, undoubtedly as a reaction to the more quantitative vision that dominated scientific and policy environments when emphasis was placed primarily on expanding access for all to primary education (Young, 2007; Jarvis, 2009). This shift in international education discourses is also reflected in the increased concern with improving the quality of education in national education reform in terms of combining formal and informal educational efforts: however, we also need to note that educational ‘quality’ is now effectively measured quantitatively, via performance on high stakes tests.

"Rationales for quality improvement have to do as much with the need to increase the effectiveness of national education and training systems as essential levers for societal development in an increasingly globalized world, as they do with the need to reduce discrepancies observed between educational outlays and the relevance of what is actually learned to the lives of learners, their families and their communities in particular, and to national development efforts more broadly. Rationales for quality improvement in national education reform discourse also have to do with the need to reduce the observed inequalities within education systems in terms of the uneven performance of schools, as well as in terms of the disparities observed in the social and gendered distribution of learning outcomes among various categories of the population. Finally, these rationales are also related to concerns regarding the ability of formal education systems to deal with the growing diversity and complexity of national societies as a result of the increased pace of patterns of migration, urbanization, cultural globalization, and access to expanding sources and channels of transmission of information, knowledge and values" (Akkari et al., 2011: 21)

Moreover, in the contemporary scenario students’ plans and aspirations have to cope with the

“external fluctuations of capital in the society (current economic, cultural and social prospects) and demands in the labour market. Such influencing forces may have a critical effect on how key groups of actors view the role of education in today’s society.” (Goffart et al., 2012: 7)

In fact, as this current report has shown, such fluctuations have indeed had a critical effect on how key groups of actors now view the role and relevance of education in today’s society. Even in the case of countries with relatively developed social services, the potential of educational and public care systems are not sufficient to assure full support to the students. From previous evidence and from what emerges in the present report, we can confirm that in contemporary societies education alone (seen as schooling commitment) is not sufficient to ensure a positive future career and secure employment and social integration. This means that all actors involved in educational processes, as well as policy makers, have to focus their attention to obtaining a common vision about the relevance of education; for all groups of students in order to cope with the challenges of a post-modern society. Rather than creating or exacerbating social inequalities within educational environments, the school environment should be a crucial field for overcoming them, notably by compensating for weak family efforts in supporting the student in his/her education and in his/her personal development.

In contemporary societies, education systems are fragile creatures of particular historical and cultural constellations;

“(…) we can reason with great conviction that education is important and relevant, but we soon run into difficulties defending this system as opposed to other forms. This of course is due to the principal contingency of modernity. In the absence of any permanent transcendent foundation, scientization fulfils the founding function in late modern societies. This is why standards rather than structure (…) orient education reform. Relevance is to be safeguarded and increased by a more thorough process of rationalization of education. As one famous historian of education put it: we are tinkering towards Utopia” (Dale et al., 2012: 176).

Experts very often complain about a lack of consideration by policy makers, who tend to avoid confrontation with experts' findings and their ideas about the governance of education. For instance, what emerges from the local experts' perspectives analysis (chapter 2.5) is the necessity of a pedagogical alliance between the different stakeholders involved in the educational process as well as the families. This perspective seems not to have gained any traction. If all actors do not share a common vision on the relevance of education it becomes difficult to cope with educational challenges in a complex society.

The responsibility for our future generations' education cannot be placed only on the individual school professionals and the socialization of youth cannot be placed only on their families: there must be a basic societal change at every level. Moreover, we can assume a gap in terms of explicit European legislation (and in some cases even local) to involve more effectively local authorities and child protection agencies to provide support to young people staying in education after its compulsory stage in order to prepare them for better work careers. According to 'agency theory' (Bandura 2001), the research has confirmed that young people's own 'agency' displays capabilities and resilience which could be empowered with political measures. Individuals have the capacity to make positive adaptations within a context of significant adversity (Luthar et al., 2000), and the ability to adapt along appropriate developmental pathways despite their family and/or social difficulties. Young people are active in building their own human, economic and social capital (as seen in chapter 3) and these internal factors could be emphasized by external factors (Kasearu et al., 2010):

"The internal factors are connected to will, persistence and commitment but also valuing knowledge (an acknowledgement of further education as a necessary precondition for getting a better job and building a good future). The internal factors are closely connected to the external factors – support from school, motivating teachers or key workers bridging school and the transition to post-compulsory education, finance schemes for widening access (such as benefits, loans or scholarships)" (Goffart et al., 2012: 31).

Promoting access to social rights is fundamental for the civic and political participation of young people. In this perspective, education represents one possible way to increase a feeling of empowerment that can help young people to realize their potential, if institutionally supported. School together with civil society organizations can uncover underexploited capacities and actively engage young people in the process of designing a personal project of education.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

The multi-faceted nature of the relevance of education requires a range of different tools to address its own multiple educational ‘relevancies’. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, education has social and cultural relevance as well as merely economic relevance, though it is the latter that seems to dominate the debates in the area. For example, tackling multiple socially generated disadvantages and the social exclusion of youth from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and low personal resources, and promoting an effective education that could empower students and provide them with better opportunities for their personal and professional development, requires an interdisciplinary and multilevel approach that recognises these different elements of the relevance of education. One example of this is considering the ‘social’ element of relevance as it manifests itself in the social divide among youth, and how that comes about. The social divide among youth could be narrowed by political acknowledgement of their specific social, economic and political needs, through focusing political attention on the relevance of education in the prevention of social exclusion, alongside the elaboration of institutional measures supporting youth transitions to independent living. Ensuring that education’s relevance to such issues could generate recognition of this points to the need for a package of inclusive educational and labour market policies combined with supportive schooling and welfare policies. Education also carries relevance for individuals qua individuals, in enhancing their capabilities and capacities to survive in and contribute to the wider societies of which they are all in some sense part, and which depend for their flourishing on the involvement and engagement of all, a goal that has long been at the centre of educational relevance.

The results that emerge in this report show that all relevant actors regard education as very relevant for young people, although it is acknowledged that the labour market is unsecure. Education, and school, has not only an important role in preparing young people for the labour market; there is also crucial socializing aspect to schools’ work, and schools have an important role in decreasing social inequalities. However, the different education systems provide students with different opportunities. In some differentiated education systems with early selection, a student cannot easily change his or her educational trajectory. Comprehensive education systems seem to provide students with more opportunities to change an already started educational trajectory. In countries with well-developed apprenticeship or work placement training (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands), students may choose to enrol in full time education or enter the labour market after compulsory education, while in some countries, full time education is considered as the only real option (e.g. Finland and Slovenia). Because of the different education systems’ emphases on the nature and aspects of relevance conceptions of relevance of education differ across the GOETE countries. Polish students see education as something they must achieve and therefore want to receive as many qualifications as possible while French students also see apprenticeship training or a full time job as an opportunity after compulsory education. In differentiated and stratified educational systems some educational routes to higher education are not available for students in lower tracks, they are “beyond”

expectations, and cannot therefore necessarily be seen as an indicator of low aspirations of students and parents.

Because of the different education systems and country differences it is very difficult to provide general recommendations on policy and practice. However, the results show that family background is of great importance and influences students' opportunities in their life course and how students perceive the relevance of education. The family background not only shapes how students perceive the relevance of education for their future life, but is also significant in providing different learning opportunities for students. There seems to be a general trend in reducing schools' role in providing students with different learning opportunities outside the curriculum, which has been shown to be important in providing students with learning experiences they do not receive from home. Therefore, it is important for schools to have sufficient knowledge on how to support students who are regarded as disadvantaged. Socially disadvantaged students who do not receive support from home are in the most vulnerable position if they do not receive support from school. Schools should be encouraged to provide students with different non-formal learning opportunities and out-of-school activities.

5.2.1 Conclusions for policy

A key point in the shifts of the relationship between state and citizen and the responsibility of the state to provide employment – and in these terms make education more relevant for citizens – is that the apparatuses for addressing the problems have not changed in tune with both the rhetoric, and the reality, of changing circumstances. This is especially notable in the case of VET and is prominent in discourses around the educational experiences of socially disadvantaged young people is Early School Leaving – ESL – which also represents elements of continuity with the consequences of the cyclical nature of economic production. The VET sector remains a significant institutional apparatus, with many of its institutions going back decades. Of course, these institutions have changed enormously, but there remain significant path dependencies (see, for instance, Kathleen Thelen's classic study 'How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan'). The problem is essentially perceived as one of VET coming to terms with new conditions rather than one where the basic relationship between education and training systems and work and employment needs to be radically reconceptualised, as the conditions that yoked vocational education and 'relevance' together are eroding. The discursive shift from 'unemployed youth' to 'early school leaver' is rather more profound. It entails a shift in responsibility for individuals' life courses from the state to the individual. The state's responsibility is to ensure, as far as possible, that there are minimal numbers of unqualified young people in the labour market. This is also very much in the state's interest, at many levels, including social cohesion and economic costs, for people lacking the qualifications for many jobs are thought also to be more likely to be socially excluded. National rates of ESLs are in a sense seen as an index of the socio-economic success of a system, a region, or a nation; hence their political prominence in the European Commission's 2020 strategy. And as more effective and productive routes into employment than through vocational education emerge, this may

lead to increasing 'negative selection' into those routes, and the concentration within them of those already most at risk of ESL.

"Post-compulsory educational participation is becoming a norm and, simultaneously, is becoming more costly in Europe. Since the 1970s, participation in education after the compulsory phase has increased threefold. Moreover, in the EU 84 % of young people aged 15–19 are in education, as are 25 % of the age group 20-29 years. In spite of the fact that education is high on the political agenda of European countries, wide participation in education is not a fact among all groups: young people in care stand out particularly in this respect. Young people with public care backgrounds prioritise financial independence through work, not further education" (Goffart et al., 2012: 9).

Starting from this data we can assume that, besides personal problems, young people have to face multidimensional institutional barriers, especially at points of transition.

Transition from compulsory to secondary/vocational school is a crucial transition in young people's lives and in this specific period they need support by adult figures within the professional arena of teaching and social work (such as teachers or social workers) to demonstrate the economic, social and individual relevance of education, even when young people are highly motivated. Interviewed experts emphasized this point: besides raising aspirations and expectations it is also important to support young people to be successful in their further education and transition to labour market. They also stressed the need for outreach programmes from higher institutions. Moreover, local level experts especially underline that the students' commitments and their good educational performance are largely conditioned by anticipated future rewards in the labour market, thus defining the relevance of education in terms of educational credentials. In terms of policy challenge, a more focused involvement of local authorities and child protection agencies is needed to support young people to stay in education or training after the compulsory stage. Otherwise, budgetary pressures are likely to cause an abandonment of their school career and premature entrance in the labour market – or failure to do so – without adequate skills and knowledge.

Of course, it is very difficult to draw a European picture because of the large variations in the policy systems of different European countries: the different problems of youth at risk of social exclusion, which vary from country to country; the very different socioeconomic conditions and cultural environments in these countries; and a great diversity in the scale of migration, ethnic minority presence, youth unemployment and numbers of excluded young people. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the ideas shared in our research will increase awareness of the particular social, economic and political needs of young people and educational space in Europe, to make their needs more visible in policy arenas. These needs include the opportunities to accumulate educational credentials, but also preventing social disadvantage turning into social exclusion

Education, employment, equal rights and opportunities for citizenship, participation and solidarity between society and youth are the key areas where change is needed to develop and execute EU youth strategy actions for the empowerment of young people's agency and for initiatives to prevent

social exclusion, in support of the implementation of related and relevant policies at regional and national levels.

The notion of 'compulsory education for all' is more an ideal than a reality. This resonated with other research projects' findings, which show that compulsory education in Europe tends to mostly segregate children with biographical disadvantages (Goffart et al., 2012). Students need stability during their developmental years. Multiple changes of schools have a negative impact on their educational achievements and thus they are worse prepared for transitions to future life careers. Moreover, according to 'Empowerment theory' (Blanchard et al., 1996), a positive success in life and/or career transitions is determined by the possibility by individuals to get a feeling of involvement and self-determination in their future life/school career. Non-participation in the key activities that are expected from a young person according to their age produces troublesome transitions and identity problems.

Public discourses and the media are not helpful in terms of addressing the social exclusion of youth, breaking the stigma or revealing discriminatory practices. But the media system could also assume a role as a potentially positive contributor to activating civil society through initiating social dialogues between different policy interest groups (Fangen et al., 2012).

The research has revealed another policy challenge: the development of integrated measures to assure a successful transition for students in Europe. It means that transition is not an issue only for students with low personal resources but for everyone, if we think in terms of the complexity of the contemporary society where it is difficult to predict what kind of education would lead to secure employment in the future. This is why it is important to increase institutional support, protection and encouragement in formal and non-formal education.

The need for education to be socially relevant also raises concerns about the opportunities to expand conceptions of 'social public care' for compulsory school students in an 'educationally oriented' welfare perspective. The key means of achieving this is for schools and youth welfare agencies to extend and increase their cooperation.

Moreover, to address the transition to the labour market it would also be useful to involve labour market institutions to provide extracurricular activities for students,

"which would give young people up-to-date knowledge of the value of education, training and the contemporary labour market situation, as well as perhaps encourage their entrepreneurship" (Goffart et al., 2012: 49).

In this direction, it is also important to define and improve the quality of vocational training which is a valuable professional option for those students who do not want to stay on in education, but at the same time want to achieve appropriate skills to enter into the labour market.

European and local institutions have to elaborate policy responses inspired by an opportunity-focused approach and a view of education as a strategic financial investment. This step must be addressed by

reflexive forms of policymaking, inspired by evidence of good-practices which are available in the European environment, and are oriented to reduce the impact of transitions within the educational process.

National as well as communitarian policies also need to encourage solidarity between society and youth to encourage the feeling of citizenship and participation of students as fundamental educative challenge to promote a sense of belonging and identity within the communities. These conditions provide the necessary underpinnings to increase the personal resources of young people, to achieve their better integration in society, and to facilitate the real democratic participation of young people. The provision of language for non-native speakers provides an instructive and symbolic example here; it instantiates the need for a recognition of, and response to, the social relevance of education, in that it offers the means for fuller social participation in society. Similarly, the relevance of education is closely connected to the promotion of intercultural education, teacher training and the collaboration of experts and citizens (parents and others) in integrated educational systems (Frabboni, 1998).

The GOETE project enlightens several positive examples across countries that support socially disadvantaged young people in school transitions. Some countries have good educational law systems; others a functional welfare provision; some show good examples of peer education; others have education systems integrated with labour market policies; in some countries we found positive civil society initiatives. The policy challenge is to integrate these different tools into a coherent system. This refers to the policy challenge of making education the first priority in the lives of European people; starting from the youngest but not only for them; first and foremost for those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

According to the results, there is a need for inclusive educational and labour market policies combined with supportive schooling and welfare policies. Education, employment, equal rights and opportunities for citizenship, participation and solidarity between society and young people are the key areas where change is needed to develop and execute EU youth strategy actions for the empowerment of young people's agency and for initiatives to prevent social exclusion, in support of the implementation of related and relevant policies at regional and national levels. Bottom-up knowledge based practices could be promising in this sense.

Lastly, the complex body of policy challenges makes sense only if policymakers understand the multiple aspects of the relevance and capacities of education systems. Policy challenges for European society lie not only in the vision of integrating socially disadvantaged students to prevent deeper and further problems for them and for society, but primarily in a political aim (Morin, 2010), where Education is relevant first of all to stimulating autonomous and critical thinking and to driving young people to the assumption of the role of 'protagonist' (Contini, 2009) in their lives and within the society to express all their potential.

"The policy challenge lies in developing measures addressed to the empowerment of youth agency to enable young people with disadvantaged backgrounds to break the chain of disadvantages and broaden the field of choices about their future" (Feerick, 2009: 65).

Only if educational system assumes the task of improving the 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004), will our societies embody a completely democratic role.

5.2.2 Conclusions for practice

Subjective perceptions of young people about aspirations to continue education or find a job are also the result of the peer comparisons of their school performance and success and the social advancement of their reference peers group (see 3.2).

Negative self-comparisons to normative expectations and peer achievements lower aspirations to continue education or find a job amongst those with low personal and social capital (such as weak family or kinship support, lack of financial resources, or low or missing language proficiency in the cases of migrant youth). Low self-esteem sets the ceiling to one's personal aspirations and leads to self-exclusion from potential opportunities.

Ethnic minority students often experience conflicts between the values, norms and practices of their home environment and the school, thus producing distrust in parent-school relations. Frustrations stemming from experiences of discrimination and segregation lead to high drop-out rates which can be regarded as the primary source of marginalization (Perrons, 2010: 29).

Stigmatisation and labelling are only two factors for perceived social exclusion, which is by no means confined to minority students, but affect all those who experience poor financial or housing situations, and these three factors lead to a sense of belonging to a particular socially disadvantaged group. The sense of stigma of these students can generate fear about 'otherness'.

Moreover, professionals – teachers, social workers and others – often bring a 'professional paradigm' (Perrons, 2010) which leads to children and young people being labelled, and underlines the importance of education in the young person's life, reflecting the focus of intervention in education and integration process for young people's well-being and aspirations.

Educational systems have great potential to encourage the students to resist and contest feeling of 'otherness'. For instance through a policy not just of equal access to schools, but to share and promote a view of relevance of education for their lives not only in terms of school success. In addition, it provides rational and effective individual tools for teachers, which can be useful for their professional role (e.g. counselling, training sessions on intercultural issues, support for their sense of self-efficacy, and so on)?

But the most important issue is related to the importance of promoting environments and conditions where students can really feel a sense of commonality with their peers, and thus reduce the impact of existing problems in their families of origin or other disadvantage factors.

In sum, the main practice conclusions are as follows.

Although parents find education relevant, it doesn't mean that they necessarily can mediate this message to their children. In some cases parents regard education as the task of the school and trust in the school to provide students with sufficient knowledge and means to manage their educational trajectory. In other cases parents interfere too much and school personnel feel overburdened by the demands of the parents. In many cases parents need guidance on how to support their children in their educational trajectory. Therefore, there seems to be a need to provide schools with guidance on how to support parents in supporting their children.

To support education in consideration of the issues raised above, it is important to provide multilevel tools. For students, it is important to develop school as well as and community-based counselling services to give young people an opportunity to face their problems and access support, but also to channel their own educational desires and needs.

In many schools we can find a great knowledge regarding how to support socially disadvantaged students. Many experts and teachers in schools have developed a significant expertise in how to support socially disadvantaged students. This knowledge should be better valued with bottom-up knowledge based practices.

For schools, as well as for social care systems, early recognition of disadvantaged situations is crucial to provide individual tutoring and support and thus help the students and avoid school drop-out.

To encourage and support teachers, as well as local experts, self-efficacy is another crucial point. From our study other 3 points are raised as important bases for educational success:

- appropriate 'lifelong learning' education and 'training during the job' for teachers and professionals;
- appropriate social recognition of teachers and educational professionals in terms of recognition of their important social role within society (this aspect is largely decreasing in the public opinion);
- autonomy of the local educational environments in a "communities of practice" perspective (Snyder & Wenger, 2000) to provide specific answers to specific needs.

For teachers it is important to steer in-service training towards innovative methods of competence-based teaching and their application, and intercultural skills and competence in dealing with socially disadvantaged groups (Goffart et al., 2012).

To connect teachers and local level experts it is useful to facilitate informal and non-formal learning in order to address their efforts in a common direction and to build a 'community of competence', which can cope with multifactor disadvantage issues. Moreover, in this way it is also useful to start to think about a new model of school which is much more open to the local context, and to include NGOs' in the educational system.

It is also important to address the difficulty of sharing meanings and ideas about 'relevance in education', to provide platforms for open dialogue among young people from a range of backgrounds together with school counsellors or other professionals who have regular contacts with students and their families and invite the media to attend (Goffart et al., 2012).

Parents also need to be supported about their educational and care commitments and they also need assistance in learning how to support their children. In this regard it can be useful to provide training for parents, so that they will be prepared to support their own offspring in the education process.

Another topic is the importance of engaging "trusted adults" (teachers, social workers, youth workers, health professionals, police, employers) as complementary support agents in the provision of advice, information and counselling, who, in partnership, could encourage young people to invest in education and assist them in school and other learning environments (Goffart et al., 2012: 51).

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