GOETE | Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe

Coping and Support in Educational Transitions

Authors (in alphabetic order)

Hulya Kosar Altinyelken (co-editor), Mikko Aro, Felicitas Boron, Silvia Demozzi, Ilse Julkunen (co-editor), Laetitia Mellottee, Susan L. Robertson, Federica Taddia, Rainer Treptow

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Responsible partners:

University of Helsinki, University of Amsterdam

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Executive summary

Young people in school are a group who gain a great deal of attention from the research community with many surveys exploring success, skills and welfare among students. This study considers coping and support issues facing young people from a multi-actor perspective framing it in a comparative welfare and educational context. It focuses on investigating how students manage to cope with educational demands. It analyses measures of active inclusion through provision of social support and informal support inside and outside of school, and how formal, non-formal and informal learning are related within education systems in general and in educational trajectories in particular. Some of the questions that are central to this thematic report include the following: What are the conditions and constellations under which productive learning occurs and how are learning biographies constructed? What support systems are available inside and outside of school in order to help students develop successful school careers? What coping strategies do young people in school have, and how do they vary in different countries? And, finally, can we find commonalities and divergences within and between countries?

Meanings and Contexts of Coping

Young people have to cope with the issues and challenges that they are presented with during this particular phase of life. Children and adolescents are dependent on resources and the circumstances in which they find themselves, including what kind of welfare support is available. To integrate into society is a difficult challenge. Coping, as a mediating concept, enables us to understand the relationship between young people's personal history, their life conditions, and the school environment. It provides a framework that connects the practice of welfare support to an understanding of young people's personal, psychological, and social, coping strategies. Support, on the other hand, is a concept that describes different forms of strengthening people to enable them to cope with social and mental challenges in a more successful way. In a professional way, support means a systematic or interactive intervention in either a group setting, community work, or individual case-management. In this Report, a wider frame of reference of coping is applied that concerns the relationship between the individual and the conditions of life, so as not to isolate people's actions from their social contexts and the existing acting possibilities. Societal conditions may be seen as a set of rules

and resources which facilitate different forms of action. People thus actualize societal conditions in a specific context through individual action.   These may differ in different contexts:

1) General societal contexts encompass the challenges of societal and political development that a country has "to cope with" e.g. in a competitive knowledge society, in globalization facing economic demands and educational development of individuals as a question of shaping the future of the society. Given demographic development, there is also a demand to provide the nation with a qualified workforce. Another challenge is seen in qualifying and integrating those with a low educational background and without sufficient training or qualifications. There is also the challenge of strengthening the ability of young learners to participate in social and cultural spheres, and the ability to lead a self-determined life facing the demanding challenges of mobility, complexity and acceleration of information and knowledge. It is also argued that members of a (post-) modern society have to cope with the devaluation of knowledge and changes to traditions, and to develop an attitude toward the process of life-long learning.

2) The context of institutional demands and challenges encompasses the necessity for cooperation between institutions within the school sector, and out-of-school services such as social work, psychological and psychiatric counselling and on self-organized support (by parents). In order to organize support and to strengthen individual coping strategies, the demands of creating a sustainable school-culture have to be taken into account. The aim is to: secure a climate of welcoming every child; ensure the non-acceptance of bullying, mobbing or racist mentalities; and to develop constructive ways to solve and regulate conflicts by mediators (even peer-to-peer). Institutions "live" by the transparency of their processes, a high level of parental participation, and an atmosphere of solidarity and support, although this seem to be kind of paradox to the principles of competition and selection which schools have to follow.

3) Formal and non-formal supports need to be oriented towards the resources and capabilities of the students, and regulate who should be able to use them both inside and outside of school. In this context, the individual has to be considered in terms of their social background, their capacities, and deficits in their coping abilities. It is important to take account of students from families regarded as having a lack of resources to overcome

structural barriers and difficulties that are connected with individual situations. Describing these situations also demands identifying the influences which can be identified as contributing to the discrimination of disadvantaged children.

These contexts frame how coping and welfare support is investigated from an agency perspective; it includes the polyphonic voices of students, parents, teachers, and welfare experts both inside and outside of the school.

The comparative research study of GOETE

The GOETE project is a comparative project; in this regard it is concerned with understanding how education systems deal with the changing relation between education and social integration in the knowledge society, on the one hand, and across different countries of Europe, on the other. This has entailed analysing and comparing young people's educational trajectories in Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and the UK.

The study covers the period from transition from lower secondary education to transition into upper secondary education/vocational education and training. The comparative mixed-methods study consisted of national background documents and the following studies:

- Standardized surveys in schools with: (i) students and parents on their experiences in school and the availability of support for their transitions; and (ii) school principals on the regulation, provision of support and relevance of qualifications.
- A comparison of teacher training practices regarding the social aspects of teaching and learning, including the role of teachers in processing students' transitions carried out through document analysis and expert interviews in teacher training institutions.
- Qualitative local case studies conducted in disadvantaged school districts in three cities per country focusing on the interaction between individual and institutional decision-making inside and out of school. Data was gathered via group discussions with students and teachers, individual in-depth interviews with principals, parents and students during and after they had left lower secondary education. Expert interviews were also conducted with professionals inside and outside school.
- Document analysis and expert interviews with policy makers and stakeholders carried out on educational policies, priorities, and trends and logics of intervention.

A multi-level and multi-actor research approach

The thematic report on coping and support among young learners draws upon targeted analysis and the meta-analysis of the national and comparative research material. A triangulation approach was applied using survey material to show patterns within and between the countries, comparing and interpreting to analyse local cases, and the use of additional data material. The comparative analysis tried to establish a relationship between the phenomena of youth transition and the conditions and processes represented by the country cases (Rode 2009). This thematic report consists of the analysis of different aspects of coping and draws from the different research material described above. All chapters provide information on the foci of the analysis and the research material that was used.

Comparative studies are frequently conducted on the basis of a comparison of welfare regimes. In this study we compare both welfare regime typologies, youth transition regimes, and the distinction between standardised and stratified education systems and what this means for coping and support for young learners.

Main findings

Financial, social and cultural resources still matter

Our study confirms that socio-economic background of students has an importance influence on students' achievements at school. Financial, social and cultural resources still play an important role in many educational careers. Although also actors interviewed in the GOETE-context see education as a key to break through the cycle of disadvantage, the study shows, that the reproduction of social and economic inequalities is still a big issue in many cases.

The same can be affirmed for the discrimination of students with migration background. In many countries interviewees report about a segregation of students with migration background in certain schools, about experiences of discrimination and 'othering'. Furthermore several experts and teachers argued that parents from immigrant background have less interest in supporting their children and rate education as less relevant. That contradicts not only former findings about on average higher educational expectations of parents with migration background but also statements of high motivated and committed immigrant parents interviewed for our study.

Parents may react to potential stigmatisation that is associated with high stratification in the system, and attempt to manage the educational trajectory of their child. A particularly interesting finding is that those in the GOETE survey accessing private tuition – especially in France and Germany - tended not to be from privileged family backgrounds (professional and managerial class) but were more likely to be from the lower middle classes. This is an important finding in that it highlights the ways in which particular class fractions mobilize and use different kinds of support strategy for their child (though this is clearly dependent on individual family resources) to manage the limitations that the schooling system presents them with.

One of the more interesting findings presented in this Report is that in the GOETE countries there is a correlation between characteristics of standardised and stratified educational systems and the health of students, and that girls' mental health is particularly problematic especially in comparison to that of boys. Students in low stratified and high standardized systems (such as Finland, Slovenia) experience much better health. A second is that streaming and stratification in the education systems, practices that are most prominent in countries like Germany, Slovenia and the Netherlands, can lead to stigmatization.

The discourse on individualism - Students believe they are responsible for their own careers and success

An important insight for GOETE research on coping and support is that the student is viewed as responsible for their own career and success; this is a view which students also agreed with and held. By implication, a lack of success is also their own fault, rather than that of the system or other kinds of social relations. The discourse of individualism, and the consequent responsibility for their educational trajectories and careers, is powerful - and one that also works for the system. This is because it does not challenge the system to generate sufficient support for learners. Nor does it lead to the confrontation of structural inequalities and their role in creating significant barriers to learning for young people.

Meeting academic demands emerged as an important challenge in various contexts, and several students discussed how they developed strategies to increase their efforts (the need to work hard', e.g.: to do homework every day, to study subjects every day and to pay more attention during the class hours) and perform better at school. Students believe that everything depends solely on them. Students do not consider inequalities at school as a main issue and explained pupil difficulties by lack of involvement or goodwill. This denial of

educational inequalities leads them to have very individualistic perception of trajectories. As a consequence, they do not entrust coping facilities with supporting them and consider they have to deal with difficulties on their own.

Trust and quality of schooling and support

Satisfaction with the support provided at school seems to be more related to the individual country's organization and provision of the support at schools than with the general characteristics of educational systems in terms of stratification and standardization. Actually, not only mere comparison of educational systems, but also differences on welfare states and youth services play a role.

However, there is a not a very clear connection between welfare state type and/or education system type and the emphasis on the various types of support measures, as there were strong differences in the opinions of the principals e.g. between Germany and the Netherlands, which are similar on the system level. However, the indirect forms of support (both in-school, such as school nurse, and out-of-school, such as general municipal social work), were on average the most emphasised in Finland, which does indicate somewhat of a connection to the welfare state and the availability/strength of services.

One insight explored in depth in this Report is the different levels of access to, and usage of, private tutoring – with Poland and Germany featuring quite high on usage and Finland quite low. However, what is interesting here is that this seems to be linked to trust in the quality of schooling, and therefore that students in the system will be properly attended to. The differences in the prevalence of private tutoring may be linked, firstly, to the status of school and the (dis)trust of the parents in the capabilities of teachers to provide the pupils with the necessary tuition and support. Secondly, the prevalence of private tutoring may be fuelled by competition and by the needs of the high-achievers, which seems to be related to having final examinations there are final examinations at the end of lower secondary education, which naturally increases competition among pupils.

The agency of the child and the burden of choice in transitions

The GOETE findings suggest that there is a strong discourse of the child as the chooser; an attitude that is favoured by parents, though they are also not certain whether students have the necessary aptitudes to do this well. How might students manage the burden that this creates, or take it as an opportunity to develop their own resilience and sense of self-efficacy? To

what extent does such an approach perpetuate a social reproduction agenda, where familiar stereotypes are embraced and unfamiliar trajectories are side-stepped? When does guidance fail the individual and their family, and what are the causes of that failure? Interesting examples are explored in this chapter; examples that enable us to see that support services do not always lead to desirable outcomes.

There are different traditions and practices in career guidance across Europe. The data is clear that transitions are decisive in shaping the ongoing trajectory for students. Education systems with streaming and tracking mechanisms in place tend to have more highly developed guidance systems. Still, the study highlights a lack of coordination and coherence in guidance systems. This gives rise to a lack of transparency facing many users of such support services. Paradoxically, guidance counsellors, as one means of formal support, face particular coping challenges within their own profession, in turn limiting their capacity to support students.

In none of the GOETE countries does career guidance accompany the whole school career trajectory of a child, beginning at entrance to the first year of primary school and ending at the end of compulsory education (or even later). Yet, there is growing insight that the first transition is crucial for the further school career of a student. There is a need for closer coaching, certainly in countries with selective systems, although this also relates to comprehensive systems. Few educational actors – aside from teacher training institutions – pay attention to both of the transitions facing students.

Building bridges between home and school

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

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

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

Policy and practice recommendations

- Making decisions regarding future educational or occupational careers appears to be a very important challenge for all students. Students are 'forced' to make changes at a very young age which lead in many cases to frustrations, disappointment, and multiple transitions to 'correct' earlier decisions. This can be viewed as a waste of much time and effort. These findings demand the attention of policy makers to review early selection systems and high differentiation, and to consider the postponement of critical selection moments.

- Pathways to the future are not clear to students, causing stress and uncertainty among some students. Such uncertainties and confusions were particularly endemic in countries where students need to make educational and occupational choices at a young age. Close coaching is needed. However, career guidance today is too narrowly focused on trajectories from lower secondary to upper secondary. A whole school

perspective is needed extending and integrating career guidance within school. Also here some countries provide examples of successful strategies.

- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to need more support at school, and the schools need more information and interaction with parents in order to offer this support effectively. In other words, remedying educational and developmental problems of disadvantaged students requires improved cooperation between schools and homes. Moreover, parents from lower socio-economic or educational background may not be adequately informed about the education system and the transition possibilities. Therefore, cooperation with them is central to enable them to make informed choices.

- Concerning dealing problems at school, students tend to approach their social networks, including friends, siblings, parents and other members of the extended family, rather than seeking help from professionals such as counsellors or social workers. This suggests that the broader social networks of students need to be incorporated into efforts to provide support to students by professionals at school. The linkages with family and the community also need to be strengthened.

- Addressing stigmatisation with regard to seeking support from experts at school is an important intervention area for schools, because unless this stigmatisation is overcome, the formal support offered at schooling settings will be underutilized.

- The professional demands of teachers are changing; in several countries, teachers complain about increasing demands. There is a need to take this issue seriously and prepare teachers on how best to deal with social disadvantages in schools, as well as how to increase co-operation within and outside professional multifunctional networks.

- In all countries there is a need for reforming teacher training towards a system which combines social and teaching competences. Teachers need to be more prepared in how to guide students, in particular socially-disadvantaged students.

- More emphasis should be made on integrating career guidance not only as a formal support but also to be integrated with the curriculum. In some countries this form of

mixed approach has been successful. Where career guidance services are wholly school-based, links with the labour market are weak. Schools need to develop closer links with the labour market providing more practice-related knowledge for students. Creative projects with the labour market can offer inspiration and future bridges for students.

- Schools are increasingly multicultural in terms of student population. Teachers still lack multicultural competencies. It is recommended that student teachers and teachers should develop a greater range of skills to undertake teaching in multicultural classrooms.

- The mother tongue of students should be recognized as an important heritage. The example of the UK shows that lessons in mother language of students not only supports their identity formation but also supports to develop and preserve skills that can be an advantage at educational and job market.

- The self-confidence of students from vocational schools and lower tracks of the education system must be supported by special measures. It is important to develop a view on them that not only sees their difficulties and problems but their strengths and capabilities. Teachers must be trained to develop such an attitude which avoids 'cooling-out' processes.

- In order to avoid the risk of getting entrapped in a 'blaming game', parents and teachers should start their cooperation trying to understand each other's reasons and values (e.g. cultural differences in thinking the role of the school). What we suggest here is a 'bottom up' approach in building practices of cooperation in order to understand and include values, expectations, strong points available in the context. Too often, in fact, cooperation is built up on formal rules and old practices, that probably can't meet what nowadays is needed anymore.

- The importance of indirect support measures should not be under-estimated even in times of economic hardship when schools/municipalities are looking for ways to save money. The importance of school nurses, for example, goes far beyond just providing health care, as they can often be "impartial" confidantes for the pupils.

- It needs to be remembered that the school and the pupils do not exist in a vacuum, but they are strongly affected also by out-of-school policies, such as the functioning of the general social protection system. The way social policy is organised affects the school, and vice versa. In times of economic hardship, it should be realised that savings in one sphere may very easily become rising expenses in another sphere.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Ilse Julkunen and Rainer Treptow

This chapter provides an introduction to the thematic issue of coping and support in the educational transitions of young people. Coping as a mediating concept enables us to understand the relationship between personal history and the social and material world, and in this context - the school environment. It provides a framework that connects the practice of welfare support to an understanding of student's personal psychological and social coping strategies. Support, on the other hand, is a concept that describes different forms of strengthening people to cope with social and mental challenges in a more successful way. This can be done by informal communication among peers, members of families or neighbours, or via formal professional settings. Professionally support is offered within different sectors. In relation to dedicated professionals way, support means systemic and interactive intervention in a setting of either group work, community work, or individual case-management. Interaction is based on methodological knowledge and on theoretical reflection of the conditions to cooperate and to handle conflicts.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping serves two overriding functions: managing or altering the problem, and regulating the emotional response to it. There are a number of definitions of coping; each e chapter relates and positions themselves differently with regard to these definitions. A common distinction is between problem-focused coping, where efforts are directed at doing something constructive about the condition by dealing with emotions, or on the cognitive dimension – where the focus is on creating a reappraisal of the person-environment relationship. Definitions of coping might also include efforts to manage stressful events. In different phases of the life span, stressful events can accumulate in situations of transitions, such as between kindergarten and school, between various transition points inside the school, and between the school and the labour-market.

The discourse on coping has been most prominent within the discipline of psychology and later incorporated into sociological studies. Although the terminology is largely shared, there are differences in how these are operationalized and interpreted. Broadly, psychological

studies focus on individual behaviour, whereas sociological studies pay more attention to the social context of individuals' lives. Another body of research belongs to the field of medicine – such as the salutogenetic approach exemplified of Antonovsky's sense of coherence (1987). This approach tends to emphasize different coping styles that emerge as stable dispositions to cope in a certain way over the life course. By contrast, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) apply a process-oriented approach, including situational demands, as well as the resources and constraints that affect the process. Mörch (1997) developed this further, highlighting the importance of not isolating people's actions from their social contexts and existing possibilities for action. In fact, societal conditions may be seen as a set of rules and resources which facilitate different forms of action. People thus actualize societal conditions in a specific context through individual action.

This brings up a wider frame of reference of coping concerning the relation between the individual and the conditions of life. On one hand, the term coping is used in a quite individualizing way - describing the forms of dealing with challenges an individual has to manage. These challenges might arise as a result of biographical events (such as the birth of child, illness or death of family member, separation in partnership, or moving to another city), that in turn demand coping strategies. Such strategies might have already been learned, or will need to be developed. On the other hand, coping is embedded in a wider range of macro- and meso-theoretical references which connect the demands of a changing society and it's institutions with individual capabilities to react and shape its everyday life. In this model authors see a range if structural reasons for emerging challenges, paradoxes, and stressful events, which have to be interpreted by the individual in the context of their existing cognitive and socio-cultural experiences and attributes. This can lead to forms of behaviour which are not simply an adaptation to the rules and norms that might be expected; instead it leads to deviance and innovation. The relevance of structures in order to support individuals in coping have to be seen in a wider socio-political context; as simultaneously reacting to changing conditions and as also in part creating them. In order to understand coping the strategies and support demands on young learners in relation to socio-political accountability, the terms Lebenslage (conditions of life) and Lebensbewältigung (coping with life) (Böhnisch/Schefold 1985) are relevant.

The concept of 'Lebenslage' was developed in a specific historical and socio-political set of conditions in the 1980s: one that saw the increasing demise of the welfare state which, over a longer period of time, had promised secure access to work and therefore to social integration. Economic processes, like the rationalisation of work, have caused major structural

challenges, such as higher and longer lasting unemployment rates. Because economic development became decoupled from social development, the welfare state could no longer guarantee that the 'normal' life course (school - vocational training or academic studies - work) might lead to classical forms of social integration over the life span. The normality of the institutionalised life course, where the welfare state provided integration via work, was broken. Acting in everyday life - as well as the continuity in biographies – has become more insecure. However, 'Lebensbewältigung' not only refers to critical life events that are circumscribed by a certain situation in life., The term also encompasses all actions and activities that an individual undertakes to become and stay capable of acting, especially against a background of socio-structural detachment and exposure to new socio-economic developments (cf. Böhnisch 2012). This takes into account such forms of acting are socially recognized, but that deviant behaviour itself is a means of 'coping with life' because it opens new possibilities for becoming or staying capable of acting. The concepts of 'Lebenslage' and 'Lebensbewältigung' have a historical dimension because the conditions of life are always constituted in the context of certain social-political conditions and are therefore not accidental.

Contexts of Coping

Much of the theory and research on coping has been driven by an adult-centric point of view. Yet it can be argued that the particular characteristics of childhood and adolescence need to be taken into account when applying and studying coping and support amongst young people. These may differ from the ascriptions of society. They might involve feelings of being misunderstood, of experiencing depressive moods, or of not belonging and loneliness (Böhnisch 1994). To integrate into society becomes a difficult challenge for young learning. Children and adolescents are dependent on both the resources and the circumstances in which they find themselves, and what kind of welfare support is available. There are 3 contexts to be identified:

1) The demands and challenges of education are generated by economic and technological change. These contexts encompass the challenges of societal and political development that a country has "to cope with" e.g. living in a competitive knowledge society, or living in a society experiencing new economic demands as a result of globalisation. There are also challenges as a result of demographic changes, which include demands in providing

the nation with a qualified workforce. Another challenge is seen in qualifying and integrating those groups with a background of low educational achievement and without sustainable training or qualifications into the labour market and society. These place pressure on individuals with regard to the ability to lead a self-determined life in the face of increased mobility, growing complexity, and accelerated growth in both information and knowledge production. Members of a (post-) modern society also have to cope with the devaluation of knowledge, a collapse in traditions, and different attitudes toward the process of life-long learning. They must also manage the new complexities of individualisation, risk and precariousness in society.

2) There are also new institutionalised demands and challenges as a result of changes in the relationship between the public and private sector. This context encompasses the necessity of new forms of cooperation between institutions within the school sector and out-of-school services, such, as social work, psychological and psychiatric counselling, and self-organized support (by parents). In order to organize support and to strengthen individual coping strategies, the demands of creating a sustainable school-culture have to be taken into account. The long term aim is to secure a sustainable, ethical, and normative, climate of welcoming every child; of non-acceptance of bullying, mobbing or racist mentality; and of constructive ways to solve and regulate conflicts by mediators (even peer-to-peer). Institutions "live" by the transparency of their processes, by a high level of parental participation, and an atmosphere of solidarity and support. However, competition and selection also generate new paradoxes with regard to integration and solidarity. To work in this atmosphere that now pervades school cultures, teachers have to broaden their knowledge base into understanding the new social competencies, along with how best to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds which characterise many family's lives.

3) Individual context of capabilities and capacities of students in their local surroundings. Formal or non-formal support has to be oriented to the resources and capabilities of coping that the students are able to use inside and also outside school. In this context, the individual has to be regarded in their social background, including their capacities, and deficits in their coping abilities. It is important to take account of those students from families who might lack resources, such as cultural attributes, social capital or economic means. Such circumstances, however, influence the opportunities that student have, and are often likely to lead to forms of discrimination.

Due to these contexts, coping and welfare support must be investigated from an agency perspective, including the polyphonic voices of students, parents, teachers, the welfare experts in and outside of school.

Young people in school are a group who gain a great deal of attention from different research communities, with many surveys conducted on the success, skills and welfare of students. Ethnographic studies in schools from a gender perspective have been conducted starting from the classic studies on resistant boys and silent girls (Willis 1977; Davies 1979). Comparative and cross-cultural studies also exist and are especially interesting, for instance, a study on the restructuring of education in Britain and Finland focused on curriculum policies, practices and processes in schools (Gordon et al 2000). However, the focus of the study was mainly been on students as a distinct group rather than the student in relation to others. This study explores the coping and support issue from a multi-actor perspective framing it in a comparative welfare and educational context.

Forms of Support

Support describes different forms of strengthening of people to enable them to cope with their social and mental challenges in a more successful way. This can be done by informal communication amongst peers, members of families or neighbours. Professionally support is offered within different sectors and different professions have been developed within these, such as social work and youth work. Social support can be given through a broad range of methods, including mediation, empowerment, and community work. Support is also a term describing the transfer of material resources. A variety of support mechanisms (formal, informal and nonformal) have been implemented in schools, and these vary within different countries. How these are perceived from different angles are of importance. Coping and welfare support in schools may be a complex, contextual and subjective practice, based on a variety of experiences and interpretations. Essential in this development is the acknowledgment of individuals as an organic, complex, dynamic whole in which different dimensions must be understood in relation to each other (Colley 2003). Accounting for individual agency includes taking account of the pragmatically rational aspects of career and lifestyle decisions. A more accurate and comprehensive understanding of those contexts in which young people have to make their decisions and choices, may offer a great deal to policy and practice.

Disadvantages and Inequalities

There are large gender differences when it comes to well-being amongst young people in schools. It is of utmost interest to study gender differences and their experiences in relation to how they construct and act in regard to welfare practices within schools. Gender inequality in school is not just an educational concern but a welfare concern. There is a lack of understanding of how misfortunes and challenges vary amongst young people, and how they might be overcome. From a gender perspective, it is important to find more knowledge on how boys and girls talk about and express emotions, experiences and concerns to peers and adults in school and how do they perceive the support they are receiving.

As mentioned above, social background and class are important in understanding how certain norms, practices and outcomes prevail in school. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as a tool of analysis has been popular in the sociology of education paying particular attention to individual students and their school success. However, if focusing on processes within schools and classrooms, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is of interest. Pierre Bourdieu (1999) uses the term "symbolic violence" to explain how particular groups are able to retain dominance in a society without resorting to physical violence. Bourdieu argues that when most members of a society accept its norms as "natural" rather than arbitrary, they also accept the outcomes of these norms as natural, even when the outcomes go against their own objective interests. The symbolic, in Bourdieu's view, categorizes, divides, and separates individuals, and through this, constructs social collectivities (Bourdieu 1991, 120). In doing so, it constitutes the collective identities through which social actors come to know themselves and others. In the current dominant framework of neo-liberalism, which favours individualism, and self-responsibility, the symbolic violence perpetrated is that those who are affected blame themselves for their own suffering whilst the role of society remains hidden (Bourdieu et al, 2000).

From an ethnicity perspective, structuring systems of power can be seen in the way that ethnicity is talked about and understood in school settings. When the problem of low grades among students with ethnic background is discussed, language and discipline deficits and problems in family are brought to the fore to explain why transitions are problematic, thus leaving out young people's experiences of discrimination. This may serve as an example of how in society, different groups and classes are divided and disciplined. Newer studies on social class (cf Anthias 2005, MacDonald & Shildric 2007, Skeggs 2004, Tolonen 2008)

open new avenues for conceptualising social class in ways that explicate the unequal positions and of individuals in the labour market, and differing experiences and understandings of education or culture in ways that illuminate how individuals identify and value themselves in relation to others.

The comparative research study of GOETE

The GOETE project is concerned with understanding how education systems deal with the changing relation between education and social integration in the knowledge society. The GOETE project analyses the role of the school in re-conceptualising education in terms of life-long learning by combining a life course and a governance perspective. From a life course perspective, it asks how young people's access to different stages of education is regulated, how coping with forms and demands of education and life-long learning is facilitated, and if and how education is relevant for the future lives of young people. Comparative analysis on young people's educational trajectories is conducted in Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and the UK.

The study covers the period of transition from lower secondary education into upper secondary education/vocational education and training. All 8 EU countries involved in the mixed-methods study have carried out different studies. They begin with background information regarding the different national education and training systems, welfare services and recent reforms. These were collected in country reports and compared in a synthesis report (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2011). The comparative mixed-methods study consisted of following studies:

- Standardized surveys were carried out in schools with (i) students and parents on their experiences in school and the availability of support for their transitions, and (ii) School principals on the regulation, provision and relevance of transition support. (cf. Aro et al., 2012; Biggart et al., 2012).
- A comparison of teacher training regarding social aspects of teaching and learning, including the role of teachers in processing students' transitions carried out through document analysis and expert interviews in teacher training institutions (cf Cramer et al., 2012).
- Qualitative case studies conducted in local school spaces in three cities per country focusing, on the interaction between individual and institutional decision-making

inside and out of school. Data was gathered from group discussions with students and teachers, as well as individual in-depth interviews with parents and students during and after they had left lower secondary education. Expert interviews were conducted with professionals inside and outside school. (cf. du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012).

- Document analysis and expert interviews with policy makers and stakeholders carried out on educational policies, priorities and trends and logics of intervention (cf. Dale et al., 2012).

This thematic report focuses on investigating how students manage to cope with educational demands. It analyses measures of active inclusion through the provision of social support and informal support inside and outside of school and how formal, non-formal and informal learning is related within education systems in general and in educational trajectories in particular. What are the conditions and constellations under which productive learning occurs and how are learning biographies constructed? What support systems are available inside and outside of school in order to help students to develop successful school careers?

The main objective of comparative social science is to insert each study into larger related contexts (Dogan & Pelassy 1990), the purpose being to discover divergences or commonalities in phenomenon. We have employed a triangulation approach using survey material to show patterns within countries and within the local cases, as well as constructing parallel cases across countries so as to compare and interpret local cases and additional data material. We have found it useful to draw on Rode's interpretation of comparative analyses, where the aim is to establish a relation between the phenomena, conditions and processes represented by the country cases (Rode 2009). This thematic report consists of analysis of the different aspects of coping and draws on the different research material described above. All chapters provide information on the foci of the analysis and the research material that was used.

Comparative studies are frequently conducted on the basis of a comparison of welfare regimes. In this study we have used both welfare regime typologies and youth transition regimes. These models serve as important analytical frameworks and a step towards theorizing and generating hypotheses. These models do not specifically focus on educational transitions, which is the main focus of our studies. This is why we have also used Allmendiger's typology in our analysis, which distinguishes between the standardization and stratification of education systems. Stratification refers to both the kinds of prestige of educational programs and the chances of reaching high levels of academic attainment.

Standardisation refers to the degree to which the quality and contents of education, such as teacher training, school budgets, curricula and school-leaving examinations, meet the same standards nationwide (Allmendinger 1989).

Table 1. Categorisation of countries based on Allmendinger's typology (1989; Parreira do Amaral et al. 2011)

STANDARDISATION ╲ STRATIFICATION	Low	High
Low	Italy, Poland, UK	Finland, Slovenia
High	–	France, Germany, the Netherlands

This typology can be seen as a heuristic tool for presenting and analysing the differences in the organisation of schooling by illustrating the relative positions of the countries on these two dimensions.

The structure of the thematic report

The thematic report on coping consists of seven chapters, the first outlines the theoretical and methodological contours of the theme, and the last synthesizes and concludes the comparative results. The empirical chapters begin with the second chapter on the educational challenges of students from a multi-actor perspective. What exactly are the educational challenges that students in a modern society encounter and how are these perceived by the different actors within the school milieu, i.e. the teachers, the principals, the professionals within and out side of school? It encompasses broad empirical material from surveys among principals and students and local case studies, in order to capture both the multidimensionality of the challenges students encounter and also to highlight how different actors perceive these. It also draws on an extensive literature review on research on some of the more pervasive challenges students may encounter including: poverty, health, discrimination, bullying, language deficits,

special education needs, and peer relations. These all have an impact on how young people act and make decisions on their future educational and occupational career.

The third chapter analyses the challenges and problems students encounter during their education, particularly as they make the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education. While the focus in the second chapter was on a multi-actor perspective, the main focus in chapter three is on the students' perspectives and on their coping strategies and what form of support the students receive and are offered, and how they perceive this support. The analyses are based on data from surveys among students and on local case studies. Who are the most important people for young people as they search for help with their school and life problems? How important are parents, teachers and friends, and to what extent can students rely on experts within school? These clearly vary from country to country, but some common patterns are to be found. Here, the Allmendiger typology of categorisation of countries is used for analysing the different combinations of student-teacher and student-student relationships t be found in schools.

The fourth chapter addresses the formal support available to students in school and examines   issues of access, organization and trust. It starts by contextualising the study in a comparative framework, and gives a short introduction on how support is defined in a school context. From a comparative point of view it is interesting to see what forms of formal support are offered, which issues are covered and how formal support is organised in schools in the countries involved and how usable this seems to be. The use of support in school is somewhat a grey area. To get a picture of this "grey area" a typology has been developed to differentiate between direct and indirect learning related support and between internal and external support. A major focus in this chapter is on emerging forms of support being, that of private tutoring outside of school hours provided by the commercial sector. These seem to vary enormously between the countries and the chapter discusses the possible reasons for this. The chapter draws the on analysis of the surveys among principals as well as on local case studies that involve interviews with pupils, teachers and parents.

The fifth chapter focuses on career guidance structured around three main perspectives: individual trajectories, the role of educational professionals and institutional organization of guidance support. From a comparative perspective, the chapter analyses different types of internal, external or mixed support, their relation to teaching and conception of guidance (e.g. labour market oriented, lifelong learning perspective, focus on disadvantaged students) provided in countries so as to underline similar and different

strategies conducted in the European countries. It gives a comparative picture of career guidance policies including on: how career guidance is organized, and the actors providing career guidance in school. It asks: how are educational professionals trained to provide career guidance and how do they look at the challenges? How do these actors coordinate their work within and outside of school? This chapter builds on a review of the international literature and a comparative analysis of the structure and forms of career guidance in the eight GOETE countries. Documents and general information related to national systems, expert interviews (at local and national level) that give information on how teachers are trained in guidance issues provides the basis for the comparative institutional picture on career guidance policies and practice in eight European countries. The multi-sited ethnographic study in 24 different schools in eight countries provides for the basis for the contextual actor perspective on career guidance.

The sixth chapter is on parental involvement in their children's education and the nature of their implications for their children's school career. Still, it is not clear to what extent parents are involved and to what extent the school co-operates with family and how teachers experience their role. This chapter asks what are the main problems and challenges from the perspectives of teachers and parents, and how particularly does cooperation with migrant parents work. A main focus is on recognition, that is, the challenge in cooperation between schools and parents to recognize the circumstances and the efforts that both parties undertake. The chapter draws on local case studies, as well as the background papers in order to describe how parental cooperation is organized in the different countries.

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Chapter 2

Educational Challenges of Students

Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Felicitas Boron and Silvia Demozzi

Introduction

This chapter sets out to discuss the main challenges students encounter in their education, particularly as they make the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education across various educational contexts in Europe. Transitions are challenging in many ways as they involve a complex and contested nexus of processes, structures and systems. A range of emotional, cognitive and social change is implied within transitions. Students are expected to cope with new expectations and requirements in their new educational environments. Transition periods are also widely recognised as challenging times for young people, during which they might encounter problems or concerns, including confusion, disenchantment, disorientation, disengagement, alienation, resistance, and bullying (Laly & Dole, 2012; Darmody, 2012). In recent years many of the contexts which students now face have undergone substantial changes; the traditional structures of transition have become obscured within a 'marketised education' system which offers the 'illusion' of individual choice (Laly & Dole, 2012), of freedom, and a multiplicity of opportunities. Consequently, transitions have become increasingly precarious in what might best be understood as a de-standardised and uncertain life course. As a result, navigating through the cognitive and emotional burden of transitions has become even more daunting for young learners.

In this chapter, we will not only discuss life events, and more specifically the challenges of transitions, but also attempt to outline broader issues that directly or indirectly influence students' educational experiences and choices, e.g. daily stressors and hassles. Within the literature on coping and support, stress is often used as the main construct to define those aspects (e.g. challenges, concerns, problems, anxieties) which individuals respond to by developing coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) refer to four fundamental sources of stress arising from situations ranging from: 1) a situation being benign, 2) it may involve

threats of future stressors, 3) harm or loss, or 4) challenges. Three additional categories were added to these by other scholars, including: hassle (not necessarily a threat, harm or loss but an annoyance); at a loss for what to do next (e.g. in situations that involve great uncertainty such as educational transitions); and worry about others (e.g. the individual may not be in any difficulty but is very much concerned about the problems or a friend or family member) (Aldwin, 2011). Appraising situations for likely distress is important since individuals develop their coping mechanisms based on such appraisals. It is important to note that this process is not always a conscious one; rather it can often be unconscious.

Stress, or more generally challenges and problems that are encountered by individuals, can be differentiated in terms of their duration and severity. Yet they often related to one another. For children and adolescence, these include the following (Aldwin, 2011):

- *Trauma*, severe stressors that might involve war, domestic violence, sexual abuse, loss of a parent, involvement in a car accident, severe bodily injury, exposure to discrimination and bullying.
- *Life events*, major events that occur to individuals such as starting school, separation of parents, transition between different levels of education, change of residence or school, breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend and pregnancy.
- *Chronic stress,* on-going problems located in the social environment, such as problems at school or home, chronic illness, unresolved conflicts with parents or peers, problems with siblings, restriction of choice, living in deprived conditions and poverty.
- *Daily stresses or hassles*, minor and relatively short-term stressors involving arguments with friends or teachers, getting a low grade, travelling a long distance to school and preparation for an exam.

The following chapters on coping strategies (Chapter 3) and parental cooperation (Chapter 6), and particularly the theoretical approaches highlighted in these chapters, offer useful entry points to understanding the major concerns students have in various contexts within different European countries. In this chapter we will explore these challenges from the students' perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of other actors who are involved in the education of the student (e.g. teachers, experts and parents). While doing so, we will use a comparative approach, attempting to outline similarities as well as differences within the eight GOETE partner countries. The central research question that will be addressed in the chapter is: What are the educational challenges and problems students have to cope with in their

lives? And, how are these perceived by different actors in various European countries? Our analysis is mainly based on local case studies, as well as individual surveys with students and parents.

Empirical findings on the educational challenges of students

According to our findings, the main areas in which students face major setbacks include the following: meeting academic demands; challenges that arise due to the family and socio-economic background of students; stigmatization of students from lower educational school tracks; challenges caused by ill health; migrant backgrounds and language proficiency; peer relations, and finally decision making.

Meeting academic demands

Coping with academic demands emerge as one of the significant challenges students encountered in various school contexts where we did research. Exam periods, and more specifically 'leaving' exams (administered at the end of lower secondary in some countries, e.g. the Netherlands) are considered very stressful. Some students contend that they felt more challenged by specific subjects, and they often named mathematics and language classes as being the most difficult ones. Responding well to academic demands was an important challenge and taken seriously by many, since educational performance at lower secondary level has important consequences for future educational and occupational careers. Most students appear to be conscious of the fact that success or failure at lower secondary might open up or close down some opportunities at later stages of their lives.

The degree of hardship and stress perceived and experienced by students differs across schools and countries. For instance, in Slovenia, students complain about being overburdened with school demands (Razpotnik et al., 2012). Parents were also aware of their children's concerns about schooling being too demanding and time consuming. Yet, according to teachers, parents continue to have a rather competitive attitude towards education, and they put substantial pressure on their children to perform. Competition is also pervasive in following extra-curricular activities where parents encouraged their children to take part in various extra-curricular activities, such as sports, arts, music and foreign languages. Consequently, teachers believe that students hardly had any leisure time to pursue their own interests, socialise with peers or even get adequate sleep (Razpotnik et al., 2012). A teacher

from Ljubljana, Slovenia, explained how such pressure might result in a negative attitude towards schooling:

> Many children, especially those whose parents teach them, control them, pay for their private lessons, come to school with a certain reservation; especially when they have an oral or written exam, because they are afraid, but not because they will get grade 4 or 3, but because they will disappoint their parents, their instructors. […]. Some [children] are under very big pressure as today only the best grade counts, anything else is not worth a lot, even grade 4 is no good anymore'.

In contrast to these accounts, in two of the case study schools located in the Netherlands (Rotterdam and Amsterdam), students complained that the curriculum was not challenging enough. These students, the majority of whom were immigrants, believed the curriculum was diluted and teachers reduced their demands substantially to ease smooth grade transition. For some students, this was perceived as a form of discrimination (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012).

In various schools students also complained about their classmate's disturbing behaviour and the teachers' inability to manage the classroom. This made it difficult for them to concentrate and adequately follow lectures. Some feared their performance would be low as a result. This is why some students in the Netherlands, France and Germany wished their teachers would assure a calm and structured atmosphere during lessons by being more strict and authoritative (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012; Jahnich et al. 2012; Boron et al. 2012). Furthermore, the interviews with ex-students (those who made the transition to upper secondary) contended that the academic demands increase substantially at upper secondary level, yet here teachers are less supportive compared to lower secondary level.

Family background

According to several teachers and experts involved in our study, various educational challenges of students originate from or are reinforced by their family background. Parents are often said not to be prepared for their role and provide inadequate support to their children. According to the majority of teachers and experts, this is especially the case among families with migrant backgrounds, and those who have a low socio-economic and/or low educational status.

The challenges related to different kinds of family backgrounds appear to be common across various country contexts. These include drug and/or alcohol abuse by parents, divorce and broken homes, poverty and (long-term) unemployment or precarious working conditions. For instance, in Poland there is an emerging phenomenon called Euro-orphans which refers to children who live with their grandparents or other relatives because there are left behind by their parents who have moved abroad for work (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012). Such living arrangements appear to negatively influence students' ability to cope with academic demands. Various actors also contend that disadvantaged family backgrounds tend to be reproduced in the next generation. An expert from Poland noted the following:

> Those of the least support from the family side or started the process of moral decay or are exposed to the maladjustment have the least chances and in general do not cope well and will not manage well in future. They come into conflict with law very fast and they do not find themselves on the labour market or in other words they repeat the scheme they had observed and inherited at home.

Finland, which is a relatively strong version of the social-democratic welfare state provides comprehensive social welfare services to all students and offers widespread educational support. However Finnish experts and teachers claim that these comprehensive supporting measures are not sufficient if parents are bad role models and teach their children to depend on social benefits (Salovaara et al., 2012). Despite the critique of teachers and experts on parental shortcomings in supporting their children, student accounts from various case studies indicate a rather different view, portraying parents as mostly engaged and supportive.

It is not only the low socio-economic status of families which directly influence the educational chances of students as a result of poverty (being able to pay for books or employ a tutor) or diminished social and cultural resources. It is a question of how societies respond to these conditions of life. For instance, if the challenges for students who suffer from a lack of financial, social and cultural resources because of their familial and socio-economic background are not recognized and answered with adequate support, they are at risk of becoming socially excluded (Böhnisch, 2008). As data from the individual surveys with parents emphasize; in all countries, those parents who need it the most, namely the relatively poorly educated parents, are the least satisfied with the support provided by schools. Furthermore the segregation of families with poorer-socio-economic backgrounds into districts where rental costs are low, leads to schools with a largely homogenous student population shaped according to social class status. Catchment systems used in countries like

Poland, which are determined through a district structure tends to lead to a particular form of 'ghettoization' (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012). An expert from Poland noted that:

> If we take into account the level of general knowledge, such skills as ability of analysis, drawing conclusions, technology utilization then we notice how much those kids have to catch up with children from different districts. There is a very huge gap between them.

Our findings confirm the influence of teachers' negative perceptions on students coming from low socio-economic background. In this respect, a student from Belfast stated: 'See in our school? Sometimes we don't get a chance; they just put us into lower tier for everything'.

Furthermore, the unequal funding of schools in different quarters or regions of a country leads to an unequal distribution of resources. For example, in the British case studies students referred to 'richer' schools who have more resources and who offer more subjects to their students (Biggart & McDowell, 2012). As a result social disadvantage is reinforced by structural disadvantage. The Finish case studies, by way of contrast, shows that measures like multi-professional welfare teams, remedial teaching, and general financial support, in combination with the principle of universalism of the social democratic welfare state, can be a way to compensate for socio-economic disadvantage (Salovaara et al., 2012).

Immigrant background and language proficiency

There is a strong correlation between students with migrant backgrounds and difficulties in access to education in various country contexts. Students with migrant backgrounds can be seen as one of the most disadvantaged groups. Even in Finland, where multicultural studies are included in teacher training, Salovaara et al. (2012) report that the school principal of a school with a high population of migrant students rejected the thought that immigrants ere disadvantaged, even despite the fact that young people with migrant backgrounds more problems accessing vocational schools compared to those of Finish origin. Research suggests that the risk of unemployment, or remaining outside of education among immigrants in Finland, is four or five times higher than among the mainstream population (Myrskylä, 2011).

A number of experts and teachers also complained about a lack of parental interest in education, as in the case of Roma families in Italy who they argue do not value education and 'force' their daughters to marry early. These actors also suggest that a lack of interest in education is pervasive among immigrant families too. However, our interviews with parents and students reveal a very different perspective. Indeed our study suggests immigrant parents attribute much importance to education. Many appear to be enthusiastic about the education

of their children and have high aspirations as they perceive education an important tool for socio-economic mobility. However, despite their enthusiasm, as well as their high aspirations and expectations, these parents tend to lack the necessary resources to support their children's education. Their lack of resources are the result of various reasons, including the low educational levels of parents (which is common among migrant groups, such as in the Netherlands, Germany or France). Other reasons include the fact that educational degrees might be obtained in their country of origin, hence the curriculum the children are studying might differ, in turn limiting parents' capacity to help with their homework.

GOETE findings confirm that it is not migration backgrounds *per se* (individual level) that causes difficulties in education but that the disadvantage lays at a structural level. In the Netherlands for instance, the majority of migrant parents and students feared direct or indirect discrimination. They might have to prove they have better qualifications for a job compared to Dutch applicants (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012). A student in Amsterdam stated:

> My mother tells me that you should work very hard and be better than your Dutch classmates, so that you can prove that you have better qualifications, then they would not discriminate against you.

This institutional discrimination[1] seems to be hard to overcome even in those societies that appear more 'inclusive' (e.g. Finland, the Netherlands and the UK).

The trend of 'separating' out students with migrant backgrounds seems to indicate an unexpressed wish to control 'migrants' by gathering them all into the same context. This is the case, for example, of Gdansk Chechen in Poland, where, even if migration is not a dominant issue, Chechens are divided into different classes in order to easily "control them" (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012). In the context of the phenomenon of 'white flight' in the Netherlands, some Dutch parents avoid sending their children to schools with a high percentage of migrant students which they believe have a bad reputation. Migrant students, on the other hand, are often refused by more prestigious schools with a high percentage of Dutch students on the grounds that they miss the required qualifications, or the school is full. Some of those students are advised to apply to schools with a high migration population (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012). Student interviews also indicate that the challenges and skills associated with their migration experiences, for example their mother tongue language, aren't taken into account when they search for vocational training places. Instead they have to cope with

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[1]The concept of 'institutional discrimination' illuminates how institutions discriminate certain groups by their internal logics and structures. For a detailed explanation of this concept see chapter 2 of the Thematic report about access.

discrimination and stigmatization. Thereby 'othering'[2], which means a generalizing and hierarchical speaking about others as a form of constituting and maintaining difference, remains pervasive.

GOETE data suggests that the reason for integration problems facing migrant students is often explained by local/native individuals and their families as - 'migrant children ('they') are not socialized properly into the ways the society lives ('meaning us'), and as a result are said to have difficulties integrating into schools or vocational training places. Their condition seems to worsen if their parents do not support them (in the way the society 'intends' supporting measures) and sometimes the latter are perceived to impart a de-motivating attitude to their children.

Furthermore, the discourse of 'othering' has much to do with identity which is well expressed by a student in the Netherlands:

I was born and grew up here. So I am Dutch, but I also have Turkish blood. But, if a Dutch person would ask me, I would not dare to say that I am Dutch. I would be concerned about his reaction. At the same time, when I say to my Turkish friends that I am Dutch, they criticise me and say "How can you say that? You are Turkish!".

Proficiency in the language of the country of residence, and therefore of instruction at school, is seen as key for integration and access to education, and eventually society. School and society 'speak' another language and this makes their 'demand' in terms of achievements and integration much more difficult. This has a double effect: at a structural level, middle class language codes that are used in school not only hinder the integration of foreign students and parents, but also those from other social classes. At an individual level, their lack of proficiency not only affects academic achievements, but also the possibility of self-expression and communication with peers. This is critical to their sense of belonging and social-emotional development. Hence, the lack of language proficiency might result in isolation, low motivation, and self-esteem. Likewise, a study in Switzerland demonstrated that local language skills are associated with children's ability to show pro-social behaviour, to construct social relationships, and to set boundaries. Children with a low level of language proficiency are more often the victim of bullying and exclusion, which in turn negatively influences their academic attainment (Grünigen et al., 2012).

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[2] 'Othering' is the way members of one social group distance themselves from, or assert themselves over, another by construing the latter as being fundamentally different (the 'Other'). It is a term that is associated with discourses of colonialism, and, in particular, with the work of Edward Said and his book *Orientalism*, (1995: 332).

Language proficiency combines with the discourse of 'segregation', for example in schools with very low non-migrant student populations, migrant students often only befriended peers from their own group. This was apparent in the case study schools in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and Italy (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012; Barberis et al., 2012). As demonstrated by some studies in the Netherlands (Crul, 2000), there are positive effects of such close friendship groups among peers formed by students coming from a shared background: they provide protection, as well as psychological and practical help to each other, and thereby greatly contribute to their success at school. However, our findings in the Netherlands also point out adverse effects, such as over-identification with their own group, and the development of a 'we *versus* others' (othering). Teachers also noted that the language spoken by these students was often not their native language or Dutch, but a mix, hindering their development in any of the languages (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012). Some students also regretted the fact that they could not express themselves fully in any of the languages they spoke, resulting in much frustration. As this student in Amsterdam stated: 'Not being able to speak any of the languages well makes me very sad, deeply sad. Yet, I do not do anything about it'. Similar experiences were recorded in France, Slovenia and Italy.

There are differences in how educational systems respond to lacks in language proficiency. In the case of Germany, if students are separated in special classes to learn the language of instruction they are often isolated from other peers and loose time in those classes until they can start with regular classes (Boron et al., 2012). However, the attitude the educational systems adopt concerning first language support differs in the countries under research. In countries like France or Germany, an 'all-or-nothing' attitude can be observed: teachers, principals and experts interviewed for the GOETE project suggested that difficulties with language of instruction can be ascribed to the use of the families' mother tongue at home. The only way to support students' language proficiencies would be the use of the language of instruction at home and other informal contexts (Boron et al, 2012; Jahnich et al., 2012). This kind of attitude, however, can cause additional challenges for students, such as difficulties in identity formation. The recognition of the student's mother tongue as an important heritage matter as it tends to support students' identity development. Moreover, offering classes in the mother tongue, as in the case of British case study schools (Biggart & McDowell, 2012), helps to develop particular kinds of skills in migrant students which in turn can facilitate their access to vocational training and jobs.

Health

Students' mental and physical health conditions may have wide-ranging effects on their educational trajectories. Poor health can directly influence a student's possibilities to follow their education. A school nurse from Finland summarises different health issues facing students: allergies, psychological problems, back problems, and impaired hearing and vision (Salovaara et al., 2012).

The student survey conducted by GOETE showed a correlation between the characteristics of educational systems and the health of students: Students in countries with low stratified and low standardised educational systems (UK, Poland and Italy), and countries with high stratified as well as high standardised educational systems (Germany, France, Netherlands), report significantly poorer health and that students worry more, than students in countries with low stratified and high standardised educational systems (Finland and Slovenia). We can assume that the worries of students in countries with low stratified and low standardized educational systems might have its origin in the uncertainty of vocational paths and the questionable relevance of educational qualifications. In high stratified, high standardized countries, the reason might be the high level of competition that is forced by the early segregation of students into different hierarchical tracks.

Furthermore, those who wanted to achieve higher educational goals worried more than those who wanted to achieve certificates below ISCED level 3. This is probably due to the large amount of pressure put on those students who worry about failing to fulfil the demands made on them. This is especially the case for students in Slovenia (McDowell et al., 2012). In Brittany (France), which is known in France as the region for the best results in final exams for upper secondary school, very high performance pressure persists, which can in turn be linked to high suicide rates (Jahnich et al., 2012).

According to the individual student surveys, boys report better health than girls. At the same time girls worry significantly more about their future compared to boys. This can explain their poorer mental and physical health as well as their lower results concerning self-efficacy, as shown in the surveys (McDowell et al., 2012). Furthermore the powerful individualizing discourse is pervasive in all case studies and could be a reason for the pathologization of the behaviour of children that is seen as inadequate. Instead of searching for explanatory factors in the environment there is a tendency to find them within the individual.

Peer relations

GOETE findings confirm the importance of peers as a source of information and support, . especially if support by parents is low or the supporting structures at school or in the student's environment are insufficient. Therefore, to be known by peers is often seen by students as the first important task at a new school. Sometimes the desire or the need to belong leads to 'extreme' strategies (show off): arrogant attitudes towards teachers, drinking alcohol and risky behaviour in order to gain acceptance by peers.

Furthermore, GOETE findings confirm that a lack of friends, or being exposed to bullying on a regular basis (which is reported as a significant problem), can lead to alienation from school, diminish students' capabilities to cope with academic demands, and undermine a student's well-being as well as identity development, as exemplified by a student in the Netherlands, 'Otherwise (if not have been bullied) I would have had a better youth and would I have attended school with much more pleasure.'. Another classmate of this student felt so uncomfortable at the school due to bullying that she did not want to go to school anymore. As a result she only received minimal school advice and has had to work hard to upgrade her educational level in the following years (du Bois-Reymond & Altinyelken, 2012).

The experience of being bullied has its consequences not only in learning results and physical and mental well-being, but also in the quality of interpersonal relationships and how bullied students will adapt to society. Interviews conducted with students and parents show that even the fear of being bullied can be a reason for poor school achievement. Some students decided not to show their abilities at school because they feared being perceived as a 'swot'. A Polish mother complained about discrimination against her son by his classmates because of the fact that he studies hard.

Stigmatization

Vocational schools and schools which tend to have lower educational tracks often have to deal with assumptions about reputation, which in turn is accompanied by the stigmatization of their students. In the French and Slovenian cases, attending vocational schools is seen as a sort of failure. Those schools are said to be reserved for students with behavioural problems and learning difficulties, or for those who come from lower social background with less cultural and social capital (Jahnich et al., 2012; Razpotnik et al., 2012). Since there are persistent prejudices against vocational schools it is mainly those students who fail in upper secondary schools who enter the path of vocational training. As a result

professional/vocational training courses are attended mainly by students who have a poorer socio-economic backgrounds, and whose schooling careers are not that successful.

In countries with highly stratified educational systems, like the Netherlands or Germany, students have to cope much earlier with the stigmatization caused by the allocation to a lower educational track. Parents are often ashamed by the fact that their children are going to a lower educational track and they hide this information from their relatives. At this stage of transition it is perceived as humiliating by students. In Slovenia, for instance, those who want to go to a vocational school to learn a handcraft or to take over a family business do not tell anyone about their plans because they are ashamed (Razpotnik et al., 2012). Likewise, students from Hauptschule interviewed in Germany feel stigmatized, as "the rest of the rest". The internalization of stigmatisations, stereotypes and prejudices, might lead to feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem and permanent frustration, as confirmed by a principal in Germany:

> When they are grown older, because of the permanent repetition by society at large they have developed a consciousness that they are 'just' Hauptschuler, that they are worth nothing and that they will never get a chance in life.

Stigmatization and prejudices towards lower educational tracks or vocational school often lead to problems in finding an apprenticeship place or even vocational placements. The ensuring fear of this can influence decision-making processes as explained by a student in Slovenia:

> First of all I wanted to go to three-year vocational floriculture school but everybody recommended me rather to choose gymnasium. If I compare it, in a way I regret it, because now I know I could make some concrete physical things – like different bouquets of flowers and these things that makes me happy.

Moreover, as shown by students' interviews, supporting measures can have a stigmatizing effect as a result of labelling students as needing special educational support. The universal nature of support in Finland reduces these stigmatizing effects by considering support as something that everyone might need at some point in their education trajectory, independent from background and achievements.

Decision-making

To decide on the right educational path, or the right place for the student, is a challenge for the students as well as for those parents, teachers and experts who want to support students in their decision making process[3]. Parents, experts and school staff interviewed for the GOETE project often pointed out that students were too young to make such important decisions about their future. Deciding on upper secondary school is challenging for students, who have to be prepared to face different types of difficulties and ruptures. Many actors in the various contexts perceived the students' young age and a general laziness/adolescence as reasons for the lack of student motivation. A teacher from Germany (Stuttgart) reported that:

> Well, it´s cooler when you don´t learn. The striver is never the cool one. That´s often a big obstacle. And laziness is a big factor. It´s clear: adolescents in the middle of the puberty, (...) they have a lot of other interest and then school is not so important (S-T1:33).

However, the most frequently mentioned reason for de-motivation is said to be found in the family background and the inheritance of a disadvantaged position from parents. Parents who live on social benefits are especially blamed as bad role models who implicitly communicate to their children that one can live without working.

Our findings, however, point to other possible causes of de-motivation other than individual ones. For instance, in Finland the reason might lay in the educational system where students do not have to decide about their educational path until their transition to the upper secondary after nine years in the lower secondary. Although students acknowledge the relevance of education in some cases it is difficult to motivate them after such a long period without educational decisions (Salovaara et al, 2012).

Furthermore, students' interviews show that, in contradiction to a general allegation of de-motivation, students undertake enormous efforts to succeed in education and make very deliberate decisions in many cases. Weaker students especially have to cope with many refusals and failing. In this situation support measures which have as their aim to "make students realistic" concerning their educational choices, and to confront them continuously with their limited chances, marks and school achievements, can have a further de-motivating effect. One Germany student observed:

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[3] For a detailed report about constellations of decision making in young people's educational trajectories see chapter 6 of the thematic report about life course

She asked me what would be my plan, and I told her that after grade 10 I want to go to professional school in order to make my FAQ[4]. And she so: You will not achieve this. And I: why should I not? (…) look, I have achieved grade 10. And she: the school is too weak. Provides too little education. She told me like that (..) so you know what I mean? What would you think if I talked to you like that?

Being constantly confronted with a lack of choice, and being forced to downsize one's aspirations in the context of such a 'cooling-out', can reduce students' feelings of self-efficacy and cause feelings of an impaired dignity (cf. Walther et al., 2006, p. 34). But to reduce feelings of self-efficacy also means to reduce students' motivation which can be an important resource to make self-confident and trustful decisions: Why should I undertake some efforts and trust in my own decisions if I think I can't achieve something and can't improve my situation by my own actions?'

The uncertainty about vocational training and employment markets is another aspect mentioned by experts, teachers and parents in various country contexts. They contend that it impedes motivation and therefore decision-making. In Poland, for instance, high unemployment rates, even among those with higher educational credentials, inspire many people to believe that investing in a good vocational education with the prospects of working aboard is a more pragmatic strategy (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012). An expert from Poland explained:

I say personally, here, you graduated from the university and you work here and earn a certain amount of money, while some uncle who graduated only from lower secondary school or that kind of school or has only vocational training. He emigrated and earns three fold what you earn here. Then I was told what did I need those studies for?

For many years in Germany the common advice from teachers and experts was to choose higher education if possible to increase a student's own chances and opportunities. However, since German companies lack qualified workers they have become interested in recruiting more students, including from Hauptschule, for vocational training. Therefore, the new message coming from many teachers and experts is to start vocational training directly after

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4   Accreditation to go to upper -secondary school.

school without wasting any time on higher education[5] (Boron et al., 2012). An expert from Germany noted that:

> Over the years there have been almost zero chance to get anything with lower secondary. Of course this had to do with a tiny labour market, where only the best will win. Of course everybody told their child: learn, you have to get a better degree, otherwise you won't get any chance, because it really was like that. But now, as the deficit of qualified labour force is increasing, now we are asking: how could we lift the potential also among these (lower secondary) students.

Although experts and teachers explain that students should decide on a profession they are interested in and for which they show the necessary competences, at the same time they demand from them attributes, such as a high degree of flexibility and mobility. This means being willing to apply for vocational places in different professions, and also to accept vocational places which are not their first choice. Furthermore, students should be mobile in a regional sense and willing to move to another part of the city, or indeed another city, in order to secure a vocational training place. This demand to 'move out of their comfort zones' was mentioned by two principals from the UK who argued that such a demand does not take into account the significance of the social resources, networks and friendships where students live and which contribute to their feeling of belonging, sense of safety, and self-efficacy (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012).

The demands of being motivated, flexible, and mobile, are only some aspects of the general tendency to individualize educational challenges and disadvantage. On the one hand, this means taking on a high level of self-responsibility concerning decision making, and the development of competences that are seen as preconditions for a successful career and for organizing support to students and parents. At the same time, the structural reasons for failing educational careers are neglected. In this way those who are disadvantaged as a result of structural shortcomings are blamed for failing to fulfil those demands that they themselves cannot influence. In Slovenia especially, but also in countries like France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, even the students seem to internalise discourses of individualization and self-

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5   That message is often underlined with the warning of teachers about higher education as a one-way road if students performances at school are too weak.

responsibility concerning their (educational) future. As an expert interviewed in the context of high governance analysis warns, this can have severe consequences:

> The question is where the limits are reached and where children and youngsters, by the way also adults where it is increasing also, can no longer handle the demands and impositions of education and individualization, which this society provides for them to be successful, where they reach the limits of their psychological household and do not cope with this anymore. (...)In which way do we deal with this crazy accelerated production of knowledge? Where nobody is keeping up with? (…) How do we deal with this explosion of expectations?' (German Youth Institute (DJI) Head of Department, Expert on Children's and Young Person's Support).

Summary and Conclusions

The findings reported in this chapter point to a variety of educational challenges experienced by students in various school settings across Europe. The major themes in our study include academic demands, health concerns, challenges related to family background, migrant status, peer relations, stigmatisation of lower educational tracks and of vocational schools, various demands of making educational choices during critical transition stages.

Meeting academic demands appear to be one of the most important challenges. Some students are particularly stressed about certain subjects, whilst for others - the general expectations of teachers and parents are overwhelming. We have observed the prevalence of parental pressure on students to perform well in Slovenian schools, whilst in the Netherlands, some of the students who study in segregated schools complain about a diluted curriculum that fails to challenge them in any significant way. In addition to academic demands and stresses, some students also complained that their lives were very busy outside of school as they are also expected to join various out-of-school activities (e.g. music lessons, language lessons, swimming and so on). Such busy schedules appear to increase the stress levels of students and make their lives more hurried and hectic.

Making decisions regarding future educational or occupational careers is an important challenge for all students. The significance of making good decisions has become even more accentuated as a result of the recent financial crises, high unemployment rates in several EU countries, and structural chances in both the economy and the labour market. Various stakeholders we interviewed noted students are now 'forced' to make changes at a very young age. This problem was most pervasive in the Netherlands and Germany, where allocation to

tracks at lower secondary takes place at very young ages. But even in countries where such decisions (e.g. general versus vocational tracks) are postponed to later ages, for instance in Finland, the educational stakeholders still complained the students were too young to make such important life decisions. Parents and teachers contend that adolescence is a turbulent time; students do not necessarily know what they want to do in the future, what their capabilities are, what their genuine aspirations are, and so on. Therefore, 'forcing' them to make decisions prematurely results in frustrations, disappointment, multiple transitions to 'correct' earlier decisions, and much waste of much time and effort. Our results from the surveys indicate that students in low stratified and low standardised educational systems (the UK, Poland and Italy) and countries with high stratified and high standardised systems (Germany, France and the Netherlands) reported significantly poorer health and tended to worry more about their future compared to low stratified and high standardised educational systems (Finland and Slovenia). These findings need to be bought to the attention of policy makers to review early selection systems and high differentiation, and consider the postponement of key selection moments. The confusion, anxieties and uncertainties of transitions also require improved support mechanisms to guide students in such critical processes.

The findings also confirm the importance of student's socio-economic background and its multiple interactions with the educational achievement. Students, parents, teachers and experts discussed a number of family-related issues that negatively influence educational performance or opportunities at upper levels. The aspects most commonly discussed include the absence of parents (e.g. Euro orphans in Poland), single parenthood and lack of assertive authority figures at home, poverty, drug abuse, prolonged periods of unemployment, and precarious working conditions. These factors result in various stresses at home which both directly or indirectly influence the young learner. The low educational levels of parents, or their lack of proficiency in the language of instruction at school, also limited parents' capacity to support their children.. Consequently, although education is seen as the key to break through the cycle of disadvantage, findings suggest that education in various contexts continues to reproduce social and economic inequalities. In fact, as confirmed by Furlong and Cartmel (1997), the processes of educational transitions remain highly structured in many settings, reproducing class-determined, gendered, and ethnic relations, thus unequal life chances, rather than ameliorating them.

Discussion on family background involved frequent references to migrant families in many contexts. Confirming some other studies on the topic, several teachers and experts we interviewed argued that parents from migrant backgrounds have lower or different academic expectations from their children or that they do not consider education very important for their children's future lives. However, our discussions with parents and students contest these findings. Similarly, a study in France suggests that migrant families have on average higher educational expectations compared to the natives from the same socio-economic background. Therefore, this contends that the lower academic achievement among migrant students does not stem from weak motivation or failure to acknowledge the importance of education (Boado, 2011).

Another important challenge experienced by students was discrimination and stigmatisation associated with vocational schools. In several schools in the partner countries, students, parents and teachers confirmed that vocational schools have low status, and students who are allocated to such schools or who prefer to follow vocational tracks are also stigmatised as being poor academic achievers or having special education needs. Students tend to internalise such pervasive associations and might have low opinions of themselves in terms of academic capacities, skills and abilities. In some cases the stigmatisation of vocational tracks also prevents students who genuinely want to learn a vocation from applying to such schools. Furthermore, discrimination was discussed in relation to Roma families and their children, and in some contexts (e.g. the Netherlands) against migrant students in terms of lower teacher expectations or refusals by prestigious schools.

A student's well-being and education is also influenced by their health status. Important life events (e.g. loss of family members or witnessing traumatic events), exam anxiety, daily stress, and lack of leisure time due to academic demands and out-of school activities, were mentioned as important health challenges. In response some students chose to isolate themselves and developed a habit of spending hours in front of a computer. Drug use and high alcohol consumption were also mentioned as coping mechanisms which, in turn, became important health challenges. Within this context peer relationships emerge as an important source of support, as well as stress. The accounts of various students point out that lack of friends at school, tension with peers, stigmatisation (which can be based on academic failure or success), social exclusion, discrimination and bullying can be important sources of stress and might undermine their well-being, school belonging and academic achievement.

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Chapter 3

Coping with educational challenges: A student perspective

Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Federica Taddia and Felicitas Boron

Introduction

This chapter seeks to analyse how students cope with the various stresses, challenges, and problems they encounter during their education, particularly as they make the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education. It highlights how children mitigate stress, attempt to maintain their well-being and resilience, and meet academic demands. By doing so, the chapter particularly points to how students use their agency. Unlike the previous chapter, in which the educational challenges of students are discussed from various perspectives (e.g. students, parents, teachers and experts), the analysis presented in this chapter is solely based on the perspectives of students.

The chapter is structured as follows: we begin with some theoretical approaches on coping will be outlined to define and understand coping processes. This is followed by the empirical findings of GOETE, in particular on local case study material and the individual student questionnaire. In the conclusion, the main findings are highlighted and their implications for policy and practice discussed.

Theoretical approaches on coping

Defining coping

The way coping is defined and conceptualised is rooted in different theoretical traditions. Referring to the social political contextualisation of coping mentioned in the introduction (Böhnisch et al., 2009), there are four dimensions that can be identified in coping with regard to specific conditions of life ('Lebenslage').

1. *Self-worth, social recognition and self-efficacy*

One dimension of the concept is the process of identity management. When developing one's self-identity, individuals are dependent on interactions with others. Through these interactions, they develop their self-esteem and experience social recognition. Within this process, the individual not only plays a part in integrating him or herself into society (which also means to answer social demands like role models) but at the same time experiences oneself as a unique individual. The social values on which the individual is anchored and which mediate and make identities changes over time, and thus demand from the individual that it is flexible and able to react to changing situations. Consequently each individual has to develop a new orientation in order to balance their identity making actions between the personal and social sphere. In return, the welfare state provides the individual assurance, guarantees and options, to undertake this task, for example education and work to fulfil their life plans. However in the context of on-going changes in the welfare state across many of the countries across Europe, these guarantees are no longer a given. Furthermore, there is a growing variety of values and norms on which individuals can orientate in the context of identity making and management.

2. *Social orientation*

The unattainability of social participation and the impossibility to realise a satisfying social status not only impedes the search for identity but can also lead to a situation of anomie, which can be defined for modern societies as a discrepancy between culturally defined aims and norms, and access to means which are necessary to reach them (Böhnisch, 2008). This situation of disintegration is enforced by processes of individuation: although the individual becomes more and more responsible for their own fate, for some individuals and social groups it does not provide the means to facilitate the development of self-worth and the social ability to become 'someone'. In the situation of anomie, an individual's orientation about what norms and values can lead to social integration in a legitimate and even a legalized way, is lost. If they do not see chances to fulfil these norms they try to cope with the situation of anomie with different strategies of adaption: to stay, or become, capable of acting again.

3. *Social integration, social belonging, social security*

The demands of society (flexibility, readiness to assume risk, mobility etc.) assume a secured identity and psycho-social support. The detachment from traditional norms in the context of the modern individualisation process leads to a search for social bonding and belonging in the new context of social integration. The dominant (hegemonic) culture in society does not

provide integration options for everyone anymore. The social integrative function of work also disappears with the rationalization and modernisation of the economy. In this situation, social bonds and belonging can be found in milieus with alternative sub-cultural contexts. Because they cannot develop social belonging through hegemonic contexts some adults and youth search for bonding and belonging in milieus which build their coherence via deviant behaviour. In these groups they experience belonging and recognition. To be able to cope with social challenges people need assurance that their existence is secured and they do not have to fear disintegration. This security, which is provided by the welfare state, is endangered in the current situation of society.

4. *The act of normalisation and becoming capable of acting again*

We see that in cases of severe difficulties in life the lack of capability to act can lead to disintegration, in turn producing acts which do not conform to dominant norms and values. These acts have three different dimensions. First the individual makes efforts to become capable on acting again. Second, is a social-integrative dimension: because of its nature as a social being, individuals are dependent on others. Third, the act of normalisation and adaption takes place in contexts of social definitions of normality and conformity. Problems arise if the current action - aimed at becoming capable of acting again, contradicts the social-integrative norms of the society (Böhnisch, 1994).This leads to the situation where the forms of acting developed by individuals to act again are not recognized as normal , but are instead stigmatized as deviant behaviour.

In addition to this wider sociological contextualisation, coping is also defined from more psychological approaches, which closely relate coping to how negative emotions and distress are regulated by individuals. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage [that is master, tolerate, reduce, minimize] specific external and/or internal demands, [and conflicts among them], that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person' (p.141). This approach focuses on strategies used in particular situations. They are guided by the appraisal of the situation, often in a way that is conscious and flexible, and responsive to contingencies and to situational demands. Phinney and Haas (2003, p. 708) adopt a similar definition by pointing out that coping is 'a response to specific situations that the individual experiences as posing challenges that cause stress or anxiety.' They maintain that coping mechanisms vary in

accordance with the nature of the challenges and the diversity of contexts. For instance, coping with cancer poses issues that are very different from coping with poverty, financial insecurities or academic pressures. When individuals appraise a situation they may perceive it as challenging, threatening or irrelevant. If the situation is regarded as stressful individuals apply coping strategies to alleviate the stress.

Earlier understandings of coping emphasized homeostatic ideas of adaptation. In other words, it was assumed that stress disturbed psychological and physical states, and the objective of coping was to restore the original state (Lazarus, 1966). In some cases, this may be true, but generally the process of coping initiates developments that result in change, whether minor or major, negative or positive, or more often - a combination of these. For example, encountering challenges might lead to an increased sense of vulnerability, to changes in the resources one might use for coping, or it might lead to the mastery of relationships with others (Aldwin, 2011). Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2011) also point to the development of coping over the life course of an individual and define it as 'how people mobilize, coordinate, manage, and direct their actions (including behaviour, emotion, attention, cognition and physiology) under conditions of challenge, threat, or loss. Their definition underscores the links between coping and the normative development of emotional, attentional, and behavioural regulation, and underlines constitutional and social factors that shape their development.

Categories of coping

There is a lack of consensus concerning exactly what constitutes a coping strategy or indeed if there are a particular number that would form the basis for social identity making and managing. Broadly, however, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) have identified two dimensions: coping efforts intended to act on the stressor, thereby eliminating the threat (problem-focused coping), and coping efforts intended to regulate emotional states associated with, or resulting from, the stressor. Problem-focused coping includes problem-solving strategies and efforts to actively change the external situation or the stressor, for instance information or advice seeking, goal-setting, selecting and working towards solutions, or developing a plan to approach the problem. Emotion-focused coping refers to ways through which individuals accommodate themselves to the stressor. Hence, it involves adjusting or adapting through

emotional regulation, which includes avoidance of the stressor, distraction, denial, cognitive re-structuring of the stressor, selective attending to positive features of the situation or the self-accepting the problem and talking about it (Compas, 1987).

Very often, researchers suggest, females are more involved in emotion-focused coping while makes tend to engage in problem-solving coping. However, such generalisations over gender differences in coping are criticised on the grounds that both problem-solving coping and emotion-focused coping are rather broad categories that themselves including several distinct coping strategies, and only some of those reveal gender differences (Helgeson, 2011). Moreover, problem-focused or emotion-focused coping can be used in different ways in different places by different groups. For instance, some studies suggest that Asian migrant students tend to keep their concerns and problems to themselves rather than talking about them with others due to cultural norm attached to emotional expression. As a result, they might be less likely use emotion-focus coping strategies that involve the expression of feelings, intimate thoughts and apprehensions (Yeh & Inose, 2002).

Some authors take a normative approach to coping and make a distinction between productive and maladaptive coping strategies (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2000). Strategies, such as problem solving, seeking support, physical exercise, relaxation, meditation, support groups, religion, or humour help in various ways to ease stressors. Such a normative approach is contested by others, suggesting all coping efforts refer to attempts of individuals to find solutions to their problems or stressors. Therefore, what might be seen as a 'problem' from a normative approach is in fact a proposed solution by the individual to a stressor (e.g. aggressive attitudes, drug use or withdrawal from school). In other words, coping has to be interpreted as an intention of the individual which might in some cases have counter-productive effects. When it is seen from an interactional point of view, the reactions perceived or experienced from the social environment might delegitimize the coping strategies employed by an individual, and might pressure them to revise the ways in which the individual copes. Fulfilling these expectations in turn requires a range of resources and capabilities.

One coping mechanisms that tends to be considered 'maladaptive' is *avoidance* coping. Some pupils are not equipped to adequately deal with a troubling situation. Some scholars suggest that in these cases children are at risk to use passive coping skills in response to the situation (e.g. not speaking out about the fact that they are bullied at school) or showing avoidance behaviour that is associated with maladaptive practices or escape. In other studies

avoidance behaviour is perceived as literally denying or evading a problem situation or a situation that is frightening or stressful, such as school tests or difficult tasks (Suls & Fletcher, 1985). The latter is difficult to observe or analyze as the element of 'not being conscious' is inherently part of the behaviour. More structural avoidance has been examined in children and adolescents in relation to maladaptive psychological and social development. Studies on coping styles are not clear-cut as coping mechanisms are labelled differently by different scholars. However, all types of behaviour that are oriented away from the stressor or the associated emotion, and are characterized by disengagement and withdrawal, tend to be categorized under avoidance coping. Empirical studies have found avoidance behaviour to be typically ineffective in gathering social support, or in engaging in problem solving mechanisms. Avoidance coping has also proved to be positively related to mal-psychological adjustment over a long period of time, including depression and psychological distress (Lewis, 2010).

Coping strategies can be conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary. The degree to which coping refers to conscious or unconscious processes is an on-going debate within the field, some focusing on conscious processes (see for instance Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), and others pointing out that many coping responses are in fact involuntary, particularly those employed to deal with chronic stress (Compas et al., 1996). According to Anna Freud, unconscious defence mechanisms are mainly an attempt to protect the ego from the anxiety generated by internal conflicts, including denying the existence of the problems, projecting them onto others, reaction formation or transforming them through displacement (Freud, 1966). Furthermore, coping strategies can move back and forth between voluntary or involuntary actions since the individuals may not always be aware of the behaviours and actions they engage in to manage stress and restore their well-being. What is more, behaviours that were conscious can become relatively unconscious once individuals master those behaviours and get accustomed to them.

Coping is also categorised according to the degree of pathology of the psychological defences employed by the individuals. These range from projective mechanisms (e.g. denial, distortion, and delusional projection) to immature mechanisms (e.g. projection of passive-aggressive behaviours, repression and intellectualisation) or mature mechanisms (e.g. sublimation or altruism) (Valliant, 1977). It is important to note that coping does not occur in a vacuum. Rather the social context, friends, peers, siblings and parents, among others,

influence how individuals appraise situations and the stressors, and how they make choices in terms of using specific strategies to deal with those stressors (Thoits, 1986).

The most comprehensive review of coping strategies proposed by various scholars in the field has been conducted by Skinner et al. (2003). They have identified hundreds of categorisations currently in use. These scholars concluded that there were five basic types of strategies: problem solving, support seeking, avoidance, distraction, and positive cognitive restructuring. Problem-solving coping strategies refer to behaviour (instrumental action), cognition (e.g. planning) and motivation (perseverance). Both avoidance and distraction refer to behavioural and cognitive strategies, however they should not be confused with each other as distraction refers to positive behaviours and cognitions to minimise stress (e.g. reinterpreting the problematic situations, looking for potential positive facets and outcomes). Furthermore, support seeking indicates strategies to reach out to others in order to obtain behavioural, cognitive or emotional support. The positive contribution of social support in helping individuals to cope with challenges is also confirmed by other scholars (see for instance Eggens et al., 2008). Social support can be defined both as a resource and as a coping response. As a resource, it involves the availability of tangible help, guidance and emotional support. As a coping response, it refers to seeking and receiving support from significant others (Pierce et al., 1996). The existence of social support also makes individuals feel loved, respected and valued. Therefore, it is considered a critical resource for children and adolescents. Although findings are sometimes inconsistent, studies have also demonstrated the beneficial effects of social support on children's and adolescents' academic achievement (Gutman et al., 2002).

Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2011) classified various ways of coping into a dozen families that serve three major adaptive functions: 1) coordinating actions and contingencies in the environment; 2) coordinating reliance and social resources available; and 3) coordinating preferences and available options. The four areas that help to coordinate actions and contingencies in the environment included the following (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2011, p. 40):

- Problem –solving, which allow people to generate and adjust their actions so that they are effective.
- Information-seeking, which allow people to discover new contingencies in the environment.
- Helplessness, which identifies the limits of effective action.

▪ Escape, which is an extreme form, or denial, of non-contingent environments.

The dynamic nature of coping

Coping is a dynamic process largely shaped by situational demands as well as the person's resources for coping with challenges (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). A number of studies adopt a lifespan developmental approach and look at how coping changes consistently with age. These studies reveal that coping processes change over the life course. A number of factors, including biological and social contexts, as well as individual motivation and behaviours, determine the nature of such changes. Furthermore, such understanding of the processes of coping requires a multidisciplinary approach, including disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology. Such perspectives are required to understand how these myriad influences shape individuals' vulnerability and experiences of stress, and how they cope with problems. It is important to note that the immediate context largely influences exposure to stress (e.g. peer relations at school, academic demands or interactions with teachers at school, or some other contextual factors such as socioeconomic status or living in impoverished neighbourhoods). The immediate context also influences the interpretation or appraisal of stress by individuals and how individuals attempt to cope. The research also underlines that there are clear differences in individual trajectories of stress and processes of coping (Aldwin, 2011).

Coping strategies demonstrate developmental shifts from early childhood to adolescence and then onto adulthood. For instance, self-regulation follows a clear developmental trajectory from inter-personal self-regulation (reliance on parental caregivers) to independent self-regulation in later childhood. This parallels with an increase in cognitive emotional regulation. As children experiment with different coping mechanisms they observe that some of those strategies are more effective. Hence, their coping styles might become increasingly more complex and differentiated (Aldwin, 2011). Moreover, adolescence is referred to as a time for the development of so-called maladaptive coping strategies, such as the use of external regulators to manage distress, as in the case of drugs, cigarettes and alcohol, or risky sexual behaviour (Wills et al, 2001). Teenagers also resort to social withdrawal as a coping strategy, which might be dangerous as it is associated with an increased likelihood of suicide (Spirito et al., 1991).

On the positive side of things, a major advantage of adolescence is the potential for using meta-cognitive strategies when dealing with challenges and setbacks (Compas et al., 2001). This provides at least two advantages: first, it allows the individuals to use information about the possible long-term consequences of a course of action in deciding how to solve a problem. Second, it allows individuals to use and coordinate multiple perspectives and alternate strategies in deciding how to cope with a setback (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2011). Nevertheless, it needs to be highlighted that even the use of meta-cognitive strategies and other advanced thinking experienced during adolescence also have drawbacks. For instance, the same skills that allow adolescences to imagine the long-term consequences of their actions and think about multiple aspects of an experience, might also lead them to worry about the future and imagine, or even exaggerate, possible negative outcomes and failures. Some might also remain stuck in a mindset of helplessness.

Coping strategies of students: A GOETE perspective

Having outlined some of the theoretical approaches to coping, in this part we will present the findings of the GOETE project, and discuss how students have attempted to cope with their daily demands and educational challenges. Our findings reveal that the most common coping strategy that students use is to resort to others for support and guidance, including parents, teachers, school experts, peers and friends. The findings also highlight the prevalence of the discourse on individual responsibilities, particularly in relation to meeting academic demands.

The type of support and the people from whom support is sought depends on the nature of the problem. In general the findings show that when students encounter specific problems at school (school work, bullying), or they have communication problems with parents, they tend to contact teachers, the school psychologist or classmates for support, but for all other sources of stress family and friends emerge as the main sources of support (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). The student questionnaires reveal that mothers are the main parent who students would talk to (20%). Staff at the school do not rate very highly as persons to talk to with regard to non-school related issues. Friends are reported as the main support group; 21% of pupils reported they would turn to a friend when in need. Similar results were found in relation to support with school problems as problems in life in general, 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 and so on). Over one in ten students (14%) said they would turn to a

teacher for help, and a further 4% would seek help from a school counsellor (McDowell et al., 2012, p. 102).

Support from parents

In the majority of GOETE partner countries, family appears to be an important source of support for students. Families play a key role not only in decision-making but also in helping with homework, organizing help from others, and supporting students' emotional and social well-being. In fact, family in general, and mothers in particular, are seen as the main source of support by the majority of the students. Among migrant students mothers' involvement appears to be even more pronounced. Fathers are more enquiring if all is going well, if their children perform well, or if they encounter any problems in or out of school.

The findings from the student questionnaire indicate that students talk to their parents about their life and transition from school to work quite regularly. Only a small percentage of students report not to have spoken about such issues in the last 12 months. This shows that students use their parents as a support network, and the majority talk to them at least once a month about issues in their life. Nearly two-thirds of students discussed their experiences of school with their parents at least on a weekly basis (65%). Discussing future education or career options was also a frequently discussed topic with parents, probably because our sample included students who were at a critical transition stage in their educational career (McDowell et al., 2012, p.103).

We have also observed different patterns in different schooling contexts. For instance, students in more affluent schools talk more frequently with their parents about school and career-related options compared to those in average and disadvantaged school contexts. This could be indicative of the importance of education for more affluent parents who are often highly educated themselves. Moreover, teachers in affluent schools are more likely to encourage students to follow an academic route. Therefore students may turn to their parents for support, information and guidance. It appears that parents with higher educational backgrounds and a higher socio-economic status are more informed about the educational system and the transition options offered within the system.

Furthermore, some significant differences are also present when the Allmendinger typology[6] (which describes the categorisation of educational systems in terms of their levels of standardisation and stratification) is considered (for further information please see McDowell et al., 2012). Overall, students in low stratified/low standardised groups and low stratified/high standardised groups talk to their parents relatively frequently (monthly or more) (76 and 78% respectively). Those in the high stratified/high standardised group talk to their parents significantly less (71%) claiming they get educational advice from their parents monthly or more, whilst 11% haven't talked to their parents this year (which is their final school year).

The importance of family as a source of support is confirmed by various local case studies as well. For instance, in Slovenia, students appear to primarily rely on their family as they cope with educational demands and take decisions about their transitions. While doing so, families place a great amount of pressure on children and burden them with their high demands (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012, p. 54). In some other cases, parental support does not seem to be available. In Poland, for instance, various actors we spoke to discussed the phenomenon of 'Euro orphans'; children whose parents have moved abroad in order to earn higher incomes, leaving their children behind with members of the extended family. In such cases the absence of parents and lack of communication with them has a negative influence. Polish teachers particularly discussed the adverse effects on student's learning, motivation to study, interaction with peers and general attitudes to schooling (Błędowski & Fedorczuk, 2012).

Support from teachers

Teachers emerge as an important source of support at school, particularly concerning challenges that directly relate to academic demands or problems at school. Specifically, classroom teachers, or teachers who are in charge of offering counselling or guidance to students regularly as part of the curriculum, are considered important by students. These

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[6] The two variables used in the categorisation are: (1) the degree of standardization of the educational system and (2) the degree of stratification of the educational system. Standardization refers to the level of teaching resources and teacher education, and how equally the quality of teaching is distributed across the country, in general. If the level of teaching is high and the differences between cities or suburbs within cities are small, the level of standardization is high. If the differences inside the country are large, with low quality of teaching in some schools, the level of standardization is low. Stratification refers to the share of pupils completing the maximum number of years in basic education. Countries in which all pupils complete the maximum number of years have a low level of stratification, countries which have multiple tracks in the basic level have a high level of stratification.

teachers are consulted more since students tend to have a good rapport with them as a result of regular and continuous contact and discussions on various concerns. Many students felt closer to teachers in such roles, and had more trust in them in terms of taking their concerns seriously, seeking solutions, and keeping the conversations private.

According to our findings, students appear to appreciate the help they received from their teachers (e.g. in case study schools in Italy, France, Slovenia, the UK and Poland). Students appreciated the sincere dialogue that some teachers tried to have with them, or when teachers helped them with schoolwork and provided career advice, or when they tried to catch their attention through the use of new technologies.

Within the context of Italian case study schools, another aspect appreciated by students was when the teachers made an effort to provide opportunities to learn by doing. This emerged as the most important distinctive features of the schools in Bologna and Catania. The case study schools organised educational activities both in the morning and in the afternoon (until 4 p.m.) from Monday to Friday, based on horizontal (with the participation of students of the same age but belonging to different classrooms) and vertical (with the participation of students of different ages) workshop activities. Workshop activities are considered supportive experiences for coping and concern both traditional educational knowledge (maths, grammar, science and so on) and social and professional skills, like sport, drama, journalism, cooking, painting, dance and carpentry. Furthermore, some pupils can't even afford to buy textbooks and, therefore, teachers prefer working with other tools. Most of the teaching and learning process is done in the classroom in both Catania and Bologna.

In general, students say that teachers try to do their best and they understand their efforts, and that they prefer a friendly but authoritative teaching style. They say teachers should give support to those pupils who need help; and if it is not enough, they should ask the student what the problem is. In addition, students think that if there is someone who needs help at school, he or she should be supported both by teachers and peers. Teachers should also explain their lessons so that the student can comprehend it well. Some students say that teachers should monitor all students and not only those with learning or behavioural problems. In Italy (Catania) it was suggested that teachers should listen more to students and that the acquired education levels of students should be higher – otherwise students would run into trouble during the first year of upper secondary school. In the UK (Bristol), some students pointed to the difference between being a good teacher and being a nice person. They liked teachers who provided friendly and structured learning. In Poland many students

identified that teachers differentiate the way they approach students according to their behaviour (e.g. students breaking some rules are treated worse than 'good students'). The Slovenian teachers (mainly class teachers) are also perceived as individuals one can rely on when the students have problems.

Furthermore, from the GOETE students' questionnaires, two interesting types of relationships emerged between students and teachers, on one hand, and amongst students, on the other. Students were asked to rate how much they agreed with statements that queried whether students were supportive of each other, how encouraging and interested teachers were, and if students in the class liked each other as friends. Factor analysis on the items revealed two factors as: Positive student-student relationships; Positive student/teacher relationships (McDowell et al., 2012, p. 105).

Low stratified/low standardised groups report the most positive student-student and student-teacher relationships. The low stratified/high standardised groups have the poorest level of student-teacher relations but depict better student-student relations. It is evident that schools that differ in socio-economic 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 he/she can cope in school. Those with more positive relationships in school may feel happier to talk to staff or their peers than those who do not. Some, however, tend to avoid seeking help from teachers. In Helsinki for instance, some (male) students were concerned about their (female) classmate who was bullied by other girls and wondered why the teachers did not intervene. Another (female) student in Helsinki told us that after being bullied she informed the teacher and the bully found out, which felt 'embarrassing' to her. She suggested that possibly feelings of embarrassment might be a reason why some students do not inform teachers or others in school about bullying incidents. In France students do not consider school as relevant to cope with all problems they may encounter in their life. A student expressed that 'It's none of its [school] business' (Jahnich et al., 2012, p. 56).

Support from experts

While seeking support from parents, peers, or teachers, was seen as 'normal' (McDowell et al., 2012), contacting other experts within the school, particularly psychologists, was not that easy in some of the GOETE study countries. That is why students do not consider

psychologists as an available resource, or they (as well as their parents) areconcerned that others might find out they have 'problems' and need special support, and thus evaluate them negatively. In some countries a low level of trust in experts at school was evident, such as in Slovenia. Students reported examples of cases when they entrusted some problems to school experts but then when nothing happened they felt unsupported and instead accused. It seems that individuals only gain trust from students where there is a level of familiarity.

In Finland, a positive change was observed over recent years. Students used to be hesitant in approaching a psychologist and would be discreet about it. They find it normal and natural and are open about receiving support and talking about it, with mistrust having mostly disappeared as a consequence of a general de-tabuization of psychological problems (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012, p. 169). However, some Finish students, when dealing with a problem like bullying, also tended to avoid seeking help from school personnel because they felt embarrassed to talk about bullying incidents.

In France and Italy it is not the norm for every school to have their own psychologist or medical professional (often there is only one responsible for several schools) and therefore immediate communication with them is less simple. However, in other countries (the UK, Germany, disadvantaged Italian schools) students with communication problems with their parents and who feel that they cannot overcome a specific problem on their own, might contact the school psychologist. Furthermore, some students with psychological problems contact the school psychologist, whilst students with learning difficulties receive part-time special education as a result of their own initiative or as a consequence of the suggestion of a teacher. While dealing with a problem like bullying, some students might ask for help from parents, social worker or school psychologists. In Germany students who experience behavioural problems such as hyperactivity, learn a variety of coping strategies from counsellors, such as being patient, how to improve motivation, and how to manage frustration (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012, p. 101).

Support from peers and friends

In general, the findings show that students reflect and discuss their educational decisions and plans with their classmates and peers. Their role and influence, however, varies across the GOETE partner countries and within the national contexts. The findings indicate that peers can be an important source of emotional support and can have a significant influence in students' future choices. Through listening and encouragement, peers support each other, help each other to cope with schooling demands, overcome social or emotional concerns, and thus remain motivated to reach desired goals or to resolve some family-related problems.

Regarding the influence of peers on students' educational decisions, parents in Finland have expressed concern that peers have a direct influence on their child's educational decision, e.g. that students apply to a particular school because friends apply to it. However, students themselves reported that they applied to those school that matched their own interests, regardless of their friends' choices (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012). In France classmates have a significant influence on students' school choices; their influence is considerable especially in terms of the presence of friends in the future school (Jahnich et al., 2012), (same in the Netherlands and Poland). In the UK peer groups in general are seen as very important in making the experience of school a good one.

In some of the cases a lack of support or solidarity emerged as a significant concern among teaching staff and parents. Students from under-privileged groups especially lack such support. In Slovenia disadvantaged students often do not have any classmates from whom they can ask for help and are left to their own limited resources. This might also lead to their exclusion only having friends from other foreign student groups. Furthermore, an individualistic orientation of students is also highlighted in some settings, such as in Slovenia, Finland and Italy. There were concerns that there is a lack of solidarity among students in school and they were perceived as highly competitive and lacking the willingness to help or support classmates around more academic activities.

Individual coping strategies

Other than the strategies outlined above, students appear to adopt more individual strategies to cope with demands inside and outside of school. Meeting academic demands emerged as an important challenge in various contexts, and several students discussed how they developed strategies to increase their efforts and perform better at school. In France, for instance, some students noted that for them coping with teachers' demands was a matter of working hard. In

general students tend to believe in their responsibility for their own educational trajectories, and some of them have successfully improved their understanding and efforts in order to achieve better results. Likewise, in Italy we observed various students who believed that in order to perform well and please parents and teachers, they have to show greater commitment to their studies, do their homework, and study longer hours on a regular basis. Some of them also managed to do this as well.

The coping strategies discussed so far indicate problem-solving approaches as they involve seeking support and advice, and working towards a solution to meet academic and other demands. However, the findings also point to some strategies that involve avoidance of the stressor (e.g. academic demands). The findings from Germany illustrate this type of coping strategy. In Germany teachers and experts implied that students frustrated due to being relegated to a lower secondary school show all kinds of disaffection with school and education in general. This is viewed as a form of resistance or avoidance of the stressor. The students do not identify with the goals of the school; hence failure in reaching them can be attributed to the school and does not impinge upon their self-image. Students who played truant showed more effort to meet teacher demands when they realized that such actions threatened their graduation. A remark about truancy in their profile is also not good for their future since future employers do not welcome persons with such attitudes, interpreting them as a possible unwillingness to work. Usually students start to make more effort to attain better grades in the final years. Julia's account illustrates this:

> With parents and teachers pressuring her] all of a sudden I realized that you do not have a future at all without the certificate […] at one moment it was like a 'click' in my head where I thought 'if you do not start working now, you will never make it'[…] so I started working more and more (Boron et al., 2012, p. 101).

A further issue regards the relationship between students and their engagement in terms of types of education systems. In the low stratified/low standardised group (Italy, Poland and the UK) students came out with a higher sense of belonging demonstrating that students in systems that are low stratification and low standardisation have a higher feeling of purpose, enjoyment and belonging. Furthermore, this appears to hold true regardless of school context, which suggests the way in which education systems are structured is having an impact on young people's sense of belonging in education. The low stratification and high standardisation education system has the lowest average sense of school belonging despite the

fact that these comprehensive systems tend to perform well in comparative achievement outcomes.

These results also demonstrate that students in disadvantaged schools do not subjectively experience disadvantage in the form of exclusion or feelings of detachment from their school. Students' experiences of disadvantage did, however, become manifest in their academic self-concept (how well they think they would do in school and in their future transitions) and their general feelings of self-efficacy. Students who predict they will fare worse in their academic year compared to their peers were most commonly found in the high stratified/high standardised group. Those students who feel they will do worse than others also have the lowest level of self-efficacy. This reveals that a student's personal efficacy and attitude toward their self-promotion and coping skills may affect their self-belief in their academic capabilities. Results showed that predicted academic achievement is affected by the type of education system, but not the type of school the student attends.

Some important family events (e.g. drug and/or alcohol abuse by parents, divorce and broken homes but especially poverty and unemployment or precarious working conditions), were mentioned (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012) as the causes of 'maladaptive' coping strategies. In these cases the student's learning and relational difficulties or psychological problems are coped with by the student themself because their families are not able to support them. Some students chose to isolate themselves in response and developed a habit of spending hours in front of a computer, watching TV, or consuming drugs and/or alcohol. For instance, a student in Italy commented that: I'd like to spend all day sleeping, computing and watching TV alone' (Barberis et al., 2012, p. 23)

Some students cope by playing truant, in other words, they take time off school without permission from their parents/guardians. The most common reason students gave for playing truant was that they were bored with school and would take days off to relieve themselves (coping) of this boredom (33%). The other common reasons were that they just did not like school or did not like a particular lesson or subject, 14 and 15% respectively. Bullying was the least common reason for missing school (only 2%) (McDowell et al., 2012).

Individual responsibility
Although seeking support from significant others is pervasive in all GOETE project countries as a coping strategy (du-Boys Reymond et al., 2012), the findings also point to a dominant

discourse on individual responsibilities and 'the need to work hard' (even if the trend is to start to make more efforts during the final years or toward the end of school year) as the most effective coping strategy, particularly to cope with academic demands. To work harder included several strategies: to do homework every day, to study subjects every day and to pay more attention during class.

The great majority of students believe that they alone are responsible for their own lives, education, success, and career. They believe that everything depends solely on them and they hardly mention other factors that could influence their success. When we asked students whether they believe they all have the same possibilities/opportunities and whether school is equally demanding for all, we received an almost uniform answer: 'It is all up to you, if you study hard enough, then you also have good opportunities'.

In France, when students were asked about the possibilities of achievement for all students, they almost systematically refer to individual responsibility. They often analysed their difficulties at school as a consequence of their personal behaviour or work. Students do not consider inequalities at school as an issue and explained pupil difficulties by lack of involvement or goodwill. They praised the motto: 'When you want, you can' (Jahnich et al., 2012). In Italy as well, several students contended that 'If you want to obtain better marks, just work and learn more' (Barberis et al., 2012, p. 59)

This denial of educational inequalities leads them to have a very individualistic perception of trajectories. As a consequence they do not entrust coping facilities with supporting them and consider that they have to deal with difficulties on their own. For French students it is only a matter of work. If they do not achieve good results and do not match teacher demands, students are the only ones to be blamed. Indeed, some ex-students state that their low school scores were due to their lack of interest in the topics taught in lower secondary. For instance, in Italy, students believe that those who do well at school are no more intelligent than others but they are able to use their intelligence in order to study and achieve good marks.

In Slovenia a similar approach exists as well. One of the main findings regarding students' coping with problems in education is the contradictory situation in which, on the one hand, students express a great deal of self-responsibility for the educational and life course decisions and actions, whilst on the other hand, there is a strong influence of family as parents play an important role not only in coping with demands but also in students' life in general.

While the former can be understood as reflexive individualism, the role of parents points to a more traditional orientation in this respect, or can at least be seen as a Slovenian specificity. Teachers and school experts perceive this as a problem and an obstacle to the path of students' independence and the development of autonomy.

A similar issue emerged in Germany (in Duisburg and Stuttgart) (du Bois-Reymond et al., 2012) where students seem to adopt an individualization discourse to cope with problems related to access. Accordingly, everyone is responsible for his/her own fate. This means working hard for success and searching for adequate support. Students who succeed in coping with transitions refer to their own will to succeed and effort. Stigmatization motivated some students to work harder and disprove the stigma. Even students who fail refer to an individualized view as they attribute the reasons for their failure to themselves. Such an approach disregards structural problems and displaces responsibility for success and failure primarily on to the individual (see also Chapter 2 – motivation and decision making).

Students are not the only ones who express self-responsibility and other characteristics of individualism. Individualism as a value is also present in the perceptions of the parents , teachers and school experts. Teachers rarely see structural factors as those which influence individual student life, but instead emphasise individual responsibility, individual characteristics and abilities as being crucial for 'success in life' (being able to adjust, to be smart etc.). This puts the responsibility solely on individuals in turn leading them to not question the broader social and economic contexts which shape their opportunities and educational outcomes. This not only means that children are directly socialised into a culture of individualism (self-responsibility), but above all it means the 'passivisation' of young people whose role is only supposed to be to be able to adjust to whatever conditions come along.

Discussion and conclusion

These findings indicate the main coping mechanism that students use as they navigate their school trajectories. These include teachers, peers and experts at school, and parents, siblings and other members of the (extended) family in out-of-school settings. The person(s) students contact differs depending on the nature of the problem. Furthermore, even concerning problems at school, students tend to approach their social networks, which include friends,

siblings, parents and other members of the extended family, rather than seeking help from professionals such as counsellors or social workers. This confirms some other studies conducted in other schooling contexts. For instance, studies that looked at the coping strategies of Asians, and Asian Americans, found that seeking support is the most frequently used coping strategy among these students, and they prefer to seek help and advice from their social network rather than professionals employed at school (Yeh & Inose, 2002). This suggests that broader social networks of students need to be incorporated in the effort to provide support to students by professionals at the school, and the linkages with family and the community need to be strengthened.

Support provided by the families is critical to many students. Mothers particularly appear to be the most important source of support for many students. Parents or siblings directly offer help with homework or organize such help (e.g. private tutoring), offer psycho-social support and play an important role in making decisions related to schooling. For instance, students talk to their parents regularly about their life and transitions to upper levels of education and into labour market. Students in more affluent schools appear to talk more often with their parents about their educational and career plans and aspirations compared to students in average and disadvantaged school contexts. Although no generalizations can be made based on our local case studies, certain patterns emerged in some of the case studies illustrating that the quality and intensity of child-parent relationships, and the role of parents in the education of their children, greatly differ. Our case studies in Poland, for instance, point to the absence of parents due to migration to other EU countries for work and the negative impact of such absences on children. Conversely, in Slovenian schools, we have observed that parents are highly involved in the education of their children. They offer help, take an active and leading role in decisions that need to be taken, and have high expectations from their children, which sometimes translates into pressure, stress and parental demand on students.

After the immediate social network involving family and friends, teachers emerge as an important source of support, particularly those who work as classroom teachers or mentors, having more regular contact with students over a prolonged period of time, and those teachers who are perceived by students as approachable, kind, warm and caring. Students identified a number of reservations they have about contacting teachers, even the ones they trust most. For instance, students might hesitate to contact their teachers when they are bullied since they fear that this might become known by others and their situation might worsen. The authors provided several explanations for the fact that some children did not activate social support

systems to deal with their bullying issues. First, children might not always be aware of the fact that they are being bullied, especially when the bullying is less overt, such as social exclusion. When they are conscious of the bullying, children might fear that talking about it will enhance the problems, especially when sharing it with other peers. Finally, children might not always be convinced of the efficacy of the support systems in the school or at home.

Our findings also indicate that seeking support from parents, peers and teachers is viewed as 'normal', but resorting to some other experts within schools (such as psychologists or social workers) is perceived as peculiar. There was still a stigma attached to students who receive help from experts at the school, even though in some countries it appears to have diminished in recent years (e.g. in case study schools in Finland). These findings suggest that there continues to be uneasiness about contacting experts at school; this might cause delay in seeking support by students or their families, or secrecy and a feeling of discomfort about it. Addressing stigmatisation with regard to seeking support from experts at school appears to be an important intervention area for schools, because unless the stigma is loosened, the formal support offered at schooling settings would be underutilised.

The findings point to a pervasive discourse on individual responsibility, particularly in meeting academic demands. The majority of students we talked to in several schools across GOETE partner countries confirmed that they feel responsible for their own performance and tended to attribute their successes or failures to themselves. Such tendencies were observed among parents who come from low socio-economic or migrant backgrounds and whose children might be most disadvantaged because of some of the characteristics of the system (e.g. early selection or high differentiation at lower secondary level as in the cases of the Netherlands and Germany). Therefore, it was particularly paradoxical that such families lacked an awareness of systemic issues and how they might interfere with the academic achievement of their children or limit their educational or occupational options.

The absence of a critical attitude on the system might result from a lack of knowledge on the education system and broader societal issues (e.g. inequalities and how they are perpetuated or reinforced through various institutions). It might also be a result of the general pervasiveness of the discourse of individualism. We believe that parents and students need to be better informed about the structural dynamics of the education systems in which they are involved. Teachers particularly can play important roles in raising awareness of their students and developing critical attitudes. Such awareness might empower students and parents, and

enable them to see how, and in what ways, the education system expands and limits their educational and occupational opportunities. In turn, students might move away from self-blame and feel more empowered to develop problem-solving strategies to deal with their educational challenges.

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Chapter 4

Formal support for students

Mikko Aro, Ilse Julkunen & Rainer Treptow

Introduction

What is *formal support*? If we look at the dictionary for a definition of the word *formal*, we get definitions such as "relating to or involving the outward form, structure", "following or according with established form, custom, or rule" and "done in due or lawful form" (Webster's Online Dictionary). Thus, it can be summarised that *formal* is something that is done methodically, using a certain kind of planned structure for the action, and a certain set of rules or laws is followed. Then again, *support* refers to various ways of helping individuals to cope[7] with difficulties in their lives. *Formal support* is then, by definition, methodical, structured support, the offering of which is usually based on legislation. In addition, formal support is something that is carried out by trained professionals. In a similar way as formal, informal and non-formal types of learning are distinguished in this area of research, the distinction between formal and informal *support* is used in research regarding the nature and form of co-operation among family members or regarding welfare services for the elderly (see e.g. Lipman & Longino 1982).

In this chapter formal support for pupils is examined in a comparative frame. Both statistical surveys and qualitative case studies are used. The countries involved in our analyses are France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Finland, Slovenia and Poland. There are considerable differences between the countries regarding the organization of formal support for pupils, which in turn is related to more general differences between welfare states. We do not use the welfare state typology to form hypotheses, instead we rather start "from an empty table", but it is used in the interpretations of the results later on. Following Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare state typology, most of the countries (Italy, France, the Netherlands, Germany) would be placed in the conservative welfare regime whilst Finland is the sole representative

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[7] For the different definitions of *coping,* see chapter 5.1.

of the social-democratic welfare state type. In other typologies, however, the conservative regime has been divided into employment centered (e.g. Germany, France, the Netherlands) and sub-protective (e.g. Italy). The latter has also been called, in other typologies, the South European model of welfare (Ferrera 1996). Post-communist welfare states, such as Slovenia and Poland, do generally have a largely conservative type of tradition (Orenstein 2008), but it could be argued that some of them have also started to develop strongly in the liberal direction after the transition Deacon (1992, 181). It is still, however, difficult to place the post-communist countries in such categories. Nevertheless, the availability, the level and the coverage of various welfare services, affect the transitions of the young people.

In every country there is some kind of a gap between the demands of formal support and its availability to students. Consequently cooperation between schools and out-of-school services, such as social work or psychological counselling, is important. Likewise, self-organized support obtained by parents helps to fill gaps in the network of public support measures. Trust between parents, students and teachers is also a vital element in building and maintaining a good working relationship between families and schools, which is crucial in the transitional phases. Trust helps to stabilise further steps of communication and to create a general atmosphere of respect, even in conflictual and other situations where there is tension. A longitudinal study of 400 elementary schools in Chicago, for instance, shows the central role of relational trust in building effective education communities (Bryk & Scneider 2003).

Challenges can be defined as problematic issues which require some kind of action by the "challengee" in order to resolve them. Societal, institutional and individual level challenges can be distinguished (Lazarus 1999; Böhnisch & Schefold 1985; Böhnisch 2008). Societal level challenges include, for example, the need to provide an adequately qualified workforce, something that is becoming more difficult due to the weakening of the dependency ratio in many countries as the large post-war generations are moving to retirement. On the institutional level, the question can be defined as adaptation of organisations to challenges; for example, the flexibilisation and individualisation of support mechanisms to take into account the need for young people to be supported in many different ways.

On the individual level, the case studies reveal that some of the most central challenges for the pupils include academic demands, language proficiency, peer relations, uncertainties related to future prospects and challenges related to family background (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012). Special challenges for coping can also be caused by so-called critical life events, i.e. the separation of parents, sickness or death of a member of family, birth of

siblings, unemployment of the breadwinner, moving to another region, violence in family etc. There are informal means of coping, which help pupils overcome the challenges in their lives. Often, however, the lack of economic/cultural resources in the family can make it more difficult for pupils to cope on their own. Formal support mechanisms can be considered societal and institutional level responses to these individual level difficulties. Many of the formal support services are geared towards academic challenges, but there are also various services and professionals which deal with the other challenges mentioned above. From a comparative point of view it is interesting to see what forms of formal support are offered, which issues are covered and how the formal support is organised in schools in the countries involved. Due to the mental, cognitive and emotional development of young learners (Caplan 1974; Oerter & Montada 2008), the different forms of support provide important socio-cultural components in their environment in order to strengthen their competencies in coping with the challenges of everyday life. Next, we will take a closer look at various formal support services.

Forms of support in education

Support taking place inside schools and carried out by teachers, nurses, school social workers, school psychologists and other members of staff is most definitely formal, considering that it fulfils all the above mentioned criteria: it is somehow structured or planned, it is often based on legislation and it is carried out by trained professionals. The use of peer mediators in school is somewhat of a grey area – it is not carried out by professionals, yet, it is something that is officially "structured" in the school. However, as the peer mediators are chosen by the staff and liaise between the pupils and the staff, the use of peer mediators does differ considerably from unofficial and informal peer support, being closer to formal support.

In practice formal support is most often offered by public institutions and consists for the most part of public (or in some cases, publically financed but privately organised) welfare services. Formal support taking place inside schools can be considered a "public service" in the sense that most of the schools in Europe are either entirely public or are private schools whose financing comes mainly from the government – for the share of students attending truly private schools is very small. Among the countries involved in this study the share of

private schools, the funding of which is not dependent on government support, is around 5–6 % at most. (Eurydice 2012, 33.)

Third sector organisations and the church can also be considered to be a grey area between the "formal" and "informal". Third sector organisations can be financially supported by the state. The role of the church varies by country. The ties between the church and the state are strong in the United Kingdom, Nordic countries and in Germany (see e.g. Bedford-Strohm 2011), blurring the division between the church and the public sector. Often the work done by the church tends to be associated with charity, but in Finland the principles of charity work are quite similar to those of the public sector.

In addition to actual, formally defined "services", there are also more subtle means of support. These include e.g. organisational strategies which emphasise co-operation between parents and school. These are also a "formal support measure" in the sense that they are facilitated by the school and intended to help pupils with their difficulties, however, they not a "service" as such. We are, however, concentrating on the more institutionalised services.

In order to categorise formal support for pupils, distinctions can be made on at least two axes. The types of support can be categorised, firstly, into internal and external. As the pivotal point is the school, *internal* refers to services and methods of support taking place inside the school. These are support measures that are "reserved" only for the pupils. In some cases, services can be divided between several schools, but basically the right to the service depends upon the "membership" in the school. In turn, *external* types of support are generally welfare services, the entitlement to which may not be limited only to school children or youngsters but the right to the service covers the entire population (possibly means-tested).

Secondly, the types of support can be divided according to their relationship with *learning*. Thus, *direct* refers to those types of support which are intended to directly aid pupils in their learning difficulties. Such direct measures include e.g. remedial teaching, homework classes, organisation of special classes and the different kinds of guidance and counselling taking place in schools. *Indirect* support measures include those services which are intended to influence learning outcomes indirectly by reducing inequality and the risk of exclusion.

Table 1. Formal support: services.

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

When combined, the two dimensions form the kind of a fourfold table shown in Table 1. What kind of services these categories encompass, is discussed next:

1) **Direct/Internal** –category includes various types of extra instruction given in schools to pupils for whom (either temporarily or permanently) normal classroom teaching is not sufficient. Remedial instruction means extra instruction that is targeted at learning some specific issues or subjects. For example, a pupil may have difficulties in learning a specific mathematical operation or a certain grammatical issue in a foreign language. The pupil may also have been absent for a few days because of illness, and has missed the normal tuition in some important subject, because of which he/she is in need of remedial instruction. Special education may also be temporary, but is more clearly based on extra needs than remedial instruction. An example of part-time special education is instruction related to speech impairments. Pupils may also be placed in full-time special education due to e.g. severe learning difficulties, handicap or long-term illness. Social inadaptability to normal groups may also be a result in a referral to special education. Although different in nature compared to remedial and special education, preparatory education for immigrants and homework classes are also means of providing extra instruction.

2) **Indirect/Internal** –category comprises of support services available inside schools but is not directly related to learning. These services/professionals may ultimately be very important to learning, although they are directly aimed more at the general well-being

of the pupils. Basically the aim of these services is similar to general welfare and health services, but access to them is restricted to pupils of (a) certain school(s).

3) **Direct/External** –category refers to learning instruction that is not part of the official curriculum of the school and does not physically take place in the school e.g. private tutoring. It is somewhat debatable as to whether private tutoring should be considered formal or informal. It is not as formal as public services, because its provision is not defined in legislation in any way. Its organisation is based on market principles like any entrepreneurship and it is voluntary for pupils to take part in it. Private tuition can be considered formal in the sense that it is usually carried out by professionals and it is planned/structured, unlike help from relatives, for example.

4) **Indirect/External** –category includes indirect services, the access to which is not limited to pupils of a certain school. These include social work (child welfare), employment service, youth work, youth psychiatry and work experience periods organised by the school. Traditionally public welfare services have been typical in Nordic countries, with e.g. public medical care being either free of charge or heavily subsidised by the public sector. Generally, municipalities are responsible for welfare services, either directly as service providers or indirectly so that the municipality buys the services from the private sector. In addition, even though the municipality may be responsible for the main provision of the service the state may participate in the financing of the service, either directly or indirectly as general ("non-earmarked") financing for the municipality.

As can be seen from Table 3.1., these categories "correlate" in the sense that direct services mainly take place inside schools, whereas external services tend to be mostly indirect by nature.

Financial support is also an important means of supporting pupils. Although we do not have empirical material regarding financial support, we will briefly examine the differences related to it in our survey countries. In most of the countries involved in our study, financial support for lower secondary level (ISCED 2) students consists of both family allowances and tax relief (Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Slovenia). In a few countries (Poland and France) there are, in addition to family allowances and tax reliefs, also study grants for lower

secondary level students. Finland differs from the rest of the countries with financial support for lower secondary level students consisting only of family allowances (Eurydice 2012, 103). However financial support is more difficult to categorise than other kinds of support measures. Firstly, all income transfers that are directed to families with school-age children could be considered formal support for pupils – which is too broad of a definition. Secondly, if various goods are given to pupils free of charge without any actual money involved, the line between financial support and service provision is blurred. If pupils are given bus tickets, are we talking about (transport) service provision or financial support? Thus, for example, in Finland there are no study grants as defined by Eurydice, but school books and meals are free of charge in the lower secondary level, as is school transport if the distance to school is more than five kilometres.

Next, we will examine the importance and prevalence of various types of formal support, as perceived by principals. As the growth of private tutoring is currently one of the central trends in education, there is some emphasis on that in the analysis.

Data

We set out to examine the importance of the various forms and dimensions of formal support, comparing Italy, Poland, Finland, Slovenia, France, the Netherlands and Germany.[8]

The analysis is based on three sources, two of which are statistical surveys and one consists of qualitative data. All of the data-sets were gathered from three chosen cities per country. The cities were chosen to approximately represent an "advantaged", an "average" and a "disadvantaged" city.

1) A survey of principals. The survey was aimed at primary and secondary school principals and was conducted as an internet survey (except in Poland, where principals were interviewed face-to-face). The total number of responses was 946 and the response rates varied between 35.9 % (Finland) and 4.7 % (Netherlands). This is the primary data source we are using.

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[8] UK was also involved in the surveys, but UK data is not included in the analysis, due to great problems with the quality of the data in the principal survey. In the UK the response rate was approximately 3 % and the total number of responses was 38.

2) <u>A survey of lower secondary school pupils.</u> The total number of responses in the data was 5691. The response rates were close to 100 % as the survey was done by visiting the schools, the pupils filled out the questionnaires in class while the researcher/assistant was waiting. This data-set is used for examining private tutoring, as this information was not available in the principals' survey. In the German student data there were some incomprehensible values in the examined variables. As no information regarding the meaning of these values could be obtained, these were all excluded from the analysis.

3) <u>Case studies.</u> Case studies were conducted in one school per city (i.e. three schools per country, except in Poland where two schools were involved). Interviews of principals, teachers, other experts, pupils, ex-pupils and parents were conducted (altogether 710). Material from these interviews (mostly of parents) is used to help in interpreting some of the survey results.

Importance of formal support

When asked about the usefulness of the various support measures, the exact question directed to the principals was: "Schools can support pupils' ability to cope in school, in their transitions from one schooling level to the next, and in the latter phase their transition to working life, in various ways. How would you assess the impact of the following support measures / professionals, according to your experience? (0 = Not available / 1 = Totally useless ... 5 = Very useful)".

Table 4. 2. Usefulness of the various support measures in the opinions of the principals. Means for separate variables, according to country. Cells marked with [–] indicate that the

question was not included in the questionnaire. Scale: 1 = Totally useless… 5 = Very useful. SOURCE: survey of principals.

	Italy	Finland	France	Germany	Nether-lands	Poland	Slovenia
Direct / Internal							
Remedial instruction	3.9	4.6	4.0	3.4	3.7	4.4	4.7
Special education classes	1.6	3.1	4.4	3.0	–	–	3.7
Part-time special education	2.3	4.2	4.1	3.7	–	–	4.3
Preparatory education for immigrants	3.8	3.0	4.0	3.2	1.8	3.2	3.4
Homework classes	3.9	2.7	3.3	4.2	2.8	4.1	3.9
Indirect / Internal							
Student welfare team	3.6	4.7	3.9	–	2.9	–	4.3
School social worker	2.8	3.9	3.3	3.0	2.9	–	3.1
School nurse	1.8	4.6	3.7	–	–	3.1	2.0
School psychologist	3.7	4.2	3.7	2.9	2.4	4.2	3.6
Use of support pupils	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.9	3.4	4.2
Indirect / External							
Municipal social work	3.1	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.5
Youth workers	2.9	3.5	3.6	2.8	1.9	–	2.4
Youth psychiatry	2.7	3.7	3.1	2.9	2.3	3.0	2.5
Employment service	3.0	2.8	3.3	3.3	1.9	2.2	2.4
Work experience periods	3.0	2.6	3.2	3.3	2.8	2.5	3.9

Table 3.3. Means of the summary variables according to country. SOURCE: survey of principals.

	Direct / Internal	Indirect / Internal	Indirect / External
Italy	12.6	12.9	12.0
Poland	10.6	10.2	7.2
Finland	12.7	13.0	14.1
Slovenia	13.5	13.2	11.4
Germany	13.6	7.2	11.7
France	17.5	13.6	9.0
Netherlands	7.4	11.2	9.7
Total	**12.2**	**11.5**	**10.2**
F-test (Sig.)	**p < 0.001**	**p < 0.001**	**p < 0.001**

In Table 4.2, the means for the various support measures are reported. The services/professionals marked with [–] were not included in the country in question due to either the service being non-existent or it being organised differently from the other countries. For example, in the Netherlands there are only special education schools and special education integrated into mainstream teaching (Kosar Altinyelken 2010) and hence Dutch special education is not compatible with the distinction used in the other countries. In some countries there are no school nurses and/or school social workers. This is the case in Poland, for example. However, the need for school social workers is being increasingly recognised (Błaszczyk 2010).

The items have been arranged according to the four-fold categorisation shown earlier. Among support measures which are directly learning-related and internal (in-school) remedial instruction was generally considered the most useful one and was preferred in most cases in comparison to special education. The organisation of homework classes was also a popular form of formal support in several countries, with the exception of Finland and the Netherlands. Regarding the more indirect formal support taking place in schools, perhaps the most interesting difference between countries can be found in the appreciation of school nurses. School nurses are very important staff members in Finnish schools, but their importance is not considered very high in the other countries. Incidentally, Finland (along with Poland) is a country with a high number of school nurses. It can be assumed that the availability, among other things, of certain professionals affects their appreciation.

The analysis was continued by constructing summary variables for each dimension. The dimension Direct/External is not included here; it is examined separately based on a

survey of students, as explained earlier. The summary variables were constructed exactly the way the items are organised in Table 4.2. The suitability of items for summary variables was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, the values of which were decent albeit not excellent (ranging from 0.538 to 0.680 for the different summary variables), indicating that the items used for the summary variables function fairly well with each other. In principle the test tells us that the correlations between the items are fairly high, i.e. they can be considered to measure the same dimension. In the original survey the principals were asked about the *usefulness* of the different formal support measures, the response scale varied between 1 (totally useless) and 5 (very useful). "Not available" responses were coded as 0. Likewise, in these cases non-responses were also coded as 0, and included in the analyses. In Table 4.3, means for the sum variables are reported according to country. The range of the sum variables is 0–25 (the higher the values, the more positive comments).

The highest scores for the support measures that are directly related to learning and take place inside schools (Internal/Direct) are found in France, the lowest in the Netherlands. Regarding the internal support measures which are only indirectly related to learning, the highest scores are divided between Finland, Slovenia, France and Italy. Of these countries, Finland and Slovenia are clearly countries with comprehensive school systems, but also France and Italy do have some similar characteristics. The lowest score for the indirect and external support measures is clearly found among the German principals. Regarding the indirect forms of support taking place outside of schools, by far the highest score is found in Finland, and the lowest in Poland. Also, in France and in the Netherlands low scores are found for this dimension.

Private tutoring

Parents have various ways of helping their children in their school work, particularly if the resources of the school are deemed insufficient with regard to the child's needs or objectives. The local case studies revealed (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012) that one of the most common ways for parents to cope with the educational demands of their children was to offer help with homework. Children with learning difficulties were particularly offered such help, whilst parents who placed high importance on academic performance were active in ensuring that their children would be able to enrol in good quality schools.

The other option of providing additional instruction to the child, over and above the help given by the parents, is to acquire private tutoring for the child. This is a more formal route than helping the child at home, as there are professionals involved. The growth of private tutoring is a trend that is seen almost all over Europe (Bray 2011). When examining private tutoring a different data-set and indicator had to be used than for the other dimensions, as the principals were, unfortunately, not asked about issues that related to private tutoring. Hence, a comparative data-set of pupils was used in this case. The survey question was related to the prevalence of private tutoring. The exact question directed to the pupils was defined as: "Have ever had a private tutor?"

As can be seen from Figure 4.1, there is considerable variation between the countries in the prevalence of private tutoring. It is very rare in Finland (12 %) and quite common in Poland (57 %) and in Germany (46 %). The findings from the local case studies are largely in the same direction. In countries such as Finland, where students receive additional support in their learning via remedial teaching or special education classes, such strategies as acquiring private tuition were not utilised much. There is some ambivalence, however, regarding the prevalence of private tuition in Slovenia, when information from the pupils' survey and the local case studies (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012) are compared. In the Slovenian case-studies it was noted that private tutoring was pervasive not only amongst middle to higher income families, but also among families who struggle to pay for such services. However in the interviews the results are not quantifiable, of course – the Slovenian 27 % share of pupils who have had a private tutor may seem "high" from the interviewees' point of view.

There are at least four possible explanations for the differences in the prevalence of private tuition. The first hypothesis is related to the perceived *need to supplement* the official teaching by private tuition. In other words, based on this assumption, the satisfaction and trust of pupils and parents towards school would be related to the prevalence of private tutoring. The more there is trust among pupils and parents that school will provide all the necessary teaching and instruction, the less need there ought to be for private tutoring. In a perfect world, where schools performed their tasks well, there would be no need for private tutoring or any other external support at all. We have two sources which tell us something about the trust in school: the *principal survey* and *parents' interviews* (from case studies).
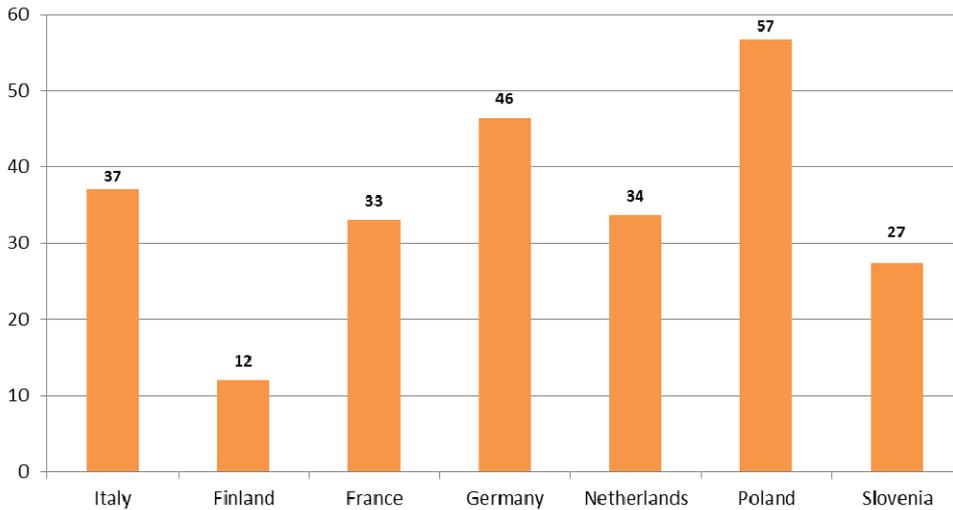
Figure 1. Shares of **pupils** who had ever had a private tutor, according to country (%). SOURCE: survey of pupils.
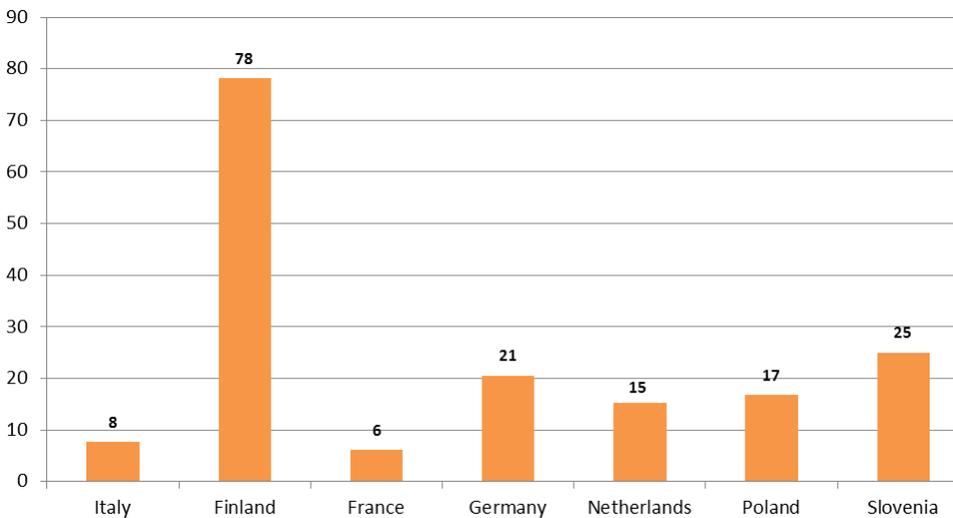

Figure 2. The shares of **principals** who considered the status of school "good", according to country (%). SOURCE: survey of principals.

In the *principal survey*, the principals were asked about what they think the status of the school is like in today's society. The share (%) of principals who considered the status of the school in his/her country to be good or improving, are shown in *Figure 2*. The share of principals who considered the status of school to be good was highest in Finland, where the prevalence of private tuition was by far the lowest. Correspondingly, in countries where

private tuition is popular (Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland), the number of principals who considered the status of school to be good was low. In *parents' interviews* (case studies) high levels of distrust towards school were observed in Italy and Slovenia (du Bois-Reymond et al. 2012). Conversely, in Finland there was a high level of trust among parents that the school provides sufficient education to their children and necessary support. Finnish parents also seem to trust that the school provides accurate information about different options for the students. (Salovaara et al. 2012.)

Another issue which emerged in the case studies and which affects the need for private tuition, is related to the co-operation of various professionals in the public sphere. It could be argued that co-operation between various in-school and out-of-school professionals adds to the efficiency of the support system, and thus the overall effect is greater than if only one of these elements were present. Thus, the reluctance of professionals towards co-operation, which was observed in the case studies in Poland, France, Italy and Germany (du Bois-Reymond 2012) could be seen as one possible factor affecting the need for the individual tuition sought from the private sector. All in all, there seem to be some grounds to support the hypothesis that "private tutoring patches up the deficiencies of the official school system".

The second possible explanation for the prevalence of private tuition is related to parents' educational background and wealth: *knowledge and money*. In other words, it could be assumed that the higher educated parents would know more and be more interested in private tutoring, and can also more easily afford to pay for the extra expenses. However, when examining this assumption based on *pupils' survey (Figure 3),* the findings did not support this assumption. Especially in Finland and in Slovenia, the differences in the use of private tutoring between different social classes were rather small. However, what is perhaps the most surprising about *Figure 3* is that in some countries (especially in France and in Germany) it is not the offspring of managers and professionals who have had the highest levels of participation in private tutoring. Rather, the offspring of the lower middle classes (clerks and sales personnel) have participated the most in private tuition. However, a possible explanation could be the social class-based differences in the quality of schools attended. In the best schools it may not be necessary to obtain private tuition, even if the parents could afford it. In the pupils' survey, the targeted schools were roughly categorised as affluent, average and disadvantaged. This indicator is far from perfect, but does offer some information regarding the quality of the school. Indeed, it is the case that the offspring of the most highly educated parents are over-represented in the "affluent" schools.
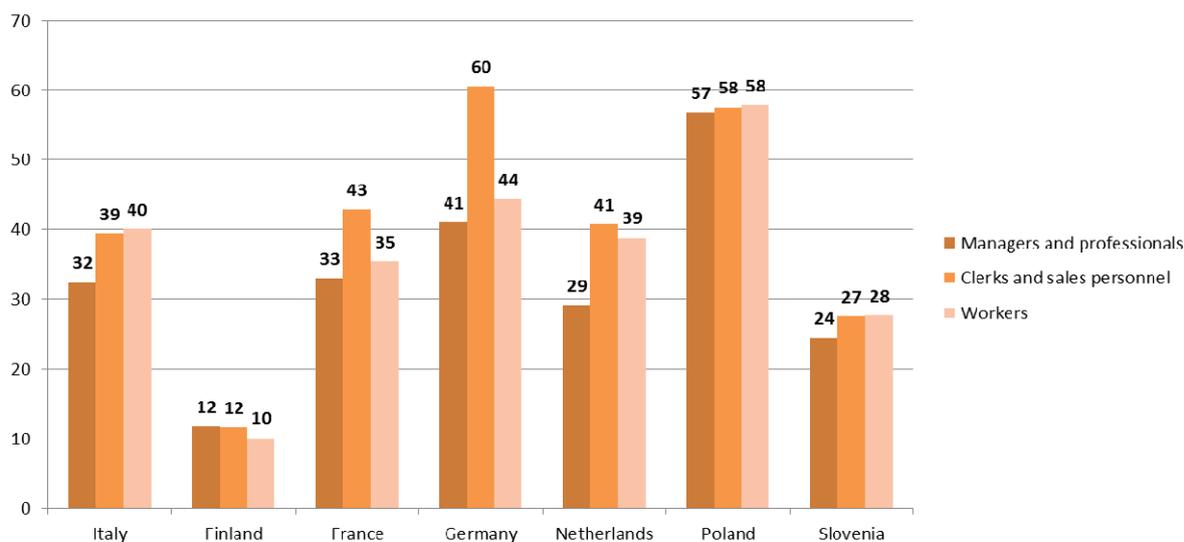
Figure 3. The percentages of pupils who had ever had a private tutor, according to country and father's occupational status (%).[9] <u>SOURCE: survey of pupils.</u>

The third explanation for the varying popularity of private tutoring is related to *competition* and the differences between countries in this aspect. Bray (2009, 2011) argues that private tuition is, for the most part fuelled by competition and by the needs of high-achievers, the very pupils who would do well even without private tuition. What, then, fosters competition? It could be argued that there is more pressure for enhancing one's performance by any means possible, including private tuition, if there is a final examination looming ahead at the end of the school level. Indeed, in most of the countries with a high level of private tuition there are final examinations at the end of lower secondary education. In Germany there is an internal final examination at the end of lower secondary level, while in Poland, the UK, Italy, France and the Netherlands, there is an external or externally verified final examination (Eurydice 2012, 164). Northern Europe is in general quite unaffected by the growth of private tuition (Bray 2011, 25). What the Nordic countries have generally strived for is equality. There has been strong emphasis for equality both in education and welfare policies. As a result of these policies, what particularly distinguishes Finland from the rest of the countries which we have examined are the small variations between schools learning outcomes (OECD 2011, 118).

Finally, the fourth explanation is related to the *status and pay of teachers,* which affects private tutoring on the "supply side". According to Bray (2011, 54), private tutors can

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9 Military excluded.

often be teachers who are "moonlighting" in order to supplement their incomes. This does not completely explain the results of our study, as in Germany both teachers' salaries and private tutoring are on a high level. However, in Poland the (PPP corrected) salaries on lower secondary level are the lowest among our research countries (Cramer 2012, 21) while also having the highest share of pupils who participate in private tuition. The phenomenon is also evident in other Eastern European countries where many teachers struggle to make ends meet. As a result in Eastern Europe as many as around 50–80 % of the tutors are teachers, in some cases even the pupil's own class teacher can act also as a private tutor (Silova 2010, 336; from Bray 2011, 39).

Of course we do not claim any direct causal relationship between any of these issues and the popularity of private tuition, but there do seem to be grounds to support the hypotheses regarding the "need for supplementation" and "competition". Private tuition seems to be more popular in the countries in which the status of schools is not very strong or there are some deficiencies which can then be supplemented by private tutoring. Competition also seems to be a significant explanation, both theoretically and empirically.

Summary and conclusions

When we look at the differences in the principals' opinions regarding the various types of formal support, no very clear demarcation lines appear between comprehensive (Finland, Slovenia, Poland, Italy) and differentiated (Germany, France, the Netherlands) school systems. Neither was a clear distinction visible regarding the prevalence of private tutoring. Finland, as the representative of the universalistic welfare regime, does differ from the rest of the countries, however, in the dimension of out-of-school and indirect support that was considered more useful by the principals. At the same time our results imply that a good combination of support ameliorates parents' distress and increases trust in schools. This may also be part of the reason for the low need for private tutoring in Finland.

This also might be partly related to the co-operation between professionals in Finland, the good functioning of which was highlighted in the case studies. The result of continuing co-operation is also that the different professionals get to know each other and can thus better evaluate each other. Although not directly drawing from our results and data, it could be argued that there is a high level of trust between Finnish professionals, such as teachers, social

workers and psychologists. Of course there are always some differences in the points of view of the representatives of different professions, but due to the same educational level (higher university degree) the above-mentioned professionals probably do consider each other more or less equals. The differences in pay are also not very considerable between teachers and social workers for example, which also contributes to how the other professionals are perceived.

There were considerable differences within the group of countries with differentiated-type schooling systems. In France the directly learning-related support measures which take place in schools (e.g. remedial education, special education) were very highly appreciated, whereas in the Netherlands the situation was completely different with very low scores. In Germany the status of internal and indirect-type support measures (such as school psychologist) was equally low as the scores were in the Netherlands in the internal/direct dimension. These scores were also affected by the fact that some of the support measures in these categories were not available in all countries.

However it could be assumed that private tuition could be a kind of replacement or addition for the internal/direct type of support measures, i.e. the need for private tutoring would indicate that the school had "failed" in providing this kind of support for the pupils to some extent. The appreciation of this type of direct support was, however, very high e.g. in France and in Germany, which were also countries with high levels of private tuition In addition it has to be recognised that private tuition is not affordable for every family to the same level of quality and sustainability. Parents in difficult economic circumstances combined with the cultural demands of coping and stressful life events are not as able to provide their children with private tuition compared to families with a better economic background.

Generally, one of the most central findings was that amongst the in-school support measures, indirect means of support, such as a school social worker or a school psychologist, are considered almost as important as the ones which are directly related to learning. The indirect support measures are focused, among other things, on mental and physical health, and on general well-being, of pupils. It can be argued that without this "stone foundation", that more direct support measures would not be of much use. Just as in other spheres of human life, it is necessary that the fundamentals of life are in place in order be able to learn and cope with the every-day challenges in school.

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Chapter 5

Career guidance in transitions – Looking at policies and practices in eight European countries

Laetitia Mellottee and Ilse Julkunen

Introduction

A variety of formal and informal support mechanisms have been implemented in schools to encourage and assist young people face the challenges they encounter in school. Career guidance within the educational context is a form of formal support that is given in schools to facilitate educational and vocational choices among students. The forms and structures of this vary within different countries and it is unclear what the objectives and roles of career guidance are and how it is integrated into the curriculum in schools. Schools are pretty much free to make arrangements for the career guidance for young people; these may include internal services in school, but also those that are externally provided by different agencies. This chapter focuses on career guidance as it mediates student's school transition experiences, and the role of educational professionals and institutional organization of guidance support in eight GOETE countries. Anchored in a comparative perspective, this chapter analyzes different forms of support provided in the GOETE project countries, e.g. internal, external or mixed support, related to teaching or not, and the conceptions of guidance, e. g. labour market oriented, lifelong learning perspective, orientation towards disadvantaged students, in order to underline common and different strategies conducted in the European countries. It draws on national teacher training curriculum and document analyses, as well as local case studies in schools, in order to provide insights into the different contexts of transitions.

There are a number of variations in how career guidance is defined. The OECD Career Guidance Policy Review defines it as "services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers" (OECD, 2004, 107). This definition is based on two complementary aspects. It includes information about the labour market and about accessible educational and employment opportunities, it includes assisting people to

reflect on their aspirations, interests, competencies, personal attributes, qualifications and abilities and to match these with available training and employment opportunities.

Literature shows that the term "career guidance" is slowly replacing the term "vocational guidance". Vocational guidance focused upon the choice of occupation and is distinguished from educational guidance, which focuses upon choices on courses of study. Career guidance brings the two together, and stresses the interaction between learning and work. In reality this approach encounters obstacles, and education guidance and employment guidance still coexist as overlapping or complementing activity, or in ignoring each other.

In the perspective of building a strong European knowledge society (Lisbon strategy) career guidance has been placed at the very top of the political agenda in most of countries. As a primary tool for achieving this ambitious goal, career guidance is largely seen as contributing to public policy's objectives. Especially since the middle of the 2000's, the most influential international institutions have conducted reviews on career guidance policies. Studies by the OECD, the World Bank (WB), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP), and the European Training Foundation (ETF) all confirm the importance of career guidance, counselling and information in helping to achieve three main goals (Watts & Sultana, 2004):

• Lifelong learning goals: Combating early school leaving and ensuring an adequate knowledge and skills base to meet the challenges in creating knowledge-based societies in the context of economic globalisation, and promoting adequate linkages between education, training and the world of work.

• Labour market outcomes: Reducing mismatches between supply and demand for labour, dealing with unemployment and improving labour mobility.

• Social equity and social inclusion goals: Promoting reintegration of marginalized and at-risk groups into education, training and employment and mainstreaming of excluded groups into general training programmes and labour market services.

Watts (2001) has studied the roles of career guidance in addressing social exclusion, especially in relation to young people who have dropped out of formal education, training or employment, or are at risk of doing so, using the example of the Connexions' services in England. Watts concludes that while career guidance has an important role to play in

strategies to address social exclusion, this should be secondary to its role in supporting individual progression and development within the societal structures to which inclusion is being sought.

The main aim of this chapter is twofold: to give a comparative picture of career guidance policies in eight European countries on the following questions on: How is career guidance organized and who are the actors providing career guidance in school? How are educational professionals trained to provide career guidance and how do they look at the challenges? The chapter aims to give an actor perspective on career guidance including on questions such as: How are students supported in their educational transitions, and how do they perceive and use career guidance? It starts first with a literature review on career guidance policies in an international perspective as a means to, frame the key trends in career guidance policies. It then scrutinizes how career guidance is formed and organized in eight GOETE countries. This chapter contextualizes individual student trajectories and the experiences of career guidance in different school and societal contexts. It also discusses the implications of these challenges for what career guidance can mean in modern society, and how it could be integrated more thoroughly into the school context.

Career guidance policies in an international perspective

In 2004 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported on a a Career Guidance Policy Review which involved 14 countries (OECD, 2004). This paper shows a number of important differences between countries. Unsurprisingly, guidance services in middle-income countries are less well-developed than in high-incomes countries. Even if all career guidance systems reflect the economic, political, cultural, social, educational and labour market contexts in which they operate (Watts, 1996), the dynamics of globalisation and te "policy borrowing" tendencies contribute to a global convergence in Europe. Moreover, there are some specific differences between countries. For instance, there are differences between educational systems with strong early streaming and tracking mechanisms and those with more flexible pathways, where guidance tends to play a more important role in the latter than in the former. Countries are also differentiated according to countries with state-run public services and countries in which services are delivered through the private and voluntary sectors, where the latter tends to lead to a greater diversity of services provision.

The most interesting findings in the report concern convergences. In all countries, career guidance is seen as a public good linked to policy goals related to learning, and to labour market and social equity. The general trend towards implementing lifelong learning policies emphasises this phenomenon of international convergence. As a consequence, career guidance needs to be accessible, not only to school-leavers and unemployed people but also to everyone throughout their lives. Nevertheless, it is also underlines the fact that career guidance takes varied and disparate forms in different countries. Consequently the author concludes with the pressing need for stronger mechanisms and recommendations enabling countries to develop a strategy for delivering such access. In front of the gap which often exists between how career guidance services are delivered and the goals of public policy, this huge work was extended into a handbook which aimed at helping policy makers within OECD countries and the European Union develop effective policies for career guidance (OECD, 2004): in education, training and employment. The findings and recommendations of this handbook make very interesting points from a GOETE perspective. The handbook covers four broad policy themes: Improving career guidance for young people; improving career guidance for adults; improving access to career guidance; and improving the systems that support career guidance.

To summarise the conclusions from the literature about the deficiencies of career guidance policies, once can say that in spite of a general common definition, career guidance in European countries is still suffering from:

- a lack of coherence and coordination
- a lack of transparency for users
- deficiencies in building a career guidance system in a lifelong learning perspective

In all levels of European countries (international, national and local), the cooperation and coordination in career guidance policies and services is seen as weak. Guidance is often delivered through a variety of providers in a decentralised system which complicates cooperation and the quality of guidance. As guidance is mostly seen as a public good, the state has a crucial role to play in the management of such providers and policies. Sultana (2004) shows that state leadership is still widely lacking where formal guidance is concerned. The two main difficulties are the lack of cooperation between:

- different governmental departments and agencies
- government and the stakeholders

Some countries have decided to develop specific guidance programs so as to support cross-sectoral approaches (Slovenia, England with Connexions), but these initiatives are difficult to sustain without adequate funding. Other countries are in favour of co-ordination at the local rather than regional or national levels (France, Italy), but few examples of effective initiatives are reported. It also appears that all policy makers have yet to embrace this style of cooperation, and turf-guarding and sectorial concerns still need to be overcome. The benefits of cross-sectoral cooperation and partnership approaches are clearly supported by international institutions and experts; as a necessary condition for creating effective career guidance field. Therefore, in order to understand the nature and quality of disparities between all career guidance services, the issue of practitioners demands close scrutiny. Career guidance practitioners in Europe are extremely varied in terms of role, training and areas of competence. As Ronald Sultana explains (Sultana, 2004), differences are about the extent and nature of professional training required prior to entry, the range of competences its members have to master and use on-the-job, the overlap between their role and other roles, the progression pathways offered, the salaries it is able to command relative to other professions, and the status it enjoys among the community.

The two main questions are how they are staffed and how they are funded (Watts & Sultana, 2004). With regard to staffing, there are no strong occupational structures in the career guidance field. Career guidance practices are not professionalised in Europe and they are often assimilated into more established professions (teachers, psychologists, counsellor). Moreover, for many practitioners, guidance only makes up part of their professional activity, and they receive little appropriate training. In GOETE countries, only Finland, France (mixed model) and Slovenia have guidance specialists as a full time occupation. Nevertheless, in France and Slovenia, these practitioners are seen as snowed under with work, and their actions are described as inefficient.

These disparities can concern practitioners from the same country, as local and institutional variations also exist, especially between educational and employment guidance (McCarthy, 2001). As a consequence clearly defining and communicating the roles and functions of career practitioners is important in providing quality training and to also advocate more effectively for the profession (Niles, Engels & Lenz, 2009). These authors define three main challenges for the profession: (a) the need for public policies addressing career development; (b) the need for greater competency standardization, and (c) the need to create innovative training programs. On the subject of providing a career development structure for

guidance staff, the Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners developed in Canada through a long process of consultation between professional groups is of particular interest. Furthermore, the international standards developed by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance provide a useful reference point for such aims.

As regards funding, policy options include devolving funding either to local authorities, as part of decentralisation, or to individual educational institutions. The obvious consequence is a production of wide variation in their level and quality (Watts & Sultana, 2004).

Career Guidance in Eight European Countries

The comparative teacher training report in the eight GOETE countries (Cramer et al 2012), examines how specific dimensions of education are covered in teacher training. One dimension looks at how teacher training provides future teachers with knowledge about "school career planning advice and decisions related to educational transitions and trajectories, vocational guidance and occupational orientation of students in school". The Report shows disparities between countries. Only one country covered this issue in depth in teacher training (The Netherlands); most countries covered it weakly (Germany, Finland, France, the United Kingdom and Italy) and two countries were seen as not covering this issue at all (Slovenia and Poland).

Table 1. *Guidance issues in teacher training in eight European countries*

	Guidance issue in teacher training	Degree of Differentiation (tracking)
Germany	Weakly	High
Slovenia	Not at all	Low
The Netherlands	Strongly	High
Finland	Weakly	Low
France	Weakly	Low

United Kingdom	Weakly	Middle
Italy	Weakly	Low
Poland	Not at all	Low

GOETE countries also have a varied degree of differentiation or tracking (high, middle, low). Countries are distinguished according to the extent to which educational trajectories are structured by being hierarchically segmented or comprehensive tracks from primary to the end of lower secondary levels. Differentiation is high in Germany and in the Netherlands, middle in the UK and low in Finland, France, Italy, Poland and Slovenia. A high level of differentiation most likely requires a high level of career guidance or counselling, as students have to make educational choices at an early age (Germany & the Netherlands). Nevertheless, by comparing the "guidance issue in teacher training" and the "degree of differentiation", no such relation appears. Still, even though the issue is not covered in teacher training, the issue may be provided through other providers or sources as table 2 illustrates.

Table 2. *Actors and roles in career guidance*

Countries	Actors	Roles and training
Germany	Counselling teachers	Teachers with extra training in educational science and psychology. Provide guidance and advice when learning or behavioural difficulties
Slovenia	Counselling service	Individual or a team of counselling and guidance specialists (psychologists, pedagogists, social workers): provides guidance and support for students, parents and teachers.
The Netherlands	Class teacher	Not much theoretical knowledge rather learnt in their practical in-service periods at school.
Finland	Guidance counsellors	A separate trained group of teachers giving advices related to educational transitions and occupational orientation.
France	Guidance counsellors	Specific training mainly in psychology
	Class teacher	Responsible for guidance in a class, receives no specific theoretical training.
United Kingdom	Personal advisers	Not located within schools provided by the local education authority, local council or the health service by full- time Personal Advisers who work with a range of young people's problems, not only career guidance. This holistic approach takes place in England and Northern Ireland. They have a postgraduate qualification in career guidance or its equivalent. In Scotland, there is a mix between guidance teachers and external counsellors.
Italy	Counselling teacher	An appointed teacher who is not a specialist on career guidance and has to follow guidance projects and activities.

Poland	Psycho-educational counselling centres	Career counselling is mainly conducted in separate institutions.

Indeed, when focusing on how guidance is organised within schools, three different models emerged (i) the "class teacher" or the integrated model; (ii) more specialized forms of "school specialised practitioners"; and (iii) "out-of-school specialised practitioners". The more specialized forms of organisation partly explain why career guidance is covered weakly in teacher training in countries such as Finland, Slovenia, Italy, and the UK, The Netherlands have a "class teacher" model and career guidance is covered in considerable depth in teacher training. By way of contrast, in France and Germany, future teachers have a low level of coverage of these issues in their training as well as having a "class teacher" model. There is no systematic relation between training and the roles of practitioners in career guidance, which implies a varied quality of career guidance systems.

Table 3. *Organizational forms in eight European countries*

Model	Countries	Organisation
Class teacher	France (mixed) – the Netherlands – Germany - Italy	A teacher is responsible for guidance in addition to subjects teaching
School specialised practitioners	Slovenia – Finland – France (mixed)	Within the school a professional with dedicated training is in charge of guidance and counselling
Out-of-school specialised practitioners	United kingdom	Outside the school a professional with dedicated training is in charge of guidance and counselling

Traditionally, career guidance in schools has been viewed largely as a personal service provided at key decision points, and a support to the curriculum rather than part of it. It has mainly been delivered through personal interviews, and sometimes supported by psychometric testing. This has made it expensive to provide to large numbers and has limited

its availability. Personal career guidance services in schools have commonly suffered from further constraints. The focus has tended to be on educational decision making, often with little attention to the occupational and longer-term career choices that flow from particular educational pathways. In particular, where career guidance services are wholly school-based, links with the labour market can be weak. In recent years there has been a trend for career guidance based upon personal interviews to be supplemented with a curriculum-based approach. An emphasis upon lifelong learning and sustained employability greatly enhances the case for such an approach. As underlined in the Table 5.4 the degree of integration of career guidance into the curriculum reveals how GOETE countries are moving forward in this direction.

Table 4. *Degree of integration into curricula in eight European countries*

	Degree of integration into curricula
Germany	Middle Schools incorporate (learning about the world of work) into the curriculum: either in specific subjects such as technology; or more broadly across the curriculum. It is often in the last two years of compulsory school, but may start much earlier.
Slovenia	Middle The social structure of society is regarded an important issue in the curriculum, but do not have strong relation to teaching practice.
The Netherlands	Highly Orientation towards learning and working" is included in the upper forms of all general subjects, and "orientation towards the sector" in all vocational subjects, within revocational education. Within general education "orientation on continued education" is an optional component within the so-called "free space" periods.
Finland	Highly Career education is compulsory in grades 7-9, and new curriculum guidelines require it to be included in the full basic education. Two hours per week of lessons are provided in grades 7-9, and one hour per week in the optional tenth grade and in upper secondary education. Vocational school students receive 1.5 weeks of career guidance and counselling.
France	Weak The new "referential of personal competencies" introduced into curriculum is a first step of integration. The contents are defined at the national level but how to use it is still unclear. Integration of guidance into curricula remains very dependent on individual initiative from teachers.

United Kingdom	Middle
	Since 1997 career education has been a mandatory part of the national curriculum in England for the 14-16 year-old age group, although its extent and content have not been specified and schools have adopted widely differing approaches.
Italy	Weak
	Integration of guidance into the curricula remains very dependent on individual initiative from teachers.
Poland	Weak

As Table 5.4 illustrates, most countries now include programmes of career education within the curriculum. Nevertheless, these vary in content and intensity. Some (in Germany, for example) focus mainly on understanding the world of work and its demands. Most, however, also include attention to self-awareness and the development of skills for making decisions (Finland, partly France) and managing transitions. In other countries the extent and content of guidance has not been nationally specified, and there is a broad variety between schools or territories.

The context of career guidance - decision-making processes in transitions among young people

A lot of research focuses on factors influencing the decision-making process of young people. GOETE is particularly interested in educational trajectories and how students and families make choices depending on a range of contextual elements. Although the focus is on decisions related to education and training, these decisions are not taken in isolation from other areas of young people's lives. These crucial decision-making processes are further analysed in the thematic report on Education and Lifecourse. In this chapter the decision-making processes are analysed in a career guidance context, on one hand scrutinizing the relationship to the societal structures and, on the other hand on how this support is organized in school. We start first by drawing attention to the comprehensive picture in the comparative reports on local case studies, and continue to further analyse the decision-making processes in particular countries that represent comprehensive and differentiated education systems.

Drawing on the report on the ethnographic studies in eight European countries and 24 schools (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012b), it was shown that educational transitions from lower secondary to upper secondary schools are considered decisive in all the researched cases as they considerably shape the future life courses of students. School performance in lower secondary schools has a big influence on the enrolment to upper secondary level. Safeguarding transitions to the next educational level are considered the most important task of schools. A major topic among the different actors is the crucial times for decisions: are young students, at the end of the lower secondary level, too young to make decision about their future? Experts, teachers, parents,, and sometimes even students themselves, emphasized that at the end of lower secondary school they are still too young to make informed decisions about their life.

Pathways to the future are not clear to students, causing stress and uncertainty amongst some students. It is important to highlight that uncertainties and confusion were particularly endemic in countries where students need to make educational and occupational choices at a young age (Germany and The Netherlands) (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012). It was interesting that even though actors in general had a cautious orientation towards early decision-making, talking about the future did not seem to worry students, even though they were well aware of the difficulties young people had to face in the labour market. On the contrary, teachers and experts seemed to be more pessimistic about students' future plans than students and parents. Young people, then, seem to respond to modern contradictions with a pragmatic and optimistic attitude. Fears are almost exclusively related to difficulties finding employment.

Most research reviewed has found that the families (and particularly parents) influence the decision making of pupils and career development process. As Turner & Lapan (2002) conclude in their paper, parents act as "value socializers" (Austin, 1984) shaping their children's perceptions of the appropriateness of occupational-related decisions. Parents are also "expectancy socializers" (Eccles 1994), who greatly influence their children's self-perceptions of being academically and vocationally competent. They complete the picture by referring to Young (1994), who describes parents as the primary providers of encouragement for their teenagers to reach vocational goals through both the modelling of career-related, goal-related behaviour, and by actively providing career-related learning experiences.

Contrary to the assumption of many educators, research on family and community connections with schools has revealed that parents are interested in their children's academic success regardless of ethnicity, culture, or economic status, although they may not know how

to help their children or may well feel incapable of assisting them (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

In the cases studied, many countries relate to common issues in society, such as the increased need for of higher qualifications, rapid changes in society, and an emphasis on individualistic choices and careers. One parent from Finland expressed these concerns well:

> "*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.*"
> (Salovaara et al 2012)

When it comes to decision-making in transitions, the comparative report on case studies in school (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012) found one dominant and common discourse amongst parents in all the countries studied: *children must choose by themselves*. In Germany parents point out that they do not want to interfere in their child's decision. Parental statements such as *he has to want it* or *she has to stand on her own feet* document their will not to interfere, and thus also highlights a demand for self-realization. Parents counsel their children on which jobs are realistic in relation to their educational performance as well as in terms of employment opportunities (salary, working conditions). For example: *Well, he doesn't have a wide range of future plans, now he has to take, what he can get"*. Thus, parents are also contributing to the cooling-out of these young people (see life course).

In France a general consensus is to let the children choose their own school career as this is understood as a condition for successful education: *I don't influence my children, I let them choose because it's not a good thing to… all the parents who influenced their children, they didn't succeed, even in their family life*. Nevertheless, there are some parents who are more directive; such parents are usually from middle and upper class families. In Finland, the main parental wish is that their child will find his or her own path. For example*: "I cannot tell him: your place is there and that is your profession"*. The parents' main role is to guide and support their children in finding their own path. Parents interfere if they estimate that the educational path is not well reflected. In this case, the parent might discuss this issue with the student and the guidance counsellor, and try to change their plan. (cf Jahnich 2012)

Besides the influence of families, and especially parents, in the decision making of pupils, *peers* are often seen as an important source. Indeed informal discussions with peers and imitating processes between peers can partly influence a student's trajectory.

Evidence about the influence of *ethnicity* on decision-making is fairly weak. Ethnic minorities are under-represented in the samples of most of the large longitudinal surveys, so it is difficult to effectively explore large-scale patterns and associations. In Finland, for instance, teachers seldom talked about migrant students explicitly, but when asked about it, they identify the problem as merely a cultural problem of isolation. An internal expert in school describes the situation as such:

> Well, I do 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 (Salovaara et al 2012)

The issue of *gender* is also an influencing factor in career building. The large gap between the sexes in the numbers who stayed on at school at 16 (with males in the majority) has almost closed since the 1970s, and more recent studies indicate that girls are slightly more likely than boys to actually stay on in full-time education at age 16 (though far fewer females than males opt for work-based learning). Some recent studies suggest gender divisions in subject preferences – particularly a clear delineation between sciences and arts – may have decreased over time (or at least been concealed by changing subject boundaries under the National Curriculum) (Wright, 2005). In the context of guidance and counselling, gender equality has not been a big issue, although there are some exceptions, such as the project "Youth, gender and career" conducted in Denmark (2004).

A number of studies reveal that *academic attainment* is an important influence on decision-making and that destinations at 16 are significantly influenced by academic attainment. Those with the highest levels of educational attainment were most likely to remain in full-time education after 16. In his review of some of the literature, Wright (2005) specifies that once other factors are controlled for, academic attainment is the most significant factor affecting student's decisions to stay on or to leave at age 16.

Blenkinsop et al (2006) studied the *interaction* between structural contexts and young people's decision-making processes. The research design was primarily qualitative, involving

detailed one-to-one interviews with young people, teachers and parents in England. Year 9 and 11 pupils were surveyed, exploring the choices they were making at that time. Pupils were revisited after six months so that they could reflect on the decisions they had made at the end of the previous key stage. As a general and interesting finding, the study underlines that when students felt supported in decision making by the school, they were more influenced by school factors (such as individual talks with teachers, and the careers education and guidance provision) and were less reliant on external factors, such as friends and family. Moreover, young people made decisions in different ways. The quality of their decisions seemed to vary according to context (including the curriculum on offer, and support mechanisms in place to support them in decision making), the ways in which information and advice was being provided to them, and their own individual approach to and skills of decision- making. Consequently, the quality of the support provided to students on career guidance has an influence on their decision making process.

Wright (2005) conducted research on an important aspect of 14-19 transitions: the decisions individuals make, the process of decision-making, and the outcomes of these decisions. The author focuses on the quality and the *objectivity of teacher advice*. There is strong evidence that many schools provide slanted and partial evidence on post-16 options. It is particularly true in systems where the funding of schools is related to recruitment of students (the UK, Poland) as practitioners might be tempted to serve the institutions' interests rather than the student's interests.

From the GOETE study, it may be concluded that several people are regarded as important in the decision-making process for further education and employment, though this varies according to different circumstances. The most important person in the decision-making process seems to be the student him/herself. Parents might influence, support or reject ideas the student has, but parents seem to want students to make their own decision. The student reflects together with peers about different alternatives, and friends applying to the same school can be a contributory factor in decisions.

The guidance counsellor in Finland seemed to be the most important person in school and has an informative role; telling the student about his or her options, but from the premise and interests of the student. Here it seems to be of great importance that the guidance counsellor is devoted and competent.

Guidance in key decision points as a necessary but insufficient support in transition

As explained above, career guidance has traditionally been viewed as a personal service consisting in providing advice at key decision points. It has been considered a support to the curriculum rather than a part of it. This type of guidance is delivered through personal interviews in face-to-face meetings. These interviews mainly focus on educational choices with little attention to occupational and tong-term career choices. In the GOETE countries counselling mainly deals with immediate educational choices at key decision points – that this is commonly transition towards upper secondary level or tertiary education. The first support provided through guidance is a technical short-term perspective; to inform the student about the application process so as to ensure all students have a place in the next level. Most of examples in the cases studies show that it is really helpful. For instance, in the case of Rami in Finland:

> He discussed his plans with the guidance counsellor as well as his brother, father and mother. The guidance counsellor helped Rami in the application process. Rami explains that the guidance counsellor supported a lot, without the guidance counsellor he probably wouldn't be studying in the current school (Salovaara et al 2012).

In a different way, the case of Lucy in Germany shows how guidance professionals do their best so as not leave a student without any solutions.

> Lucy refers to a teacher who is coordinator and counselling teacher responsible for transitions and projects of vocational orientation. […]Lucy sent out several applications in all types of working fields but did not receive any response at all, except for a few rejections. But then one day she received a call from her teacher telling her that a large international firm the school has a cooperation with wanted to offer an apprentice position.

On the contrary, a lack of support related to the application process can have bad consequences. The case of Lila in France underlines how difficult it could be to cope with the application process without a professional:

> She encountered big problems in her guidance which made her suffer and worry. These are good examples of the impact of misinformation for disadvantaged families. She did not understand procedures and strategies and had to attend a school by default. It seems rather

unfair that no one in the educational staff took her wishes seriously. If it had been the case, she would have made more realistic wishes (Jahnisch et al 2012).

In some cases students and families considered that professionals did not provide relevant support and decided to go through the application process on their own. As all families do not have the same financial, cultural and social resources, it consequently introduces inequality into the students' trajectories. If we compare Henna's (Finland) to Lila's case (France), Henna is in a more advantaged position as she has educated and supportive parents, with hobbies and an unproblematic school entrance in the first transition phase. By way of contrast, Lila is from a disadvantaged background, is used to bad marks, and does not like school. Nevertheless, she also has a supportive mother, however her mother did not understand the application process and decided to trust the guidance advice delivered by the school to her daughter. As a consequence, Henna and her family reacted and argued with the guidance counsellor at the very beginning of the orientation process to obtain what they wanted, whereas Lila adopted a passive position.

The local cases conducted in the Netherlands also reveal a weakness in the guidance process.

> Underrating at the entry to further education is more often mentioned by students, S-6 for example who complained about a wrong school advice, and S-8 was not the only one who regretted insufficient advice which subjects to choose – in his case he missed scientific subjects to enter senior general. It is striking that not only Leonie and many other students as well are not content with career guidance. Despite good intentions of coaches, students miss more individual guidance whereas deans hold the opinion that they must find the right information themselves and only give general advice and information ("you must find out everything yourself" – S-6). They miss more concrete experiences with the world of work (S-2). For students who know already what vocation or profession they aim at, insufficient guidance is not a big problem but for those who don't know yet what to choose, it is. Leonie holds a position in between these extremes: she does want to do something creative – but what precisely could that be, what alternatives does she have? That is less clear and she had to try several options to find out (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012 a).

These are examples of guidance processes which students encounter in all GOETE countries. Of course, these difficulties varied in nature and intensity. In particular, where career guidance services are wholly school-based, links with the labour market are weak (France, Italy, Slovenia, Poland). Such problems are also worse if guidance counsellors have to deal

with personal and social guidance as well as educational and vocational guidance. Indeed, the frontier between both types of guidance in often blurred. Guidance processes may, however, be strengthened by the personal predilections and the training of the guidance counsellors. In France, Slovenia and Germany, the counsellors received training oriented towards psychology which could encourage personal guidance rather than solely educational or occupational guidance. As they have to fulfil several missions in a limited time, guidance services are also described as overloaded and not successful enough. For instance, in France a class teacher explains that he only has an hour per week allocated to "class life", where he has to discuss everyday schools problems with his class (related to behaviour, to homework) and guidance. As managing everyday life at school requires a lot of time, he considers he has almost no time for guidance. Moreover, class teachers do not have, or have an insufficient, reduction of teaching hours so as to be able to develop real guidance (Italy, France). In other countries the guidance counsellors or teachers responsible for guidance did not receive specific training (the Netherlands, France, Italy). Both are restricted in their guidance roles to deliver career information and develop career competencies by overloaded work demands and a lack of specific training

An additional problem with school-based guidance services (model of the class teacher or of the guidance service within school) is that they might be under pressure to place the institutional needs of their school before the needs of students. In countries where school funding is subject to the recruitment of students (The Netherlands, UK and Poland), guidance services could provide partial advice which is more in the interest of the schools than in the interests of the student. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is rather complicated to study as they are mostly not visible, and operate in the unofficial domain.

Therefore, to avoid this biased treatment, some countries decided to develop guidance services outside of schools. In the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland) Connexions provide services from agencies based outside of the school. These services are provided by the local education authority, local council, or the health service, by full-time Personal Advisers who work with a range of young people's problems, not only career guidance. These services provide a holistic approach.

Career guidance in a lifelong perspective: integration into the curriculum

In recent years there has been a trend to develop a curriculum-based approach to career guidance. As previously explained, the appraisal of a lifelong learning perspective so as to sustain employability for all requires a more holistic approach. Nevertheless, in all GOETE countries, these approaches widely varied in intensity, and the two models (career guidance as a personal service and curriculum-based approach) often coexist. Within the curriculum-based model two different types can be found in GOETE countries: on the one hand career guidance is included within the curriculum and, on the other hand, it is organised to help work on the development of skills for making decisions and managing transitions. Some countries include programmes of career guidance within the curriculum but keep them as separate programmes. These programmes are increasingly becoming mandatory in most of GOETE project countries (mostly in Germany, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK).

In Germany, curricula is the responsibility of the *Länder* and their respective ministries. Around the year 2004, as a reaction to the PISA-shock, much of the curricula was reformed shifting, from an input-based data (describing teaching contents) to an output-based system of educational standards (what students should be able to know and to do, skills). For instance, *arbeitlehre* focuses on understanding the world of work and its demands either in specific subjects, such as technology, or more broadly across the curriculum. It is often taught in the last two years of compulsory school, although it can start much earlier.

The Netherlands has also developed this kind of programme within the curricula. Schools have the freedom to develop their own curriculum within the framework of the core objectives. Therefore some career guidance programmes, for instance, "Orientation towards learning and working" is included in the upper forms of all general subjects and "orientation towards the sector" in all vocational subjects within prevocational education. Within general education "orientation on continued education" is an optional component within the so-called "free space" periods.

The second model, based on helping students to develop skills for making decisions and managing transitions, is clearly more difficult to identify as it is an holistic approach where career guidance skills (autonomy, self-esteem, effective research of information) are infused within all subjects in the curriculum. No national directive can be found, and this kind of pedagogical approach often depends on school or teacher initiatives. Nevertheless, some clues exist in the local case studies. In France teachers are free to develop their own pedagogy – within the framework of the national core objectives - and some teachers (often the youngest teachers) use a skills approach in their class.

Hence career programmes vary in their structure, depending on how much they can integrate into the curriculum. Furthermore, in some countries (the UK, France, Italy) several patterns can be seen due to the autonomy that schools (and teachers) are given to decide which model to use. In England, since 1997, career education has been a mandatory part of the national curriculum in England for the 14-16 year-old, although its extent and content has not been specified, and schools have adopted widely differing approaches. In Italy, besides the compulsory part called *Consiglio orientativo* (Guidance suggestion), the Ministry concerned with education also suggests other actions, such as starting guidance in primary schools or focusing on pupils' emerging talents. However, authority and control over implementation largely is given to schools to exercise their autonomy.

Another difference between all educational systems concerns the grade in which career guidance should or is located. Countries have different degrees of tracking (see general overview in introduction) and key point transitions are not located at the same grades. Nevertheless, the most common choice is to concentrate career education in lower secondary education in order to prepare for transitions towards upper secondary education and tertiary education. Only one country involved in GOETE study extends career education into upper secondary education, and that is Finland.

Altogether, the comparative report on the eight countries involved in the GOETE study concludes that there is a conspicuous commonality in the governance of career coaching. In none of these countries, however, does career coaching accompany the *whole* school career of a child, begining with entrance to primary school and ending at the completion of compulsory schooling (or even later). It seems that the transition from primary to secondary school is perceived by institutional, as well as person actors (teachers, parents, pupils/students), as something which does not need coaching. Instead, teacher advice and test results will do. Yet, there is growing insight of some school systems that it is precisely the first transition which is crucial for the further school career of a student, and therefore needs close coaching. This is certainly the case in countries with selective systems, although it also pertains to comprehensive systems. Few pedagogical actors – including those involved in teacher training – pay attention to both transitions and regard them as belonging to *one* school career.

Conclusions

We started by referring to Watt's study that concluded that career guidance has an important role to play in strategies to address social exclusion, but that this should be secondary to its main role which is in supporting individual progression and development within the societal structures to which inclusion in being sought. Career guidance was regarded as an essential building block in young people's transitions, so as to give information and support. Still, the most important element in transitions is the more comprehensive support of individual progression.

Career guidance practices are not specific professional categories in Europe and they are often assimilated into more established professions, such as teachers, psychologists, and counsellors. Furthermore, many practitioners do guidance for only part of their time and receive little appropriate training. In GOETE countries, only Finland, France (mixed model) and Slovenia have guidance specialists as a full time occupation. Yet teacher training provides future teachers with insufficient knowledge about "school career planning advice and decisions related to educational transitions and trajectories vocational guidance and occupational orientation of students in school". Indeed, only one country strongly covered this issue in teacher training and that was the Netherlands. However, an emphasis on lifelong learning and sustained employability has greatly enhanced the integration of career guidance into the curriculum.

When scrutinizing how career guidance structures and processes are organized in schools, three different models emerged; 1) the "class teacher" or the integrated model, 2) the more specialized form of "school specialised practitioners" and 3) the "out-of-school specialised practitioners". The more specialized forms of organisation partly explain why career guidance is weakly covered in teacher training in countries such as Finland, Slovenia, Italy, and the UK. There is no systematic relation between training and the roles of practitioners in career guidance which implies a varied quality of career guidance systems.

When it comes to decision-making in transitions the comparative report on case studies in school (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012b) found one prevailing and common discourse among parents in all the studied countries and that is: *children must choose by themselves.* However, pathways to the future are not that clear to students, and may cause stress and uncertainty. The local case studies (du Bois-Reymond et al 2012b) found that such uncertainties and confusions were particularly endemic in countries where students need to make educational and occupational choices at a young age (Germany and The Netherlands). Interestingly though, talking about the future seemed not to worry students, even though they were aware of the difficulties young people nowadays face in the labour market. Young

people seem to respond to modern contradictions with a pragmatic and optimistic attitude. Their fears were almost exclusively related to difficulties finding employment.

Career guidance provides advice at key decision points in young people's transitions from school. It has been considered a support to the curriculum rather than a part of it. This type of guidance is delivered through personal interviews in face-to-face meetings. Career guidance may offer important support to young people in school, but these experiences vary between the countries. In all countries you may find difficulties within these encounters as well as strengths, showing that it is important to contextualise these. Still, experiences are also related to the different roles career guidance play in schools and how one looks at these crucial key points. The most common choice is to concentrate career guidance in lower secondary education to prepare the transitions towards upper secondary education and tertiary education. Only one country involved in GOETE extends career education into upper secondary education, and that is Finland. However, what would be needed is to see career guidance in a lifelong perspective (and we think our case examples illustrate this well) and thus guidance accompanies the whole school career of a child, to begin at the first year of primary school.

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Chapter 6

Co-operation between schools and parents: An analysis of the problems of recognition

Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Silvia Demozzi and Felicitas Boron

Introduction

Parental co-operation in education first gained attention during the 1960s with intervention programs, such as Head Start and Follow Through, which were implemented to improve the position of economically-disadvantaged children (Berger, 1991; Meyers, 2008). The need for parental cooperation was also stimulated by concerns over the relatively poor academic achievement and high drop-out rates amongst migrant children. Various studies have been conducted in North America, Australasia, and around Europe to explore the impact of parental involvement in children's schooling (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Lareau, 1987).

The outcomes of these studies highlight the significance of parental engagement and home-school co-operation on children's educational success (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). For instance, parental involvement in education appears to be beneficial for the cognitive development of children; it also has a positive effect on a child's social functioning as it improves academic motivation, social skills and relations among students and between students and teachers (Smit et al., 2007). Parental participation is considered to be one of the indicators for effective schools (Epstein, 2001).

Consistent with the increased awareness of the central role of parents in their children's education, several (Western) governments have adopted legislation and policies to improve school-family relationships and to empower parents to participate in school. Nevertheless, the results of such policies are ambiguous (Epstein, 2005); they point to large variations in the ways that schools address the issue of parental cooperation. There are also critics who question the underlying assumptions of causality, and the attribution of so much importance to parental involvement at the expense of other kinds of educational concerns to do with schools themselves (Crosnoe, 2009). Some also argue that the link between parental

involvement and children's success in school is not necessarily linear, as multiple factors play a role in mediating the effect on school outcomes (Auerbach & Collier, 2012).

The purpose of this chapter is to present the GOETE project findings from the case studies that were concerned with understanding the nature of parental cooperation with schools. It focuses on the forms, dimensions, and challenges of such cooperation, and presents the findings from the perspectives of various actors, including teachers, experts and parents. The specific questions addressed in this chapter include the following:

1) How is the cooperation between schools and parents organized in different countries?

 2) What are the expectations of teachers from parents and vice versa?

 3) What are the main challenges and problems that are discussed by the actors?

This chapter will first overview the literature on the importance of parental involvement and challenges in this area, particularly for families with a migrant background. Then it will present the empirical findings and discuss their implications. The chapter closely relates to the chapter on formal support, as cooperation between schools and parents is an important determining factor in providing effective formal support. Such cooperation can also be seen as a form of formal support offered to students.

The significance of parental involvement

Four types of parental involvement are distinguished within the literature: home-based, school-based, decision-making, and advocacy. The first two types refer to the place of parental engagement in education, whilst decision-making and advocacy relate to the nature of parents having sufficient power 'having a voice' in their child's schooling (Ozaki & Koshino, 2008). Parental involvement at school is considered important by various educational actors as it offers a unique opportunity for parents to be involved in their children's education with important implications for their children's academic, behavioural and development outcomes (Turney & Kao, 2009; Domina, 2005). According to some studies students achieve better, obtain higher grades and test scores, and are less likely to drop out of school, when their parents are engaged in their education by, for example, offering stimulation at home, in meeting with teachers, or participating in activities organized at school (Alexander et al., 2007; Christenson, 2004; Epstein, 2001). These patterns differ according to

the age of the child, their school level, and social and academic skills. Yet, the association between parental engagement and academic success is found to be stronger amongst at-risk groups of students (Hill, 2001).

Parental involvement in education also creates advantages other than higher academic achievement for both schools and society as a whole. Various studies refer to parental involvement as a form of social capital, comprising networks and social structures that generate benefits for members (Turney & Kao, 2009). Domina (2005) suggests that while it remains unclear if, and how, parental involvement improves school outcomes, it does significantly affect behavioural outcomes. By placing too much emphasis on the cognitive effects of parental involvement researchers discount the different ways through which parental involvement plays a role in socializing children's behaviour in education. For example, parental involvement creates social control through the relationships that are constructed with other parents, teachers and children's classmates. Such a network makes it easier to supervise and correct children's behaviour.

Similarly, a social network can serve as a source of information for parents to learn about the educational system, whether their children have problems at school, and how these can be solved (Domina, 2005). In a study conducted in the Netherlands, Geel and Vedder (2009) explored the so called 'immigrant paradox' to explain how strong family obligations and school adjustment can have positive behavioural outcomes amongst children, despite their disadvantaged backgrounds. The study shows how parental involvement can have a positive impact on children's self- esteem, mediate psychological problems, and limit drop-out rates and delinquent behaviour, as children are better adapted to the school system and tend to value education more.

Barriers to parental participation

Over the years different scholars have identified a range of distinct barriers to parental involvement, with specific attention given to migrant and refugee families. Such barriers often intensify the already disadvantaged position of migrant children. In a study in the USA (Turney & Kao, 2009), migrant parents reported having more barriers to participation at school compared to native-born parents, and were subsequently less likely and less willing to get involved in activities at their children's school. The years of stay in the country and language proficiency in English were positively associated with involvement at school. Low level of participation amongst migrant parents is deemed to be alarming since research often

points to the importance of parental involvement in building school-specific social capital which in turn has a positive impact on academic achievement and behavioural outcomes. Teachers might also interpret the low levels of parental involvement at school as an indication of a lack of parental interest or care about their children's educational outcomes.

Coleman (1988) indicates three components in family engagement; economic, human and social capital. First, economic status has an impact on parental involvement in school (see also Turney & Kao, 2009). Low economic status is often found to be lower among migrant families than among native populations (Geel & Vedder, 2009), which leaves migrant families with fewer resources, opportunities and time to be involved in their children's education. Second, human capital refers to the way parents can make use of their knowledge resources to create a stimulating learning environment for their children. Finally, social capital, as explained earlier, enables members of a social network to have access to information and resources to support their child/ren in school. In other studies it is suggested that children from a low economic background have less access to cultural resources (e.g. theatre and museums) that stimulate academic success and in affect disadvantages both parents and children to communicate with teachers on an equal level (Bourdieu, 1998; Lareau, 1987).

Education should be an instrument for migrant children to proceed beyond their parents' educational and economic status. In reality, migrant children are often over-represented in lower educational levels, such as in the Netherlands and Germany (Geel & Vedder, 2009). They also have higher drop-out rates and show poorer socio-emotional functioning and health. Several reasons have been provided to explain the poor functioning of some migrant children in Western countries, such as a low provision of language (of the resident country), school characteristics, and a low educational level of parents. Some of these issues will be explained hereafter, with specific attention for the implications of these barriers for the efficacy of school initiatives to promote parental cooperation.

Language differences

The majority of the studies on parental cooperation in education point to insufficient proficiency of the first spoken language among migrant families as one of the main barriers (Auerbach & Collier, 2012; Matuszny et al., 2007; Ozaki & Koshino, 2008; Turney and Kao, 2009). Because some migrant parents do not master the language of the host country, teachers are unable to communicate effectively with them about their child's schooling. It is important to realize that not all parents are equally equipped to participate at school. Some adults,

particularly migrant families, might have had little experience with formal education themselves. Therefore, they may lack the confidence to get involved, may not be able to understand how the education system works, or indeed what role they might play within their child's education, or what is expected from them. The school has the responsibility to find proper ways to interact with parents and overcome language barriers in order to inform them about the school structure.

However, in some cases it is not just a difference in the spoken mother tongue that causes problems for parental involvement. Teachers tend to speak a language that is associated much more with middle class norms which parents from lower economic/educational backgrounds do not feel comfortable with, or do not always fully comprehend (Dahlstedt, 2008). For example, newsletters are written in words that some parents might not understand. Participants in a study among Korean immigrants in the USA expressed their frustration about their lack of knowledge of educational terms often used by teachers, such as 'curriculum', 'substitute teacher', 'Time-out' and so on (Sohn & Wang, 2006). Even after studying English for several years these parents still felt they were incapable of communicating with teachers about their child's education on an acceptable level.

The implications of language problems among migrants for school outcomes are not always straightforward. Some studies actually show that while migrant children adapt well to the new language, their health, academic achievements and aspirations actually tend to decline (De Haan, 2012). This might have something to do with the gap that is created between migrant children and the family, as children tend to grasp the new language quicker. As they do so, these children take on the role of translator and negotiator for their family, causing reversed roles and a 'power shift' in the household (Kugler & Price, 2009). Other studies show that when parents adopt the new language sufficiently it helps to stimulate parental involvement, which can in turn be a mediating factor for the school achievement of migrant children (Turney and Kao, 2009). Considering the advantages of effective school-parent interaction and communication, gradually more schools are taking on initiatives to provide language classes for parents, in which information on the school system is simultaneously dispersed.

Cultural differences

In some cases, parents' non-involvement in school stems from having a different approach to school-family relationships and their respective roles in education. For instance, within the context of the USA, McCollum (1996) suggests that educators tend to believe that parents should ideally have an 'interventionist' approach in their children's education, and should actively attend meetings, join activities, or help out with homework. Some migrant parents might also come from cultures which have a 'noninterventionist' approach. Accordingly, the proper role of a concerned parent would not be to intervene in the school's business or question what teachers or school management do at school. In some cases parental involvement is not even sought after in the education systems of their country of origin. Consequently, teachers might interpret it as lack of parental engagement and might feel disappointed and frustrated. Yet, such attitudes may seem perfectly natural and proper to migrant parents.

At the same time they may be supporting the education of their children in ways that are not so visible to educators at school. For instance, one common parental support is to raise the level of consciousness about the importance of education and the need to motivate their child to study hard and excel at school. Hence families may deeply care about their children's learning and academic success, and may actively support them, yet these parents may still appear detached. When teachers or principals express frustration about the 'detachment' of such parents it may be even more difficult for schools to build a constructive relationship with parents or to communicate effectively (Protheroe, 2006).

The way schools and teachers approach parental involvement can be essential to the effectiveness of school-parent programs or initiatives designed to improve parental participation in their child's education. Epstein (2001) explains that, even though it is commonly acknowledged that parental involvement in school is essential to the quality of education, disagreement exists as to how to translate these ideas into and policy and practice. Many educators still hold the view that parents should be involved with their children on their own account; otherwise they are 'bad careless parents'. In Korea, for instance, parents might have their own ideas about their child's education but will not easily discuss these with the teachers as this is often perceived as a sign of disrespect and an act of disrupting the harmony between the school and home (Sohn & Wang, 2006). In the same study, as well as in a study among Chinese immigrants in the USA (Ozaki & Koshino, 2008), both Korean and Chinese parents were less familiar with the idea of attending PTA meetings and volunteering activities (something highly valued in Western societies) as this is not practiced in their home country.

Nevertheless they do stimulate their child's learning at home. Thus, parents might be very supportive of their child's schooling yet this might be less visible and apparent to the school staff. When a teacher lacks consideration for these cultural differences and expresses frustration at a parent's assumed 'detachment' schools might miss an important opportunity to create meaningful relationships with parents (Protheroe, 2006).

Another approach is to prescribe parents with what they are expected to do, and expect the family to respond to this adequately. This so called 'School-to-home' approach is similarly doomed to failure, as it perceives parents as 'deficient' or 'empty vessels': uninterested, preoccupied and unskilled and in need for instruction (Auerbach & Collier, 2012). None of these approaches are helpful in improving parental involvement. Sholars advocate the need for a 'partnership' in School-Family programs, which recognizes and values the input of parents in constructing the school curriculum. Auerbach and Collier (2012) assert that: 'If parents are to improve parental involvement and engage in authentic partnerships, educators may need to broaden their goals for parent programs beyond narrow achievement and accountability goals, and incorporate intentional relationship building into parent outreach'. Furthermore, Waterman (2009) argues that the term 'parental involvement' is problematic as it assumes that the starting point lies with the family, and parents need the proper instruction to 'become involved'. Accordingly, terms that emphasize the collaborative element will be more acceptable to use in the discourse on parental participation in education.

Having outlined some of the approaches to parental cooperation and its challenges within the literature we will in the next sections present the GOETE findings. We will first explain how cooperation with parents is organized in various case study schools, and then discuss the main problems and challenges from the perspectives of teachers and parents. This will be followed by a closer look at the challenges of cooperation with migrant families, a group that appears to require special attention in this regard. The empirical section will also highlight the problems of recognition which appear to be central to the discussion.

The organization of parental cooperation in different case study schools

In all GOETE partner countries parental cooperation is first drawn through formal means such as individual meetings and conversations with parents and periodic parent-teacher meetings.

[10] Parents-teacher meetings are sometimes arranged paying attention to parents' time availability. In Stuttgart (DE), for example, meetings are organized on Saturdays to give working parents the possibility to take part in them. In all the schools who took part in the GOETE case studies, parent meetings are arranged specifically on matters concerning the transition phase concerning the last grade of lower secondary school. The schools arrange information giving meetings for all parents, and hold individual meetings for parents and students. In some countries a guidance counsellor is usually in charge of such school meetings. The guidance counsellor is also in charge of arranging visits to upper secondary schools for students and inviting different people from upper secondary schools to talk about different options.

At the school level, representatives of students' parents from each class cooperate in parents' councils with school staff. It depends on the country's legal regulations regarding what powers those parents' councils have. Their competencies are mostly limited to an advisory function, or to decisions that only concern issues, such as the organization of school events. In some other cases, though still a minority, parents are encouraged to take part in decision making processes about curricula and planning. This is so in Finland, where parents may also participate in developing local curricula and planning their children's studies. The role of parents' associations – at least in the case study schools – appears not to be very influential in affecting school policies.

In the Netherlands every school is legally required to set up a 'participation council' that comprises an equal number of elected school staff and representatives of parents and students, but excludes members of the competent authority of the school. The participation must not only be informed about relevant policy-related and financial issues by the board but the latter cannot take important decisions without the assistance of the participation council: "The competent authorities need prior consent of the participation council for decisions affecting such matters as the adoption of or changes to the school's educational aims, the school plan, the curriculum, the special needs plan, the school rules or the complaints procedure, or the transfer of or merger of a school, etc. The participation council can advise on decisions relating to the adoption of or changes to the main points of the school's multi-year financial policy (and the timetable, in the case of secondary schools), decisions to enter into, terminate or significantly change a long-term partnership with another organization, the adoption of changes to policy on the school's organization, the appointment or dismissal of

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10   See also §*Parental support* in Chapter 3 and §*Formal support for pupils* in Chapter 4 of this report.

the head/deputy head, construction of new school buildings or major alterations to existing buildings, etc." (Altinyelken et al., 2010, p. 190)

In Finland, important communication between school and parents regarding their children happens through electronic platforms. These platforms hold secure information on the student's school attendance and grades, enabling a rapid connection to teachers when encountering problems at school. Most of the parents interviewed were satisfied with the system, but the system depends very much on the activity of the parents. The system is also vulnerable when parents do not have the adequate language skills to understand the information provided on the platforms. The risk seems to be that parents with inadequate language skills or inactive parents remain outside the information flow between the school and the home.

Expectations, problems and challenges

Teachers' view[11]

Parental involvement in education was considered to be particularly important by the teachers interviewed in GOETE. There is a general conviction that school staff and parents need to cooperate well, and parents should demonstrate commitment to actively take part in their children's education by visiting school regularly, contacting teachers, joining meetings organized at school, and following the educational performance of their children. Various teacher narratives indicated that parental engagement is central to the educational performance of students. There was a sense that teachers cannot educate children alone, and this cannot be done only at school. Hence on-going communication and cooperation were highlighted in many case study schools.

Despite, placing such high importance on parental cooperation there was also a strong sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction amongst teachers regarding parents. Many of them believed that parents fail to cooperate with school as several of them do not show up at meetings, or teachers encounter difficulties in contacting them or arranging individual meetings. In some of the case schools teachers explicitly note that parents were absent from school or that they were withdrawn. Inadequacies in cooperation with parents are perceived as problematic, but it was an even greater problem for students coming from disadvantaged

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11   See also the role of teachers' expectations in Chapter 2 of this Report.

backgrounds. For instance, some experts in Italy were concerned that participation is often poor, and that this becomes particularly problematic when it concerns students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some even argued that a lack of parental participation is a cause, or an explanatory factor, for disadvantage (Barberis et al. 2012, p. 97).

In the GOETE countries, it is mainly the passive attitude of parents that is criticized by teachers. The reason for the inadequacies of parental cooperation is perceived as parental unwillingness to actively seek contact with school, while taking part in official meetings plays an important role. This is interpreted as not supporting their children's education. In France, for example, teachers recognize that parents come to institutionalized events, such as parent teacher meetings, but do not commit on their own initiative. Hence it is their passivity that is criticized by the school staff and seen as proof of a parent's disinterest in their children's school career.

In almost all countries teachers believe that parents adopt a 'consumer-attitude'. A Finnish principal for instance notes that:

> If we analyse our relationship with parents, throughout the years school has become a service. School is a service that parents are using. Parents distrust teachers and tend to dump their family problems on school and teachers. Some parents have doubts about the teachers' pedagogical choices and think they can give advice to them (Aro et al., 2012, p. 39).

On the whole parents with low socio-economic backgrounds are those most likely to be blamed for adopting a consumer attitude and in being unsupportive. Although teachers are familiar with the possible every day challenges these families might encounter they still 'blame' them for being unwilling and uninterested in cooperating with school. Instead of questions about subjective relations that influence their attitude towards school and their possibility to cooperate with schools, teachers generalize the reasons for a lack of cooperation.

In some cases, the lack of parental knowledge about the nature of educational systems, and of their children's educational situation, is seen as the reason for dependent attitude, rather than their willingness to delegate. In the UK, for instance, the case study schools try to keep parents involved on their child's potential transition stages. Like other case study schools, parents' involvement is seen as very important for students' success in school. The majority of parents appear to be very supportive, to know about the educational plans of their child, and to be able to motivate them to work hard to improve on what they have done.

The challenge is located in the missing knowledge of parents on how the educational system functions. Because they often have completed their schooling at an early stage and are less educated themselves, they think they can't advise their children, hence they give this task to schools[12].

Moreover, a consumer mentality is also seen as promoted by the system itself. In Finland, for instance, teachers of the case study schools see this attitude as characterising middle-class families. Thus, decisional power has shifted to individuals and families in the sense that education is increasingly viewed as a service offered to parents and students.

With the demand for an active search for information, cooperation and support, schools ascribe responsibility to parents. They think they make all possible offers for cooperation and support to parents and it is their responsibility to come to school and use them. The idea that they could go to a family's home to make contact with parents is not mentioned. The ascription of self-responsibility can also be seen as 'blaming the victim'; a version of the discourse of individualization in which systemic failures are ignored whereas parents and students are made responsible for their own fate.

However, in Slovenia, teacher dissatisfaction is not about parental absence but about their over-involvement in school matters. Some Slovenian teachers complained about their own lack of authority and autonomy and the increasing interference of parents in teaching and evaluation. In various other settings teachers also believed that parents appeared to distrust them, particularly when it came to their advice on future transitions, a phenomenon that negatively influences cooperation between the parties. According to teachers parents from low socio-economic backgrounds or migrant backgrounds tend to over-estimate their children's capacities and have ambitious plans themselves for their children. Therefore, they do not agree with teacher advice.

Parents' view[13]

In contrast to the teachers and experts considerations, the GOETE case studies state a large number of activities and projects are based on a very fruitful cooperation with parents[14]. In nearly all of the countries, the parents interviewed neither perceived cooperation as bad and

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12   See also *Low educational background of parents* in Chapter 2 of this report.
13   See also *Parental expectations and valuing education* in Chapter 2 of this report.
14   See also Chapter 7 in "*Life Course*" Report.

nor wished for more contact with the school. However the form in which cooperation takes place seems to be important. In all case study schools most parents seem to prefer an individual pattern, for example individual talks and opportunities to discuss problems and questions that actually arise are preferred. Parents' associations are often not known or used.

In many cases parents do not feel they are recognized as competent educators of their own children. For instance, parents interviewed in Germany complain about the diminishing efforts of the school to stay in contact with them, and to give regular information about their child's situation. One mother commented that she is only informed when her child's problems had become severe. In the Dutch case study schools some parents noted similar scenarios; a father complained that he was informed too late about his child's problems so was not able to give support in time and his child failed.

The Finnish case studies show that parents tend to be very confident and trust schools and that they not only provide students with sufficient education but also offer adequate help if challenges arise. In these cases parents report to only supplement their child's support if they think the school fails to give enough information for successful transition. However even there, some parents are still interested in school meetings and would like more discussion and information regarding their child. Those parents who criticize the level of support provided in the school claim that it is based too much on discussion and think they do not need advice as much as concrete help, like financial provisions. Parents of the middle classes often refuse offers of support because they interpret it as blame for being a poor parent. They also think outsiders have no right to comment on their families' lives..

In some of the GOETE countries parents feel more responsible for supporting their children in coping with school and transition and claim that schools do not provide enough information to support their children adequately. Parents interviewed in Poland wished teachers would show more interest in students' vocational future and would bring this issue up in discussions with them so they would be able to assist their child in choosing the right path. Our case studies in France show parents are angry if they only find out after the fact that the choice of vocational course was unrealistic and thus caused their children's transition to fail. They wish instead to be informed about the computer and mark-based selection processes that are used before their child chooses vocational courses so they would have a chance to get onto one they would like.

Parents generally expect schools to look at their children in a 'holistic way', giving them educational competencies and care. Some parents in Italy suggested that teachers

adopted a more individualized (teaching) approach because sometimes they excessively categorize pupils who consequently lose their learning potential. Parents interviewed in the Netherlands want teachers to be more accessible to their child, and parents from the Finish case study schools claim that students with special educational needs especially miss individual support. In German case studies parents often show themselves as disappointed by schools for not fulfilling the task of giving their child individual support and accompanying them through their transition.

In contrast parents interviewed in Slovenia are worried about too much individualism of students: they criticize ability grouping because it enhances social differentiation instead of leading to a group spirit. This fear can be explained by the high level of competitiveness amongst students that is in turn fuelled by high unemployment rates among those with higher educational qualifications. The disappointment of parents if their expectations are not fulfilled causes frustration and a negative attitude which impairs cooperation. In the French and Italian case studies, there is also mistrust towards school from the lower socio-economic classes.

Cooperation between school and migrant families

Our case studies show that in all countries a special challenge seems to be cooperation between schools and families with migrant backgrounds[15]. The issue especially mentioned by teachers and other school staff is the language proficiency of parents[16]. Once a meeting between teachers and parents is set up, the teachers experience significant challenges in communicating effectively with parents.

In our case studies we recognized an all-or-nothing strategy concerning the language that is spoken in families. Especially in France and Germany, teachers and other school staff see a big problem in the use of a family's mother tongue at home because it is perceived that students would not then fluently learn the language of instruction. Parents are also blamed for not being willing to learn the language of the country of residence, and therefore imply an unwillingness to integrate into the society. In contrast to this, in the UK the mother tongue of students is seen as an important heritage which has to be supported. The UK case study schools even offered classes in different languages. While this does not mean that parents are not requested to learn the language of the country where they live, the recognition of the

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15   See also *Immigrant status* in Chapter 2 of this report.
16   See also *Language and discrimination* in Chapter 2 of this report.

native language of migrant parents can symbolise to parents that their cultural background is valued. Thus, the recognition of parents' native language supports a successful cooperation.

There are recurring issues on which teachers and parents from non-Western migrant families have differing views. These include dealing with women wearing veils, and with girls who are not allowed to attend school trips because parents do not believe that their children are in good hands with non-Islamic leaders. These are viewed as serious and very complex problems by teachers. In Bologna (IT), Roma families -who actually are not migrants but could be representative of this issue - do not appear to perceive education as a possible tool for promoting the social integration of their children. Many girls are pushed into marriage early and forced to drop out of school. Some parents experience school as a form of institutional violence that acts against their values, and one that does not give relevant support to people in their situation. They do not think that the school can provide fair opportunities for change. Some parents interviewed in France are even so disillusioned about school and the possibility to change things that they avoid any contact with the school and discussions with teachers, which they think will be useless.

Parents in a number of case studies also report discrimination because of their migrant background. In this way, 'othering' by teachers - which is defined as the generalizing and hierarchical speaking about others (Fenstermaker & West, 2002) - is a severe problem that parents have to cope with. For example a mother interviewed in the context of a German case study complained about the unjust and discriminatory treatment experienced when contacting the school with regard to the migrant background of herself and her son.

'Othering' can be seen as a (short-cut) problem analysis and a coping strategy for teachers to deal with social problems they have to face in every-day work with students and their parents. However, in the act of such generalizations, individual cases are ignored regarding their specificities as well as in their potentials. That is, not all migrant parents have an attitude and habits that hinder the successful education of their children. The interviews with parents we conducted in all countries show there are also those who search for contact with schools and those who are committed and want their children to achieve higher goals are not always unrealistic and too ambitious. Indeed they feel they are treated as scapegoats which are blamed for the problems facing migrant children. The mis-recognition of these efforts hinders good cooperation with migrant parents and the chance to profit from the very supportive attitude of many of them.

Social status, 'normalcy' and 'teaching versus caring'

A reason for the gap between schools and families can be seen in the differences between the socio-economic background of teachers and families. Analysis of teacher training, for instance, show that in the most countries student teachers come from middle-class families and often do not have a migrant background. Consequently they have few ideas about how families from lower socio-economic classes and/or migrant backgrounds live and the challenges they have to cope with. When teachers did come from lower socio-economic classes or have migrant backgrounds they were usually socialized into the dominant ethnic and social class culture, and therefore teacher training did not benefit from their origin.

That middle-class orientation of the school is also mirrored in the demand that parents should socialize their children in a 'normal' way, that is, into adopting middle-class norms. In the case of cooperation with families from other socio-economic background and/or migrant families, conflicts can result when their values and norms are ignored or even refused. School as an institution is recognized as important for the existence and the development of society and has a very powerful effect on defining what is 'normal'.

Another issue that leads to conflicts between schools and parents is the question of who is responsible for educating children in a broader sense, which means to impart the knowledge they need for being successful within transitions. Parents complain that schools do not relate enough relevant knowledge to their child. It is quite clear among GOETE countries that parents expect schools to impart the key competencies that are necessary for the successful transition and school success of their child. For example, the case studies conducted in Germany show that parents demand the school teaches their child punctuality and communication, and social competences like fairness and tolerance. In the Dutch case studies, parents demand that schools show students how to work independently and are, at first, responsible to react to any bad behaviour of the students. That demand is in conflict with traditional understandings of a division of tasks between school and parents.

In Germany the distinction between learning tasks and social-education tasks is mirrored in the distinction between the two terms of 'Bildung' and 'Erziehung': "'Bildung' results from the philosophy of enlightenment and refers to the individual process of appropriating the material, social and spiritual world. In the course of the institutionalization of public school, this understanding of education has become subject to bureaucratic and

functionalist curricula development and reduced to teaching. 'Erziehung' refers to the intergenerational interaction between adults and children, primarily in the family but also in kindergarten and increasingly in youth care services, whereby children internalize norms, learn the language and become 'educable'. Education in terms of 'Erziehung' thereby implies supporting and enabling individual learning processes. School normally expects that children are educated (Erziehung) in the family in order to concentrate on teaching. In Gymnasium and Realschule, this is still the dominant constellation while in Hauptschule teachers assume that (disadvantaged) families are overburdened by educational demands – as themselves." (Cramer et al., 2010, p.39). Hence, teachers often point out their 'original qualification' is as 'teachers' and not 'social workers'.

Teachers in the Netherlands, complain and regret that parents are inclined to leave much socializing education to the school while they, as teachers, cannot exercise their profession properly when there is no parental control over the behaviour of the children. If they feel they must take over too many tasks which belong to family education they get frustrated; after all their main task is teaching, not compensating for lacks in the home. Interviewed teachers from France refuse tasks that are not related to teaching by referring to their training that does not prepare them for tasks other than teaching. That contrast between the expectations of parents and the traditional understanding of teachers' role often causes conflicts between parents and teachers, which again lead to a reciprocal allocation of responsibilities and a blaming of each other hus hindering fruitful cooperation. In contrast to this Finnish schools have a much broader understanding of their tasks. The case study schools in Finland provide individual and comprehensive support to their students in cooperation with other experts. Here school takes on more tasks to educate students in the broader sense, and to make students as much as possible 'educable'. Parents interviewed in that country trust schools to impart the knowledge their children need.

While discussing how parents and teachers interact and to what extent and how they cooperate, one needs to also pay attention to broader societal and economic issues. Global financial crises, coupled with crises in several European Union countries in recent years, have contributed to increased unemployment rates, particularly among youth. Employment prospects are more uncertain for young people. Students and their parents are increasingly concerned and stressed about making the 'right' occupational choices and obtaining the best possible educational credentials. These challenges and stresses are also felt by teachers, both

directly or indirectly. As a result, both parties tend to blame each other when students perform poorly or when there are problems in their transitions.

Problems of recognition

Although GOETE findings indicate a high commitment from parents, including among migrant families, teachers blame parents for not being supportive. This might be caused by an understanding of support that differs from the way parents provide it to their children. For teachers active participation in official meetings is crucial and the absence of parents at such meetings is seen as an absence of support by parents. For parents, those meetings are often regarded as useless because they search for individual counselling and the exchange of information to support their children. Furthermore if migrant parents have difficulties understanding the language spoken in the country of their residence they often cannot use the school's' offers of cooperation if there is no translator present. Moreover time pressures can be a reason for parental absence: parents who work shifts may find it difficult to come to parent-teacher meetings even if they are held on Saturdays or in the evening. However this does not necessarily mean that they are not interested in their child's educational situation or that they do not search for information.

Furthermore, some teachers have the expectation that parents support their children themselves, for example by checking their homework. However, especially for uneducated parents, this may be a a task they feel they cannot fulfil. This does not mean that they leave their child alone: many organize help from other members of the family or pay private lessons even though they have less money, as mentioned by some families in Slovenia. Parents' apparent absence in their children's educational decision-making, especially considering those from more privileged backgrounds, can also be explained by their desire to give their children the possibility to choose on their own in order to assure that they find a profession they like.

In some contexts parents are blamed for living on social benefits and for being bad role models to their children. Their way of life gives the message that one can live without work. Parents who work hard and even go abroad to seek higher incomes are also criticized, as in the case of Poland, for failing to support their children. Both ways of living can be enforced by the living conditions of the family and may not be conceived as a 'wrong' way to live even though it contradicts a teachers' idea of a 'normal' way of live. On the contrary,

parents know about their disadvantaged position and want their children to have a better life than they had. Therefore they push them to work hard. Individual student surveys also show that they turn firstly to their parents if they have problems in school or outside of school. This speaks to the supportive function of parents that lies not only on a rational level of searching for practical support. Parents have their own view on the competences and needs of their child and must be recognized as a knowledgeable partner who, in cooperation with the school, is able to bring special competencies to how best to support their child. Although parents show all these efforts, they can still experience disrespect and discrimination, which is often the consequence of an unjustified generalization.

There is a contradiction between the constant blaming between schools and parents and the efforts that both sides show to support students as good as possible. The challenge in cooperation between schools and parents seems to be *the recognition* of the circumstances and the efforts both parties undertake. Both teachers and parents need to recognize the other side as a negotiating partner and acknowledge that the parties might have different views on students and on what they need.

Conclusion

For many decades, the involvement of parents in the education of their children, and particularly their cooperation with school, has been a topic of intense interest and debate. Our findings based on local case studies in 24 cities also point to the significance of this topic for various educational stakeholders involved in our study. Many have emphasized the importance of cooperation between teachers and parents for improving educational achievement of children, their school belonging and the quality of their educational experiences. Likewise, cooperation was deemed critical for making the 'right' decisions during important transition stages (please see also chapter 6 in the thematic report on 'Life course'). Good communication and cooperation between school and home was directly associated with improved knowledge and understanding on the part of teachers and other school staff, as well as parents, about students' performance, capabilities and future aspirations. Moreover, such interactions were seen as central to developing improved understandings of the education system, transition possibilities within the system and the realistic possibilities students might opt for.

Our case studies were mostly conducted in schools that were situated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or schools that enrol disadvantaged students (e.g. students from lower socio economic background). Various teachers and experts maintain that parental cooperation is even more important in such contexts, and the difference that good communication and cooperation between school and parents is even greater for the educational achievement of those students. A number of reasons were discussed in this context. For instance, some teachers and experts argued that students from disadvantaged backgrounds need more support at school, and the schools need more information and interactions with parents in order to offer this support effectively. In other words, remedying educational and developmental problems of disadvantaged students requires improved cooperation between schools and homes. Moreover, parents from lower socio economic or educational backgrounds may not be adequately informed about the education system and the transition possibilities. Therefore, cooperation with them is central to enable them to make informed choices.

Although various actors confirm the urgency of good cooperation between schools and families, particularly those with disadvantaged backgrounds, the issue was viewed as problematic in many of our GOETE schools. Although parents and school staff were relatively pleased with cooperation in many of the sites we researched in, there were cases where neither school personnel nor parents were satisfied with the quality and intensity of interactions between schools and families. This confirms various other studies which indicate that parental involvement, despite policies and laws that support it, is still considerably low in many countries (Matuszny et al., 2007; Comer & Haynes, 1991). In several of our case studies, there was a strong sense of frustration amongst both parties, and almost a sense of helplessness and hopelessness in some cases. Interestingly enough, both parties appear to 'blame' the other party for the shortcomings and failures of such cooperation. As Dahlstedt (2009) suggests, there is a high risk of both teachers and parents engaging in a 'blaming game'. In such cases, teachers perceive parents as uninterested, busy or having personal problems, whilst parents feel they are not treated respectfully, and retreat. Parents might also feel their efforts and contribution are not recognized by school. Teachers justify this by identifying these parents as bad role models and being too demanding. The complexities of such tensions were identified in many schools which were involved in our study.

One of the frustrations of teachers in this regard was the high rate of absences of parents at meetings organized at school. Teachers complained about the lack of interest from parents to join formal meetings, even if they were invited. Various teachers also maintained

that getting in contact with parents is sometimes problematic. Some teachers attested that if parents cannot be convinced to come to school and join the meetings, any other sort of cooperation cannot be managed either. Teachers' remarks in this respect often point to a traditional understanding of close school-family relationships which define 'good' parents as those who come to visit schools, attend parent-teacher meetings, volunteer for school activities, and help with their children's homework. Many schools which were involved in our study appear to experience growing problems in terms of involving parents in these ways. The issue appears to more problematic with migrant families, as in many countries (Germany, the Netherlands and France) there are concerns that migrant families are mostly absent at schools.

Their 'absence' was interpreted by some teachers and other professional staff as a lack of interest in education or commitment to support their children. Yet, various interviews with students and parents indicate that education is seen as very important by some migrant families and is perceived as an important tool for socio-economic mobility. Interviews also reveal that migrant families might be supporting their children's education in other ways that are not so visible to school staff. In fact, critics also suggest that what is considered 'good' parental involvement is largely culturally defined (Epstein, 2005). In the USA, for instance, American parents are relatively more visible at the school (through being present at parent teacher association meetings and volunteering activities) while Chinese-American parents are more involved with their child's education on a home-based level. On average Chinese-American children perform relatively better than other children in the USA. These differences in approach often derive from the experience and knowledge parents take from their home-country (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

It is important that teachers and principals improve their understanding of the role of family beliefs and how they influence the support parents offer their children. To improve involvement of parents at school educators need to build on the cultural values of families (Ferguson, 2005). In order to accomplish this, educators may have to think outside of their own cultural lenses, and the implicit deficit approach they may use to come to see that parents with migrant backgrounds, as well as working-class parents, may have different ways of supporting their children's learning (Protheroe, 2006). In fact, because of the multi-dimensional character of parental involvement, some educational scholars call for a 'bottom-up' approach to strategizing parental cooperation by being sensitive to the cultural needs of different (minority) groups (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Student demographics are shifting, and this poses challenges to the education system of many Western countries today. This

discrepancy between students and teachers means teachers also need guidance and support to meet the unique needs of students and their parents, whose backgrounds differ from their own. As Comer and Haynes (1991) confirm, those schools who are inflexible and hold on to traditional bureaucratic practices, are unlikely to generate positive relations with parents and foster successful parental involvement.

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Chapter 7

Coping and Support – Insights and Insistences

Susan L. Robertson

This report has set out to examine a range of different aspects of the coping and support mechanisms available to young learners as they negotiate their educational transitional points and career trajectories in eight different schooling systems across Europe. The different chapters explore the educational and coping challenges facing young learners, as well as the formal and informal supports that might be available to assist with these challenges. They also draw upon a range of empirical material that has been conducted as part of the GOETE project – material that includes students, parents, teachers, principals, experts and other personnel – all with an interest in the learning trajectories of young people. What can we learn about these strategies and processes that might help us better understand the challenges and successes?

The purpose of this final concluding chapter therefore is to draw together the insights that the different chapters have generated around the following questions: What coping and support mechanisms are in place – formally and informally - that help young learners to strategize and materialize productive learning experiences and therefore their ongoing learning trajectories? What can a comparative study that has been conducted across eight European countries tell us about these processes? What gaps and omissions are still evident in the works that have been presented, and what continuing questions do we still have that will warrant the ongoing attention of researchers and policymaker? The way I intend to proceed is to examine the educational and coping challenges raised by all of the chapters, and from there to highlight a set of specific themes and approaches that arise from this work.

Assembling GOETE Insights – Coping and Support

Each of the chapters takes a dimension of coping and support, and explores it, drawing on the study data collected from different actors. Together the chapters highlight the educational

challenges facing students more generally, the coping and support challenges that then follow, and the different ways in which support mechanisms are put into place that might mediate the negative consequences for students.

In Chapter 1 Ilse Julkunen and Rainer Treptow begin by outlining the dominant conceptualizations of both coping and support. Coping, they argue, connects personal histories to the social and material world – in this case, schools. Support, on the other hand, describes forms of strengthening individuals so that they are able to cope with social and mental challenges. Support also presumes some form of relationship – typically professional – based on interaction. The major purpose of interventions and interactions around strengthening an individual's capacity to 'cope' is in order to enable the individual to solve a problem or to manage their emotions sufficiently to ensure their capacity to manage daily life.

In countries like Germany, both coping and support were sufficiently visible mechanisms offered by experts and available to individuals to warrant a specific terminology. Lebenslage' refers to coping with particular situations, whilst Lebebsbewaltigung was used to talk about coping with life in general. Both terms, they point out, emerged at the time of the welfare state, and clearly provided the impetus for a range of welfare state strategies in Germany. No equivalent formal language like this seems to have appeared in the other countries under study, and is suggestive of the strong pedagogical approach of the German welfare system, albeit one in decline.

The chapter reflects on the different kinds of contexts that matter for young learners – ranging from wider societal changes at play driven by political projects such as the creation of a competitive knowledge-based economy to more institutional (such as bullying, availability of counselling) and individual contexts (such as problematic family lives, peer groups) which present both coping issues and support strategies. And whilst acknowledging certain social groups – such as girls or particular ethnic groups – are perhaps more likely to face particular kinds of coping and support issues, the chapter has little systematic to say about these issues. The Introduction concludes by highlighting the lesson learning that can emerge from the kind of comparative to be reported in each of the Report's chapters on how, why and with what outcomes different countries engage with the challenges facing young learners and their means of coping, and the support that is offered from experts and other kinds of professionals.

Authored by Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Felicitas Boron and Silvia Demozzi, Chapter 2 begins the substantive work of theme - by addressing the challenges facing students in the

education system as they make the transition from lower to upper secondary schooling. This transition is important because it not only means that the contexts change (individual, institutional, societal), but that they demand new ways of coping and different kinds of support.

The most pressing societal context likely to generate new kinds of challenge for learners is the emergence of school choice and marketisation discourses and techniques across much of Europe as a means of governing the education sector – yet it is unclear the extent to which this political project holds for all countries, and if so, in what ways, particularly around challenges that demand new modes of coping.

From the point of view of students, the major challenge is managing the nature of the academic demands placed on them – or in the case of the Netherlands – a migrant population who felt that the teachers were not demanding enough.   Yet we also see that there are differences amongst the different actors as to the causes of the academic pressures on students; that is, whether it is the parents or the school who is to blame? Such differences of opinion as to the cause clearly have implications for ownership of the problem and what might be done about it.

In the main, however, teachers and experts across the study sites regard family circumstances as generating major difficulties for students – whether it is as a poor role model, poverty, language proficiency of ethnic students, or the migrant status of the family. In countries like Poland, populations like the Chenchens tend to be located in classrooms together in order to control them, rather than for any pedagogical reason.   The kinds of support strategies around language have consequences for the student. Removing the student from the mainstream classroom and placing them in special classes does indeed enable specialized support, but the effect is to isolate the student from their peers; leaving them in the classroom with little adequate support also results in the student being isolated because they do not have the language skills to integrate.

Yet as this chapter points out, this perception of lack of interest and lack of capacity to provide the necessary supports for children is not in fact borne out by the evidence, particularly for migrant families, many of whom are highly motivated and interested in their child's education but often lack the resources – particularly around language - to influence the outcomes that they would wish for their child. Low socio-economic families, for their part, though they view the schooling system as not providing them with the kind of support that

they want, however, we are not necessarily sure of what kind of support might best suit their needs. This might imply that one role for the school might be in helping parents articulate their needs more clearly.

One of the more interesting findings presented in this chapter is that in the GOETE countries there is a correlation between characteristics of educational systems and the health of students, and that girls' mental health (worrying) is at stake more so than boys. By characteristics, they mean the level of stratification and standardization. Students who are in low on both or high on both report significantly poorer health. Those students in low stratified and high standardized systems, on the other hand (Finland, Slovenia), experience much better health. This correlation, however, does not tell us much about quite what the causes of this are, and indeed drawing firmer conclusions would warrant more systematic investigation.

A second is that the streaming and stratification in the system (different education tracks) can also lead to stigmatization – practices that are most prominent in countries like Germany, Slovenia and the Netherlands. Yet it is here too that we see the wider role that education plays in social reproduction more generally, and in unequal social relations specifically. At the level of coping, students must confront what this means for their personhood (being flexible; moving out of comfort zones), and how best to manage, or mediate those outcomes – including embracing identities which valorize *not* learning as a means of being 'cool'.

Chapter 3, by Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Federica Taddia and Felicitas Boron, introduces us to student's perspectives on the educational challenges. The chapter outlines 4 dimensions of coping that help open up a way of interrogating the data – coping as self-worth, as social orientation, as social integration and belonging, and as normalization. And while useful to lay down the conceptual terrain where this chapter fits, it would have been helpful also to have seen a more systematic exploration of the GOETE data in relation to these four categories. This likely would have required much more student data than the GOETE study collected. Instead, the chapter tends to examine the views of the actors in the scene with students – parents, teachers, experts, and peers and friends – and to imply that social worth, social orientation and so on follows when these relations are reported positively, and that when students resist or show signs of disaffection with the system, then the student was also viewed as not showing signs of self-worth, belonging and normalization.

What is pointed out by the authors of this chapter, and an important insight for GOETE research on coping and support, is that the student is both viewed, and students believe, that they are responsible for their own lives, and therefore their own careers and success. By implication, lack of success is also their own fault, rather than that of the system and other kinds of social relations. The discourse of individualism, and responsibility for their educational trajectories and careers, is powerful and one that also works for the system in that it does not challenge the system to generate supports in ways that in turn challenge structural inequalities and their role on creating important barriers to learning in the first place.

Chapter 4 by Mikko Aro, Ilse Julkunen and Rainer Treptow move the analysis along by addressing the issue of 'formal support'. Using a set of constructs – of (i) direct and indirect relationships to learning, and (ii) the internal versus external location to the school enables the authors to identify different kinds of supports that might be available to students, and more particularly to see the ways in which they involve different categories of experts as well as different resources to enable access with potentially different outcomes. This frame is used to integrate some of the GOETE empirical data and to draw a series of conclusions. One insight that is explored in depth is the different levels of access to, and usage of, private tuition – with Poland and Germany featuring quite high on usage, and Finland quite low. However what is interesting is that this seems to be linked to trust in the quality of schooling, and therefore that students in the system will be properly attended to. What would need unpacking here, however, is the ways in which private tutoring systems themselves might escalate a discourse of decision in relation to the formal schooling system linked to their own commercial interests. More likely, however, is that parents react to the stigmatisation that follows high stratification in the system, and attempt to manage the educational trajectory of their child. The particularly interesting finding from this work is that those in the GOETE survey accessing private tuition – especially France and Germany - tended not to be the offspring of the better off (professional and managerial class) but those from the lower middle classes. This is an important finding in that it highlights the ways in which particular class fractions mobilize and use different kinds of support strategies for their child that will manage the limitations that the schooling system presents them with.

To what extent do career guidance systems act as adequate supports for students? This is the topic of Chapter 5 by Laetitia Mellottee and Ilse Julkunen. Career guidance sits in the category of formal support for students. It comes in the form of information about the labour market, and providing educational advice. The chapter introduces us to the general literature

on career guidance – pointing to the different traditions and practices in the different countries of Europe. Education systems with streaming and tracking mechanisms in place tend to have more highly developed guidance systems. In other words, when the transition points are very concrete, hard and visible, the mechanisms for supporting decisions are also more visible. Yet, making this assertion would be to overstate how organized career guidance is, and indeed the chapter highlights the lack of coordination and coherence in guidance systems and therefore the lack of transparency that faces many users of such support services. Paradoxically, guidance counsellors, as one means of formal support, themselves face both support and coping challenges within their own profession, in turn limiting their capacity to support student with their own coping challenges.

How, then do GOETE countries fare in relation to formal support structures particularly in relation to educational transitions? The data is clear that transitions are decisive in shaping the ongoing trajectory for students. The research is also clear in pointing to the confusions and questions that follow. Who makes what decision, when, and how is this facilitated? When is too young? And how might students think about the future? Who is the influential decision-maker with regard to students' futures? The GOETE findings suggest that there is a strong discourse on the child as the chooser; an attitude that is favoured by parents, though it is not certain whether students have the necessary aptitudes to do this well. How might students manage the burden that this creates, or take it as an opportunity to develop their own resilience and sense of self efficacy? To what extent does the approach perpetuate a social reproduction agenda, where familiar stereotypes are embraced and unfamiliar trajectories are side-stepped? When does guidance fail the individual and their family, and what are the causes of that failure? Interesting examples are explored in this chapter; examples that enable us to see that support services do not always lead to desirable outcomes.

In the final substantive Chapter 6 on cooperation between schools and parents – by Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, Silvia Demozzi and Felicitas Boron, we see an exploration of the ways in which education policymakers and programmers have tried to build better supports between the home and the school based upon the view that parental engagement has positive outcomes for student learning. GOETE examined the nature and extent of parent engagement – focusing particularly on migrant families. Schools have often been very weak at building such bridges, and if these are stronger in early years settings, they have weakened considerably by the time the student has entered into secondary education. The perceived

value of building bridges between home and school has resulted in major efforts by education systems and educators in this direction. Yet, much of the research documents major gaps in being able to develop active and productive relationships particularly with families who are alienated from the norms that dominate schooling environments, and schooling expertise. More than this, parents may not share such interventionist norms, and view the school as solely and legitimately responsible. This makes developing active support for learners via parents a much more complicated set of challenges as it highlights the very different expectations that parents have of schools and of professionals. Having said this, GOETE did document many practices that were highly sympathetic to the needs of parents; meetings on weekends, the use of formal representation structures, and the use of digital platforms, and so on. On the other hand, GOETE findings highlight the disappointment of teachers that parents were significantly more passive than they would want them to be and indeed that the efforts of the schools and teachers were often unrecognized. Building productive relationships between parents and schools, as the Finnish data shows, is dependent upon a relationship of trust. How to generate this, and what structures and cultures to deliver this, is a major learning challenge and one that GOETE has sought to engage with.

Concluding Remarks - Insistences

So what insights to these chapters generate for coping and support, and what has GOETE research been able to highlight in this regard? The first is a theoretical and conceptual point, and that is that both coping and support must be located in ways that recognize the importance, not just of the agent, and the active negotiator and strategiser, but that these actions are always in relation to a set of structuring conditions. What is most striking about the field of coping and support is that conceptually and practically it is dominated by psychological approaches which in turn tend to favour more agentic and individualized accounts of problems, strategies and solutions. Such an approach tends toward what Robert Cox (1996) has called 'problem solving' as opposed to more 'critical theory' approaches. The former – problem solving - tends to take the world as it finds it, whilst critical theory tends to ask how that world came about, and whose interests does this particular structuring of the world reflect. And whilst it is not surprising that system based interventions tend toward problem solving accounts of coping and support, when the conceptual literature itself reinforces system-based accounts, then we can see that the wider structural issues that might

also be at play either tend to be ignored or are weakly theorised.   This generates not only major challenges around problem recognition, but has implications for how solutions are built.

Second, more psychological accounts tend to highlight decisions or lack of decisions – with insufficient attention to the ways in which both coping and support in late modernity have themselves undergone a major transformation in both meaning and mechanisms. For Ulrich Beck, this is the era of 'reflexive modernization'. Managing the problem, as well as managing themselves, implies not only a high degree of agency on the part of the individual, but a particular kind of agency; that of reflexivity, self awareness, and self control. To what extent does schooling and its supports generate the necessary tools for helping students cope with a world which – as we have seen above - demands a high level of responsibility on behalf of the student for the choices that they make in a context that they are unable to control the outcomes of their choices? How do they assess what this means in a critical and political sense, and how might they develop the kind of sensibility and sense of engagement with the schooling system that insists that they are not solely responsible for transitions but that this is also a social and systemic issue?