Abstract
This study examines why countries adopt or do not adopt pro-equality educational reforms from the political economy and historical perspective. Our study steps into a century-long debate on advantages and disadvantages of less selective schooling and analyzes the conditions, which enable the spillover of international and domestic educational discourse into policy discourse, adoption of policies increasing equality of educational opportunities and successful implementation of these policies. We document a stable balance of political and social forces. Parents with high socioeconomic status and teachers in elite academic schools oppose less selective schooling and frame later tracking as a threat to the quality of schooling. In contrast, primary school teachers tend to be in favor of more comprehensive schooling, which raises their status; however, their attitudes are often ambiguous. Not surprisingly, the mobilization of parents with low socioeconomic status is low and interests of their children tend to be promoted by scholars, non-governmental organizations or international organizations. Left-leaning parties tend to be in favor of later tracking. In contrast, right-leaning parties tend to favor earlier tracking. However, under certain circumstances – such as electoral demand or needs of the local industry – they are willing to shift their attitudes in favor of comprehensive schooling. We document that reforms occur in both extraordinary times, such as economic crisis or regime change, and ordinary times, where the successful adoption of the pro-equality educational policy depends on bi-partisan consensus or a re-framing of the later tracking as a pro-growth measure.
Working Documents are intended to give an indication of work being conducted within the NEUJOBS research project and to stimulate reactions from other experts in the field. Texts published in this series are ultimately destined for academic publishing. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent any institution with which he is affiliated. See the back page for more information about the NEUJOBS project. Available for free downloading from the NEUJOBS website (http://www.neujobs.eu) © Author/Partner institute 2011
CONTENTS


2. Peterson - Education policy reforms in Sweden: towards a comprehensive school – and back again?, p. 31

3. Thum - Educational tracking in Germany: six decades of hesitant and disaggregated reform?, p. 68


FROM SELECTIVITY TO UNIVERSALISM: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PRO-EQUALITY EDUCATIONAL REFORM
MIROSLAV BEBLAVÝ, MARCELA VESELKOVA*
NEUJOBS WORKING PAPER NO. 4.5.2/JULY 2012

* Miroslav Beblavý, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels. Marcela Veselkova, Slovak Governance Institute, Bratislava.
Chapter 1: Less Selective Schooling: The Challenges for Change
Miroslav Beblavý and Marcela Veselková

1. Introduction

Educational attainment is a powerful predictor of life chances, such as occupational attainment, earnings, health or longevity. There are substantial earnings returns to quantitative measures of education, such as years of schooling (Card, 1999; Ashenfelter et al., 1999). The earnings returns to qualitative measures of education seem to be even higher and increasing with an individual’s time on the labor market (Bishop, 1992; Riviera-Batiz, 1992; Altonji and Pierret, 2001). Furthermore, the positive effect of educational attainment on wealth and health increases with age (Crystal and Waehrer 1996, Deaton and Paxson 1998, O’Rand 2002). Education is thus an important source of social stratification. However, abilities are not a single determinant of educational attainment. The cost-benefit analysis of additional schooling (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996b; Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997; Esser, 1999, Boudon 1974 and Gambetta 1987) is sensitive to organization of schooling (Pfeffer 2008, Kerckhoff, 1995, Breen and Jonsson 2005: 227-8). Inequality of student performance is associated especially with selection within educational systems, such as timing and rigidity of student selection. Recent literature based on the comprehensive datasets from OECD’s PISA program suggests that the sooner the students are tracked, the greater the dependence of the student performance on family background (Hanushek and Woessmann 2006, Pfeffer 2008, Schuetz et al. 2008, OECD 2004, 2007, 2010, Woessmann 2009). Furthermore, the peer-group effects in groups made of similar status children will tend to be smaller in lower status schools (Betts and Shkolnik 2000). Finally, early tracking translates also in the lower early wages for lower status students (Brunello and Checchi 2006). These findings have led to a push for OECD to suggest that countries seeking to lower such inequalities should postpone the age of tracking (OECD 2004, 2007, 2010, see also various country studies).

The immediate effects of such a reform can be documented by the Polish education reform of 1999, which has produced a large overall improvement in educational performance, as measured by results on the OECD PISA (World Bank 2010). Prior to 1999 the eight-year primary school was followed by academic and vocational tracks. Following the reform, the six-year primary cycle was followed by 3 years of comprehensive lower secondary school, before a vocational tracking decision was made. Whereas Poland’s reading score was below the OECD average prior the reform, it was at the OECD average in 2003 and above OECD average in 2006, ranking 9th among all countries participating in the testing (ibid: 3). Jakubowski et al. (2011) suggest that it was the delayed entry into vocational education, which played the major role, as on average, the vocational schooling reduced test scores by a full standard deviation.

In our paper, we are not interested in revisiting the relationship between inequality of educational opportunities and organization of schooling as such, but to examine the political economy of such reforms. We explore a set of interrelated questions: (1) why do different countries adopt or do not adopt pro-equality educational policies, (2) what is the political and social balance of forces, and (3) under what conditions are these reforms politically sustainable. To answer these questions we rely on a comparative case study of five European countries with varying degrees of success in introduction of less selective educational systems. We are mindful that the shift towards later selection of students based on ability has been present in the
European policy discourse since 1940s and seems to have reappeared recently as a result of PISA shock (Ertl 2006, Grek 2009). It is therefore interesting to study how the previous attempts have – or have not – worked out (for example, see Ambler 1987; Apple 2004; Farrell 2000, Meier and Schutz 2007; Merritt and Coombs 1977, Weiler 1988). The time frame of our case studies covers the period following the World War II, when attempts to introduce less selective schooling intensified. Our contribution therefore lies in the careful political economic analysis of the past attempts at introduction of less selective schooling.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section we conceptualize the existing stratifying patterns of educational systems as deeply institutionalized and discuss theoretical insights on the possibility of reform from the perspective of neo-institutionalism and the policy change literature. In the third section, we discuss our methodology and provide a brief overview of all five cases. The fourth section presents the preliminary results of the national case studies of Czechoslovakia and its successors (Veselkova 2012), Germany (Thum 2012), Spain (Pensiero 2012), Sweden (Peterson 2012) and the United Kingdom (Toubeau 2012). The final section concludes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The past century witnessed a dramatic expansion of mass education (Boli et al. 1985, Meyer et al. 1992a). Yet, the expansion of educational opportunities has not been accompanied by the corresponding expansion of equality of educational opportunities. In their influential study Persistent Inequality, Shavit and Blossfeld (1993) conclude that the correlation between social origins and educational attainment has remained stable over the 20th century in thirteen examined countries, with the exception of Sweden and the Netherlands. These conclusions have been contested by the subsequent studies that documented both a growing equalization in some countries and a strengthening of association between social class and educational attainment in others (see Breen and Jonsson 2005). However, the focus of these studies on the social class and the neglect of the declining effect of parental occupation of parents does not enable to support the idea that educational opportunities have been equalized in a broad sense (Pfeffer 2008: 549). These findings raise two interrelated questions. First, what are the mechanisms that link social origins to educational outcomes, and second, what factors explain the cross-national variance in educational inequality?

On the individual, micro-level the social differentials in educational attainment are attributed to the rational educational choices based on the calculation of the potential benefits, costs and the probability of success associated with additional schooling (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996b; Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997; Esser, 1999, Boudon 1974 and Gambetta 1987). These rational choice models rest on the assumption that parents seek to ensure that their children attain at least the same educational level as they did. However, their success in doing so depends on a variety of resources to realize the educational preferences. The rational choice framework emphasizes the importance of economic resources necessary to meet direct educational costs and offset opportunity costs. Pfeffer (2008) points out to the importance of a different type of resource, namely educational experience of parents and the associated strategic knowledge of the education system (see also Oswald et al., 1988; Erikson and Jonsson, 1996b). The payoff matrices are thus sensitive to the institutional context: perceived costs of an education or the
probabilities of succeeding at university may differ according to the organization of schooling (Pfeffer 2008, Kerckhoff, 1995, Breen and Jonsson 2005: 227-8).

There is a growing number of studies that explore the link between institutional characteristics of national educational systems and the cross-national variance in equality of educational opportunities. The most researched institutional characteristic is tracking, i.e. placement of students into different school types, hierarchically structured by performance (Woessmann 2009: 26). Most of these studies rely on the new comparative data from international student assessments, such as OECD’s PISA or IEA’s TIMSS or PIRLS, and document greater differences in results among students from different socio-economic background in countries that track students at a young age (OECD 2004, 2007, 2010). Hanushek and Woessmann (2006) examine the change in educational inequality between the end of primary school and towards the end of lower-secondary school. Their results suggest that early tracking leads to a systemic increase in inequality of student performance, measured as the dispersion of educational performance on international tests. While less clear, there is also a tendency for early tracking to reduce mean performance (see also OECD 2007 and Horn 2009). Such results are encouraging for policy-makers, as there does not appear to be any equity-efficiency trade-off (see also Causa and Chapuis 2009). Schuetz et al. (2008) examine the inequality of opportunity directly by measuring the extent to which individual student performance depends on the family background of students. Their results suggest that the sooner students are tracked, the greater the dependence of the student performance on family background. Postponement of tracking by four years reduces the impact of family background on test scores by one quarter of the entire impact of the family background averaged across the OECD countries. This positive effect seems to arise primarily from the improved performance of children with low socio-economic status, whereas children from families with a high socio-economic status perform at approximately the same level (Woessmann et al. 2009). Furthermore, the association between early tracking and higher educational inequality does not seem to be mediated by other institutional characteristics, such as standardization of education, strength of the private sector or the inclusiveness of the post-secondary sector (Pfeffer 2008), although some studies document that standardization may enhance equality (Horn 2009).

These findings suggest that the cross-country variance in equality of educational opportunities is linked to the timing and rigidity of student selection. We can thus speak of weakly stratified educational systems where the majority of students attend untracked or tracked comprehensive schools, where the between-track mobility is possible, and where access to post-secondary education is not formally predetermined by the choice of one track (Pfeffer 2009: 553; Müller and Shavit 1998). In contrast, highly stratified systems are characterized by selection of students to a number of tracks with a low mobility between the tracks and a number of educational dead-ends that preclude attainment of higher levels of education. In very highly stratified systems, the selection of students occurs at an early age. Pfeffer (2009) locates countries on the stratification dimension. Anglo-Saxon countries (Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, the United States) and Scandinavian countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark) are characterized by low degree of educational stratification. In contrast, most continental European countries (Germany, Switzerland) with their low age of tracking and low degree of educational mobility represent highly stratified educational systems. The middle ground is populated by the cluster of former socialist countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia), Belgium, Chile and Italy. A slightly different clustering of countries is proposed by Peter et al. (2010), who attempt to link educational inequality to Esping-Andersen’s (1990) welfare typology. Their results suggest that conservative welfare states, as a group, have the highest between-school socio-
economic gradients, social-democratic countries have the lowest between-school gradients and liberal welfare states fall somewhere in between. Nevertheless, conservative states, such as Germany and France, and social democratic states, such as Scandinavian countries, tend to be on the opposite sides of the continuum. This is explained by the historical tendency of the conservative states to deliberately use tracking and other selective institutions to reproduce status differences (Horn 2007).

Institutionalization of the stratification mechanisms poses a serious challenge to OECD’s calls for policies that would reduce disparities associated with socio-economic status (OECD 2004, 2007, 2010, see also various country studies). Numerous attempts to promote less selective education during the past century teach us that such a change is complicated (see Weiler 1988, Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967, Wilde 2002, Ambler 1987; Apple 2004; Farrell 2000, Merritt and Coombs 1977). It is so because this type of educational reform – a change in the age of tracking and the accompanying curricula reform – presents a specific type of reform, as it cuts to the core beliefs about the stratification in the society and is therefore deeply institutionalized (Esping-Andersen 1990). The possibility of the postponement of the age of tracking must be therefore viewed as both an institutional change and the policy change. In the following sections, we discuss the prospects of such a reform from the perspective of neo-institutionalist theories and policy change theories. In light of the OECD’s attempts to propagate later tracking, we begin with an overview of two competing views on policy borrowing in education, new institutionalism (Boli and Ramirez 1986, Fiala and Lanford 1987, Meyer et al. 1977, Meyer and Ramirez 2000, Meyer and Rowan 2006, Thomas et al.1987, Ramirez and Meyer 2002, Ramirez and Boli 1987) and the policy perspective (Carnoy 2000, Carnoy and Rhotten 2002, Steiner-Khamsi 2004).

2.1 New Institutionalism

The review of new institutionalist literature is complicated by the fact that there is not a single new institutionalist theory (see Hall and Taylor 1996). However, irrespective of the theory applied, the new institutionalism builds on the assumption that institutions evolve through periods of stability and inertia – referred to as “path-dependency” – interrupted by “critical junctures”, i.e. exogenously induced crisis (see Krasner 1984, Hall and Taylor 1996, Pierson 2000; for a recent overview see Cortell and Peterson 2002, Harty 2005, or Engeli and Häusermann 2009). These types of crisis are international in scope and force change upon actors (Harty 2005: 60). This assumption plays the central role in the new institutionalist approach to educational system pioneered by Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978), which posits that there are “global characteristics that are important and independent of national characteristics” (Fiala and Lanford 1987: 317) and emphasizes “transnational similarities in the institutional character of state educational systems” (Ramirez and Boli 1987: 2) and worldwide convergence of patterns of educational organization. The problem of institutional change is thus conceptualized as the rapid diffusion of the understanding about the appropriate nature of educational organization from its origins in European nation states to the rest of the world (Meyer et al. 1977, Meyer et al. 1992a, Meyer, Kamens and Benavot 1992). Convergence towards the world model of educational organization is thus driven by legitimacy concerns. Only those at the top of a power structure can safely deviate from the convention; the commitments of less powerful countries to the dominant world model of schooling are imposed by the world (Ramirez and Boli 1987: 14). These commitments are supported directly by transnational organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, which require each candidate to endorse the mass schooling
rationalized around national development and individual growth goals (ibid). The dissemination of a “world-level cultural account and ideology of education” was tested by Fiala and Lanford (1987: 319), who examined the change in educational aims in 125 countries. Their results suggest that national development, economic development and individual development were the most prominent aims of educational systems in 1955 and 1965, and by 1965 five developmental aims constitute the top five aims. Outside the developmental aims, both equality and democracy scored high, suggesting that they may be part of world educational ideology, although outside the developmental account (ibid: 326). At the same time, the emphasis on education as a mechanism legitimating and maintaining the system of stratification did not play such an important role as it did up until the mid-nineteenth century. However, one should be cautious when interpreting these results. The time span of 1955-1964 captures the transition from the linear model of expansion (more is better) towards “human capital” approach pioneered by Gary Becker (e.g., see Becker 1962, 1964), which views education as an investment in people. At the same time, the time span of Fiala and Landford’s study fails to take into account the effect of the civil rights movements that arose in the Western world in the 1960s and called for equality of educational opportunities enjoyed only by the best-served few to be available to all (Fullan 2000: 7, Zajda 2005: 2). It is reasonable to assume that equality would play a more prominent role in the past three decades. Yet, the spread of the mass schooling was not accompanied by the spread of more comprehensive schooling systems. Quite the contrary, there are significant differences in the educational stratification across countries.

The fact that there is more change and variation in educational organization than institutionalists seem to acknowledge became a source of critique (see Meyer and Rowan 2006b; Levy 2006; Marshall and Anderson 1994; Crowson 1996). The institutional analysis of Meyer and his colleagues in the late 1970s and early 1980s saw education as fully controlled by government. However, the monopoly of state as the provider of the education has eroded and we witness an increasing “privatization of the public sphere” (Marshall and Anderson 1994: 177, Meyer and Rowan 2006b: 2). Furthermore, it is the private sector, in which divergent forms of education emerge (Levy 2006). This empirical evidence calls into question arguments about a convergence among institutional arrangements that characterize national educational systems.

The new institutionalism attempts to address this question by pointing out to unique national contexts (see Ramirez 2006). These represent “path dependencies” that produce unique adaptations of standard world models and affect the time and ease with which such models get adopted. The relative strength of national versus global models of education depends on the national academic traditions. Educational systems in countries with weak national academic traditions are more likely to converge towards the world model than in countries with strong academic traditions. The historical institutionalism takes the issue of adaptation to national contexts one step further and attempts to endogenize institutional change by linking it to institutional origins. The emphasis is on the notion of gradual transformative change advanced in the work of Thelen (1999, 2002, see also Streeck and Thelen 2005). Thelen’s (2004) explanation of divergent trajectories of vocational training in coordinated and liberal market economies is based on the notion that contemporary differences in skill formation go back to important differences in the relationship between employers, artisans and early trade unions.
Institutions created at one critical juncture thus do not remain in equilibrium but continue to change and evolve depending on the nature of the initial and subsequent shock. In other words, institutional stability may contain a major dose of institutional adaptation (Thelen, 2003).

The reliance on exogenous, episodic periods of crisis or subsequent transformative adaptation does not leave much room for the agency in the discussion of change. Nevertheless, there have been several attempts to endogenize the potential for change. Cortell and Peterson (2002) suggest that although external shocks create “windows of opportunities” (Kingdon 1994), institutional change depends also on policy entrepreneurs, who translate these external shocks into policy change. Furthermore, the ability of policy entrepreneurs to push forward their agenda for change is limited – or enhanced – by the institutional capacity. Constructivist institutionalists bring in agency by focusing on the role of ideational entrepreneurs. This approach is informed by Hall’s (1993) notion of “policy paradigms” and the belief that a change of ideational framework of a policy occurs only in the face of the widespread perception of policy failure. This implies that ideational change invariably precedes institutional change. Blyth (2002) believes that the moment of ideational crisis opens space for ideational contestation in which agents struggle to provide the new convincing policy paradigm for the resolution of the crisis. However, neither the concept of critical junctures, nor the concept of ideational crisis enables theorizing about institutional change in ordinary times.

### 2.2 Policy Change Theories

The importance of the national context is emphasized also by the competing school of thought, which challenges international convergence thesis (Carnoy 2000, Carnoy and Rhotten 2002, Steiner-Khamsi 2004). The global pressures for reform are mediated by the regional, national and even local social, economic, and political conditions (Carnoy 2000). The policies prescribed by the uniform paradigms at the supranational level but applied in different contexts may therefore produce different practices (Carnoy and Rhotten 2002). Furthermore, periods of internationalization of educational policies may be followed by periods of sociocentric self-isolation, mostly as a result of political developments, such as overturn to authoritarian or totalitarian regimes (Schriewer and Martinez 2004). These serve as a bulwark against the spread of international paradigms to the national discourse. To examine the impact of policy borrowing on local educational reform, this stream of literature focuses on the politics of educational borrowing (“why”), the process (“how”), and the agents of transfer (“who”) (Steiner-Khamsi 2004b: 2). The policy borrowing or importation is thus a deliberate attempt to import a policy or practice elsewhere identified as being of potential value in the home country (Phillips 2005: 23). The importation of policy happens in four stages of (1) cross-national attraction, (2) decision making, (3) implementation and (4) internalization or indigenization (Phillips and Ochs 2003). Impulses that spark off the cross-national attraction may originate in various phenomena, ranging from internal dissatisfaction with the educational system through political or economic change to negative external evaluation, such as TIMSS of PISA. However, the decision to reform the educational system is not followed by the straightforward implementation of the policy. Speed of change will depend on the attitudes of actors with the power to support or resist change and development, and they can be particularly effective in decentralized systems, where there is less direct control (Phillips 2005: 32). Finally, the national context will affect also the impact of the borrowed policy on the existing system.
On the national level, the process of educational change is described by a number of heuristics top-down models, which divide the reform into a number of subsequent discrete stages. Building on McLaughlin and Berman (1977) or Huberman and Miles (1984), Fullan (2001) proposes Triple I model of educational change. The model encompasses three stages of change: initiation, implementation and institutionalization. The successful initiation may be influenced by a number of factors, such as existence and quality of innovations (or ideas for a change), access to innovation, advocacy from central administration, teacher advocacy, external change agents (such as NGOs), community pressure, support or apathy, funds available for the new policy and problem-solving and bureaucratic orientations. Fullan views inclusion or “buy in” of various stakeholders as crucial for the success of the initiation of the reform. The most predictable initial pressure for change from the community is likely to come as a result of population shifts, such as growth in population or a change in social-class and cultural composition (Fullan 2001: 61, Berman and McLaughlin 1979). The implementation phase rests on the ability of the community to analyze whether the goals of the reforms were achieved. This implies conceptualization and operationalization of the reform goals in a way, which enables to identity, measure and assess effects of the reform. In the final stage of institutionalization the reform is either successfully embedded into the culture of the existing system or the reform process is reversed and the system returns to the initial stage. Successful institutionalization of the reform rests upon the consistency of leadership, resource allocation and the implementation of a support network at the school level.

Broad stakeholder ownership is cited as the fundamental bedrock upon which all other aspects of the successful systemic change process are built also by Roberto and Reigeluth (2010). Without broad stakeholder ownership, other elements of the framework – learning organization, understanding the systemic change process, evolving mindsets about education, systems view of education and systems design – lose their meaning and sense of purpose. Roberto and Reigeluth believe that in order for a broad range of stakeholders to feel a sense of ownership in an educational change process, new types of relationships and opportunities must be created that would allow a broad range of stakeholders to come together to envision, design and implement their ideal educational system. Similarly to Fullan, Roberto and Reigeluth emphasize the role of the leadership, offering partnership and promoting collective ideas. However, facilitative leadership may fail to address the situation, in which there are several competing ideal educational systems. As our case studies suggest, competing visions of comprehensive and segregated education are often central to the conflict and will be central to the success or failure of the reform. Facilitative leadership will most likely fail to achieve change in behavior or attitudes of stakeholders, who face the loss of status or power. Zaltman and Duncan’s (1977) postulate three other strategies for planned social change: reeducative, which rest on the assumption that rational actors will change their behavior in face of evidence; persuasive, by which agents seek to induce change by strengthening beliefs and values of stakeholders; and power strategies which change the behavior by means of sanctions (see also Kotler 1973).

The above discussed models of systemic educational change draw on American experience. As they refer to planned change, it was noted that their application to post-socialist experience is limited (Halász 2003, Polyzoï and Dneprov 2003, Polyzoï and Černá 2003, Greger 2011). In its initial phase, the transformation in transition countries was characterized by spontaneity and lack of planning. Birzea (1995) described the
process in four stages of (1) deconstruction or ideological breaking away from the communist regime, (2) stabilization, (3) restructuring and (4) counter-reform or communist-restoration in several transition countries. Birzea and Fartusnic (2003) attempt to overcome the discrepancy between Fullan’s model and post-socialist reality by combining it with Birzea’s earlier model. The resulting model describes four phases governing the process of educational change in Romania: (1) deconstruction (corrective reform), (2) stabilization (reforms of modernization), (3) transformation (structural reforms) and (4) coordination (systemic reforms). Such a conceptualization of educational change provides an opportunity to examine the context- and time-specific factors behind the success of spontaneous and often substantial and lasting changes introduced during the early stage of deconstruction, as well as factors behind difficulties associated with introduction of systemic changes at later stages. These include the discrepancy between an ideology of reform and the real possibilities of achieving the reforms desired (Birzea 1995: 2), the lack of data on student performance (Greger 2011: 2) or the lack of operationalization of reform goals (Straková et al. 2009).

However, the heuristic models are prone to top-down bias and fail to account for interaction between various stages and actors (Hjern and Hull 1982, Sabatier 1986). Furthermore, they do not supply a causal theory of causal drivers that govern the process within and across stages (Sabatier 2005: 18). As such, they are analytically empty and encourage the research within specific stages. In the following sections we will discuss the agenda-setting theories and policy implementation theories.

2.2.1 Agenda-Setting

Each policy change starts with the rise of the social problem to the public and/or political agenda. Most agenda setting theories posit that the rise of issues to agenda is the function of public and political attention (see Cobb et al. 1976, Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, Mazzoni 1991, 1993, Fowler 2006). As the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institutions to process them, specific issues have to compete for a place on the decision-making agenda in the process of agenda building. In their influential paper, Cobb et al. (1976) identify three different models of agenda building depending on variation in the four major characteristics of issue careers: initiation, specification, expansion and entrance: 1) an outside initiative model in which issues are cultivated on the public’s agenda by non-governmental groups who seek formal attention by explicitly political actors; 2) the mobilization model in which issues are addressed on the formal governmental agenda and are then expanded to the public’s agenda; and 3) the inside initiative model in which issues are addressed almost exclusively by governmental actors and broader attention is limited, indeed guarded by, those with a stake in the issues. Which of these models prevails depends on patterns of stratification. Cobb et al. suggest that the outside initiative model is more likely to predominate in more egalitarian societies and the inside access pattern is more likely to predominate in a society with greater concentration of wealth and status. However, issues do not compete only against each other. Within each substantive area, there is a competition among social groups who promote different ways of seeing the “same” problem and want their way of framing the situation to be accepted as an authoritative version of reality (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). The presentation of the issue involves political drama (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, Marra et al. 1990) and invokes certain emotive appeal of a policy (Baumgartner and Jones 1993: 26).
As the conflict attracts new interest groups, often a period of “softening up” (Kingdon 1984) or “redefinition” (Cobb et al. 1976: 127) occurs before an issue draws its full potential of proponents. This redefinition may fit closely with widely shared cultural preoccupations and political biases (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988: 64).

Building on Cobb et al. (1976) Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), Mazzoni (1991) examines legislative initiation of reforms that “appeared to many stakeholders to constitute a substantial attempt to change power relationships.” In fact, parental choice laws enacted in Minnesota between 1985 and 1988 were opposed by the majority of Minnesota citizens. Mazzoni believes that the establishment of an “arena” is crucial for the success of the reform. Moving an issue to a new arena can change the key actors, their incentives and recourses, influence relationships and governing rules and this way winners and losers in the policy conflict. However, Mazzoni’s understanding of an “arena” differs from the one established by Hilgartner and Bosk. Whereas the latter define areas, in which social problems are framed and grow, in a broad sense as executive and legislative branches of government, the courts, the cinema, the new media, political campaign organizations, the research communities, professional societies or similar, Mazzoni specifies that by an arena he means “a middle-range term, referring to the political interactions characterizing particular decision sites through which power is exercised to initiate, formulate, and enact public policy” (1991, p. 116). Such an understanding of arenas closely resembles the agenda building models proposed by Cobb et al. (1976) (Fowler 2006: 45). In his initial model, Mazzoni differentiated between two arenas, (1) the subsystem arena, which is made up of education interest groups and politicians specialized for education, and the macro arena, in which the general public develops pressure for policy change. The former roughly corresponds to the Cobb et al.’s (1976) inside initiative model, the latter to their outside initiative model. Mazzoni believed that in order for a policy innovation to occur, the conflict over the issue must expand from the subsystem to the macro arena. This roughly corresponds to Cobb et al.’s (1976) mobilization model. However, during the analysis of the Minnesota case, Mazzoni found out that it was the political elites who pressed for the school choice law. He therefore added two more arenas, a leadership arena and a commission arena, i.e. the commission created by the government. He then concluded that the policy innovation depends on the ability to shift the policy debate from the subsystem arena to any of the other three arenas. If the conflict remains within the subsystem, it will not move beyond incremental change. The dominant role of leadership arena and the minor role of the subsystem and macro arena were documented also by Fowler (1994) in her analysis of Ohio education reform.

The above discussed education research on agenda setting is shaped by the specificities of the U.S. political system. It may be therefore problematic to apply the models fitted to the U.S. experience with education reform elsewhere. As the case studies in this book document, the attitude of the general public towards the reform may be less lethargic and the shift from the subsystem to the macro arena may lead to an intense contestation of the official interpretation of the reform. Indeed, although the political agenda matters to public policies, the direction of the effect is dependent upon the policy preferences expressed by the mass public because the potential electoral costs of unpopular policies increase with the issues’ importance on the political agenda (Mortensen 2010). Nevertheless, the recent research on agenda setting and policy change offers insights into the adoption of reforms in the midst of political controversy when financial austerity or moral controversy do not create an enabling context of reform and non-decision would seem like the safest strategy for reelection. To avoid vetoing of the reform in the streets, every government needs to engage in “coalition engineering” to introduce successful policy change (Engeli and Häusermann 2009). The capacity of governments to
engage in strategies of coalition engineering is based on two inherent features of every policy. First, each policy is multidimensional, i.e. it serves multiple purposes and goals. Second, actor coalitions are heterogeneous and instable. Engeli and Häusermann (2009) define three strategies that can foster a winning coalition. Governments can (1) divide the opposition through political exchange by confronting veto players with a policy reform that comprises different non-substitutable elements (strategy of division), (2) gather a large support based on a sufficiently ambiguous compromise on which most actors can agree, even if they do not ultimately share the same policy goals (ambiguous agreement), or (3) exclude and delegitimize the opposition (exclusion). However, some of these strategies may backfire in the implementation phase. For example, Havelock and Huberman argue that in case of education projects in developing countries funded by the United Nations, leaving the objectives vague simply postponed conflicts and led to confusion, resistance to proposed changes, and difficulties in evaluating the results.

2.2.2 Implementation

Unclear and inconsistent objectives that provide a standard of evaluation and legal resources to implementing officials (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975) are only one of the factors deemed responsible for the implementation failure. In their classic study, Pressman and Wildawski (1973) emphasize the importance of a good causal theory of how to achieve social change and a few veto points, as a large number of decision points increases the probability of stoppage or delay of the reform. The conclusions of early implementation studies (Pressman and Wildawski 1973, Murphy 1973, Bardach 1974) about the ability of governments to successfully deliver reforms was quite pessimistic, as suggested by evocative subtitle of Pressman and Wildawski’s (1973) study “How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland.” Yet, their conclusions were based on single case studies. To examine whether a planned change is possible, Cerych and Sabatier (1986) launched a large comparative project on policy implementation of higher education reforms initiated during the 1960s. The factors they examined derived from the list presented by Pressman and Wildawski (1973), Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) or Sabatier (1986), i.e. clarity and consistency of goals and the degree of system change envisaged; adequacy of the causal theory and financial resources; the commitment to reform objectives by those responsible for implementation and the socioeconomic changes affecting the goals. Cerych and Sabatier argue that the success of the reform depends on various dimensions: the level of change (the whole system or one institution), the functional breadth of change (one or several programs) or the depth of change (small or large). Their results suggested that the comprehensive reform of the entire system, such as the German Gesamthochschulen, generate too much resistance against the introduction of the reform. In contrast, if the level of change is very low, the functional breadth is small and the nature of change is unimportant, such as the Swedish 25/5 Scheme for adult admission to universities, the reform will fail to arouse enough commitment to get off the ground. It is therefore the reforms, such as the British Open University, ambitious but limited on part of the system, which have the best chance of success.

This top-down approach to the study of implementation soon came to be criticized for its emphasis on the hierarchical control and the belief that implementation process could be centrally controlled without modifications or stoppage at the street level. The
ignorance of actors other than the central decision makers was identified as the fundamental flaw of the top-down models by Hjern and Hull (1982), Hanf (1982), Barrett and Fudge (1981), or Elmore (1979). To deal with the neglect of strategic initiatives coming from the private sector, local implementing officials and other actors, the bottom-uppers examine local implementation structures. Instead of starting with the policy adoption, as the top-downers do, the bottom-uppers start by mapping the network of the target population and the move upward to examine the changes needed for a successful reform (as in Elmore’s (1979) well-known work on backward mapping). However, this approach is subject to similar sins as the top-down approach. First and foremost, it is the “prisoner” of perceptions and activities of participants at the local level and fails to identify factors that structure these perceptions and activities (Sabatier 2005: 24). As such, this approach may overemphasize the ability of the local to actors to disrupt reform attempts of the central decision-makers and marginalize all of government activities to a mere legitimization of changes occurring at the local level.

To combine the best features of both approaches, a number of attempts at the synthesis arose. Elmore (1985) combined his work on “backward mapping” with what he termed “forward mapping” of policy instruments and other resources at the disposal of policy makers. The meshing of the top-down and the bottom-up perspective was supposed to ensure the successful implementation. An advocacy coalition framework developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) represents a more theoretical attempt at synthesis. They argued that the 4-6 year time span is too short to understand the extent of policy-oriented learning by proponents (top-down) and by opponents (bottom-up). Central to their analysis is the policy subsystem, i.e. those public and private actors who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue and share a set of normative beliefs on these policy issues (Heclo 1978, Jordan and Richardson 1983, Milward and Wamsley 1984, Rose 1985, Sharpe 1985) (note the resemblance of the concept of “arena” in the agenda-setting theory). These actors are aggregated in advocacy coalitions, whose conflicting strategies are mediated by “policy brokers” trying to find a compromise to reduce the conflict. The clearly defined point of departure in the form of policy adoption and the subsequent linear stages of implementation process advocated by the top-downers disappear and the framework extends back to the process of policy formulation. At this stage, the framework closely resembles of the agenda-setting theories discussed above. In the next step, Mazmanian and Sabatier link the expected success of the reform to the belief systems of advocacy coalitions trying to translate these beliefs into governmental programs. At the deep core level, the change is close to impossible, as deep core beliefs stand for fundamental normative and ontological axioms. They are therefore more concerned about the change at the policy core and secondary level. The former stand for the application of deep core beliefs to an entire policy subsystem, such as national higher education policy, the latter are narrower in scope and require fewer agreements for a change. The stability of core beliefs translates into the long-term stability of advocacy coalitions. The major policy change within a subsystem would occur only when significant perturbations from other policy areas or socioeconomic conditions change the resources or the core beliefs of major actors and replace the dominant majority coalition by a previously minority coalition (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993:34). The change is therefore limited to the secondary aspects of a governmental action program as the result of policy oriented learning by various
coalitions or policy brokers. This is, practically, a neo-institutionalist understanding of the potential for a large-scale change, which is possible only when an external shock opens the window of opportunity. Even the understanding of the incremental, adaptive change is less enthusiastic then theories developed by Thelen (2004, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

In this paper we examine the political economy of the reforms aimed at later tracking. By tracking we refer to the placement of students into different school types, hierarchically structured by performance (Woessmann 2009: 26). Tracking is often referred to as selective (as opposed to comprehensive) schooling. As such, it can refer to a number of policies that encompass decisions about the age of tracking, as well as complementary or substitute stratifying decisions about the mobility between tracks, elimination of dead-end educational pathways or unification of curricula across tracks.

Our unit of analysis is state. We are interested in a large-scale, nation-wide reform, in which all or most of the schools in the state are involved (Fullan 2000: 5). The time span is limited to the post-World-War II period. This time span was chosen for two reasons. First, 1945 is a natural starting point to our analysis, as all European countries in our sample tracked children at a relatively early age of 10-11 at that time. Second, the post-World War II period witnessed an increasing number of reforms aimed at later tracking. However, whereas some countries managed to postpone the age of tracking, others failed in their attempts at education reform or experienced reversals in educational policy. To determine factors that enabled or hampered the introduction of less selective schooling, we rely on a comparative case study of five European countries, which represent five distinct outcomes of reforms aimed at later tracking: success (Sweden), failure (Germany), formal implementation of the reform and informal transfer of selection to the private schooling sector (United Kingdom), success followed by the reversal (Czechoslovakia), and success associated with increased dropout rates (Spain). These cases roughly correspond to five educational models in Europe: (1) Anglo-Saxon (Great Britain), (2) continental (Germany), (3) Nordic (Sweden), (4) Southern (Spain) and (5) (Post-) Communist (Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic). The development of the tracking policies in these countries is depicted in Figures 1-5. Selected reforms in these five countries are listed in more detail in Appendix 1.
Figure 1: Age of tracking in Czechoslovakia and the successor countries

Source: Authors based on Veselkova (2012).

Figure 2: Age of tracking in West Germany and the unified Germany

Source: Authors based on Thum (2012).
Figure 3: The age of tracking in Spain

Source: Authors based on Pensiero (2012).

Figure 4: The age of tracking in Sweden

Source: Authors based on Peterson (2012).
The Swedish comprehensive school reforms in the 1960s is an example of the successful reform, as it managed to transform the Swedish schooling from a traditional European system (early selection, parallel school types, many selection points and small and exclusive secondary and tertiary education) to a comprehensive, mass education system, with integrated vocational training opportunities (Horn 2007: 17). The decentralization reforms of the 1990s and introduction of freedom of choice served as a minor reversal to the equality of educational opportunities (Peterson 2012).

Germany is a case of failed reforms during the post-war era. There was a number of reform attempts to postpone the selection of students, which encountered a high level of political and social resistance. One set of explanations of the reform failure points out to the rigid structure of the German educational system, which is differentiated and maintained at the level of federal states (Ertl and Phillips 2000, Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967, Wilde 2002). However, the socio-cultural factors may be of equal importance. The great obstacle to the reform attempts was the conservativism of the stakeholders – teachers and professional organizations on the supply side and parents’ organizations, universities and industries on the demand side (Horn 2007). Germany therefore maintains the tracking of students at the age of ten. However, in some states such as Berlin and Niedersachsen the primary school is prolonged up to the 6th grade so that pupils are tracked at the age of twelve.

The case of the United Kingdom is an example of a limited success. The publicly-funded tripartite system established by the Education Act 1944 lasted until the 1970s. The tracking of children into various types of schools was based on the Eleven Plus exam taken at the age of 11 or 12. The top 25% selected by the eleven plus examination went to the grammar schools intended to teach academic curriculum. The rest of the children went to the secondary technical schools or secondary modern schools. Due to the lack of secondary technical schools, those who failed eleven plus exam basically went to the secondary modern schools preparing for factory or
menial jobs. These schools were therefore viewed as schools for failures. In the decentralized education system the impetus for the reform came from the local educational authorities (LEAs), typically in Labour dominated urban areas. As a result, the reform proceeded at an uneven pace in different areas, so that both secondary school systems coexisted during the 1960s and 70s. When the Labour decided to eradicate admissions into school on the principle of selection in 1976, a high number of grammar schools became private (Toubeau 2012). The formal comprehensive school reform, which was thus accompanied by the transfer of selection to the private sector (Kerckhoff 2009).

Czechoslovakia is a case of apparently successful reform and partial reversal following change of political regime. The unified schooling up to the age of 14/15 was introduced after the communist coup d’état in 1948. The project was top-down driven and stressed the social advantages of comprehensive schooling and moral appeals to equity. In 1989, the Czechoslovak education system was similar to other post-communist countries. It was characterized by high general/vocational ratio, which began to mount around 1970 when the communist parties faced the crisis between continued Party control over society and the rise of a new class of schooled people. The transition of the Czechoslovak educational system was radical because unlike other CEE countries, there was no gradual softening of the unitary education model. The transformation process between 1989 and 1994 was therefore spontaneous and bottom-up driven. The impetus was to return to the education in pre-war Czechoslovakia, which was characterized by early selection of gifted children to academic tracks at the age of 10.

Finally, the Spanish experience is quite the contrary the Czechoslovak experience. The authoritarian Franco regime was associated with fragmented educational system reproducing the class divisions, whereas the move towards democracy was associated with a move towards more comprehensive educational system. Although the 1970 reform introduced comprehensive education until the age of 14, it failed to address the segregation at the upper secondary level, predominantly the split between the Bachillerato and vocational training. The 1982 reform by the socialist government effectively postponed streaming to the age of 16. Furthermore, various tracks did not represent a dead-end – students were able to change the track. However, increase in dropout rates triggered the debate on the risks that some students are neither sufficiently competent nor motivated to cope with the basic curriculum for all students to the age of 16 (Marchesi 1992: 597).

Our analysis of these cases touches upon several issues. First, we examine how the ideas about pro-equality schooling emerge in the national discourse. As comprehensivization of schooling is likely to trigger the resistance from those whose status and power is at risk, we identify the key actors of the educational reform (politicians, education specialists, parents, teachers, unions) and examine how they try to re-define the issue of later tracking to their advantage. Second, we examine the general context, or “playing field,” in which the educational reform occurs. The context shapes interests of various actors and mediates their influence. We are particularly interested in the prevailing beliefs about intelligence, attitudes towards equality and the shifting balance of political forces. Impact of external shocks, such as economic crises or regime change, is taken into account as well. In the final step, we examine whether the reform succeeded in increasing the percentage of students in comprehensive tracks. We pay close attention to possible escape strategies, such as white flight.
References


and the Politics of Educational Reform,” Educational Policy 18 (1): 12-44.


Political Economy 70 (5): 9-49.

Becker, Gary (1964) Human capital: a theoretical and empirical analysis, with special 

Europe: The Case of Romania.” Paper presented at the IBE International Meeting on 

Birzea, Cesar and Fartusnic, Ciprian (2003) “Reforming the Romanian system of 
education: the agenda ahead,” in Change Forces in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: 
Education in Transition, edited by Eleoussa Polyzoi, Michael Fullan and John P. 
Anchan, Routledge: 74-93.

Bishop, J.H. (1992) “The Impact of Academic Competencies on Wages, Unemployment, and 

Blyth, Mark (2002) Great Transformations. Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the 


Ministerstvo školstva (22.11.2007) “Minister školstva sa stretol so zástupcom generálneho tajomníka OECD.”


Pensiero, Nicola (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study of Spain.”


Pelikán, Jiří (undated) „Jak (ne)reformovat českou školu.“

NEUJOBS

Peterson, Elin (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study Sweden.”


Straková et al. (2009) Analýza naplnění cílu Národního program rozvoje vzdělávání v České republice (Bílé knihy) v oblasti předškolního, základního a středního vzdělávání.


Toubeau, Simon (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study of United Kingdom.”


Thum, Anna-Elisabeth (2012) “Educational tracking in Germany: six decades of hesitant and disaggregated reform?”


Appendix 1.A: Selected educational reforms in Czechoslovakia and its successors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>introduction of a single, unified school which covered the whole compulsory education period up to the age of 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>shortening of compulsory, unified schooling by 1 year, i.e. the first tracking was advanced to the age of 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>tracking was postponed to the age of 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>10 year compulsory education - eight-year basic school and two-years at upper secondary school, some vocational schools reorganized into four-year technicum tracks culminating in exam, which enabled to enroll to universities, absolvents of shorter tracks could continue their studies at evening or correspondence courses leading the same exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>tracking was advanced to the age of 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>A temporary &quot;Government of National Unity&quot;</td>
<td>abolishment of the unified school and return to the tripartite system existing prior to 1948, re-introduction of eight-year gymnasia for gifted children, where children enroll at the age of 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Czech Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Václav Klaus centre-right government</td>
<td>tracking postponed to the age of 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>end of the 2000s</td>
<td>local governments</td>
<td>attempts to put quota on the number of seat in academic multi-year gymnasia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slovakia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Vladimír Mečiar government</td>
<td>tracking postponed to the age of 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Róbert Fico centre-left government</td>
<td>introduction of quotas on the number of seats in multi-year gymnasia to 5% of the corresponding age cohort, binding for all schools since 2011. Age of tracking postponed from to 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Iveta Radičová centre-right government</td>
<td>easing of quotas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 1.B: Selected reform attempts in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Stuttgart Hohenheim resolution: proposal to modify the tripartite organization advances towards more comprehensiveness of the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Rahmenplan - a plan to maintain a tripartite system but to ease the transfer between the three tracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>discussion and introduction of Gesamtschule - a comprehensive school in which students study together up to the tenth grade - comes up, enrollment rose from 0.5% in 1971 to 7.8% in 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Bremer plan - a slightly modified version of the Rahmenplan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Hamburger Abkommen - The Social Democratic Party proposed a more integrated and comprehensive stage from grade 7 to grade 10, to this end they proposed the introduction of a Foerderstufe, which comprises a 5th and 6th year after primary school in which pupils are not tracked into different types of secondary school yet but are still together in order to give them time to develop their skills further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Bildungsgesamtplan - a strong discussion about Gesamtschulen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Dresdner Erklärung: qualification initiative: the slogan Aufstieg durch Bildung encompasses the idea of equality of chances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 1.C: Selected educational reforms in Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Franco government</td>
<td>tracking postponed to the age of 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>González government - PSOE (The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)</td>
<td>a comprehensive and compulsory secondary education from 12 to 16 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 1.D: Selected educational reforms in Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Tage Erlander social democratic government</td>
<td>launch of a pilot program introducing a 9-year comprehensive school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Tage Erlander social democratic government</td>
<td>The primary education reform: introduction of a 9-year comprehensive primary school, tracking postponed to the age of 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Tage Erlander social democratic government</td>
<td>The upper secondary education reform: Gymnasieskolan replace the tripartite schooling system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beginning of the 1990s</td>
<td>Carl Bildt centre-right government</td>
<td>enhanced freedom of choice mostly used by the resourceful parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.E: Selected educational reforms in the United Kingdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Conservative-Labour</td>
<td>tripartite system, no effort to overt selection at the age of 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Labour (Harold Wilson government)</td>
<td>reversal of overt selection through abolishment of 11+ examination, comprehensive schooling gradually spreads in local education authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Conservative (Margaret Thatcher government)</td>
<td>reversal of comprehensive schooling through parental choice, school autonomy, accompanied by introduction of national curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: Education policy reforms in Sweden: towards a comprehensive school –and back again?

Elin Peterson

Introduction

The aim of this case study on Swedish education policy is to examine the different educational reforms carried out in Sweden since the 1960s. The focus falls particularly upon a specific aspect of the educational reform, namely the shift towards (or away from) a comprehensive educational system. As stated by the OECD, educational systems with later age of tracking and more unified curricula can considered to be more comprehensive and have been seen as promoting equality (OECD, 2004, 2007). The content of the reforms, the contexts in which they were adopted, the actors behind the reforms and their effects on equality are in the centre of the analysis.

The Swedish education system has gone through three major waves of reform. The first was the comprehensive school reforms in the 1960s. The second was in the 1990s with the decentralization reforms that strengthened local governance while goals and results were set at the national level. The third is the recent education reform adopted in 2010 which aims to increase state governance and control in education both over schools and over teachers (Larsson 2011). Following from this, the case study starts out by focusing on why pro-equality educational reforms were adopted by Social Democratic governments in the 1960s, the content of the comprehensive school reforms, the context in which they were carried out and the conditions that made it possible to adopt such reforms, the actors that promoted the reforms as well as the resistance to them, and the effects on equality. Secondly, the study brings up the tendencies towards decentralization and free choice in education at the beginnings of the 1990s and discusses how these shifts have been conceptualized as effecting equality. Thirdly, the study focuses on the aim, content and potential effects of the most recent school reform of 2010 carried out by the centre-right wing government in power since 2006. Finally, the reforms are considered in the light of international comparative research on education and the conclusions drawn from the study are presented.

A context to the educational reform: The Swedish welfare state

Swedish education reforms have to be understood within the larger framework of the changes in the Swedish welfare state. The comprehensive educational reforms of the 1960s emerged as an essential part of social change; the creation of the “Swedish model” and the general expansion of the welfare state towards greater equality and universal rights. The reforms of the 1990s and the 2010 reform can also be seen as linked to the wider changes in the Swedish welfare state; these reforms were carried out under much more restrictive economic conditions when freedom of choice and marketization have been guiding principles.
The education reforms can be seen in the light of the Social Democratic welfare state regime emphasizing universal rights and equality. In Gosta Esping-Andersen’s work (1990) the Swedish welfare state is characterized as a Social Democratic welfare state regime. This regime is characterized by a high degree of state intervention and a high degree of universalism and de-commodification. Rights are based on citizenship (or legal residence) and are attached to individuals; the ideal is individual autonomy and dependence on the family is minimized. Hence, the Social Democratic welfare state regime has been regarded as the most “defamilializing”, providing a wide range of public social services and lessening the burden on families. Rights are not primarily based on need, rather, with universal social rights the role of needs-based assistance is marginalized (Esping-Andersen 1999: 78). Services and benefits are designed for all citizens, and a large majority of the population uses them regardless of their social class. Policies promote equality at the highest standards and not equality of minimal needs. Equality, solidarity and universalism are values that explicitly underpin the Social Democratic welfare state model. The system is meant to promote cross-class solidarity and, thereby, solidarity of the nation (Esping-Andersen 1990: 25). This welfare state model crowds out the market and creates essential universal solidarity in favour of the welfare state; “all benefit, all are dependent; and all will presumably feel obligated to pay” (ibid. 28).

Universalism has been seen as the precondition of equality. All social classes are offered and use to a large extent public services. Universalism has also been considered the guarantee of women’s right to paid work and to combine employment and care (Anttonen 2002: 76). Tax financing is the foundation of the welfare state and municipal taxes have been viewed as creating solidarity between people who live in the same community with respect to the funding of social services (Szebehely 2004, 1998). A focus on full employment is also characteristic of the Social Democratic welfare state regime. Employment is considered a right and an obligation for individuals. Esping-Andersen (1990) contends that the Social Democratic welfare regime has strongly put forward a norm of maximizing the productive potential of the citizenry and, hence, the goal is full employment while, at the same time, Social Security gives the right to de-commodification under legitimate circumstances.

Sweden was not devastated by the world wars as so many other countries, and the economic development was therefore not disrupted. This influenced positively on the development of the welfare state. Sweden has been governed by a Social Democratic majority since 1932, with the exception of three periods: 1976–82, 1991–94 and 2006 until today. Social Democratic governments were the dominant force behind social reforms (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999). The concept of the people’s home (folkhemmet) has played an important role in the history of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish welfare state. Folkhemmet has been used mainly to refer to the long period between 1932-76 when the Social Democrats were in power and the concept was put into practice. The concept emphasizes norms such as solidarity, equality and universalism. It displays how the Swedish state is rooted in a collectivist tradition where the protection of collective rights is given priority over individual solutions and, within this framework, citizens trust public authorities and rely on
universal social benefits and services. Furthermore, the “Swedish model” was built around a perception of having found a middle way between capitalism and communism (Scuzzarello 2008: 8; Lister et al. 2007: 62-3).

The 1960s and 70s have been called the golden age of the Swedish welfare state. A huge expansion of social services in Sweden as well as in the other Nordic countries happened during this time (Anttonen 2002). It involved an institutionalized welfare state with comprehensive policies such as a generous basic income security provided by the state, a tax system supporting production and redistribution, and a wage determination system that fomented the reduction of inequalities. Child care, primary and secondary education and after school care were almost exclusively public services. The right to work part-time with full job security and generous and flexible parental leaves were introduced. Welfare policies became inclusive of all classes since people with high income were brought into the system through the principle that benefits were related to income loss. At the same time, everyone was entitled to a basic guaranteed amount with respect to pensions, sickness insurance and parental leave (Hobson 2003: 78). These welfare state reforms had a strong ideological support from the Social Democratic Party.

The universalistic Social Democratic welfare state has been characterized as the “best of all possible thinkable worlds” in terms of promoting equality (Kangas and Palme 2005). More than any other welfare state model, the Nordic model is not just a label applied by welfare regime analysts but is used with pride by Nordic governments and citizens (Lister 2009: 245). That all citizens are entitled to the same rights irrespective of their class or labour market situation has been regarded as the proof of superiority of the model. Nonetheless, the rosy image of the Swedish welfare state has been challenged. Among other things, it has been pointed out that even in the Nordic countries universalism is not complete. Flat-rate benefits are much lower than earnings-related benefits (Anttonen 2002: 72). The principle of universalism is weaker in care services for the elderly and stronger in child care. The idea of equal services for rich and poor does not really work in practice; private market services have always existed alongside public services. Neo-liberal discourses have legitimized a shift in the Swedish welfare state, from emphasizing citizen’s rights to underlining citizen’s obligations (Lister et al. 2007: 62-3). The right-wing Alliance in government since 2006 has argued in favour of reducing state responsibilities and social spending, restructuring social benefits and services and fomenting private initiatives. It can be argued that in this context, individualism and free choice displaces the norm of equality.

**Education policy reforms in the 1960s: Swedish schools go comprehensive**

**Social, political and economic context**

As we have seen, the reforms affecting the structure of basic schooling and access to further education at the secondary and tertiary level have to be understood within the
larger framework of the changes in the Swedish welfare state. Educational reforms have been part and parcel of social change; after provisions for social security, full or semi-full employment and decent medical care, education gained in political priority. The social welfare reforms from the 1930s laid the ground for the enhanced standard of living. A policy of full employment, child allowances and generous pensions provided a framework of social security. The increased level of welfare enhanced aspirations in relation to education. The educational reforms took place after the introduction of child allowances, school health programmes, free school lunches, free teaching materials, study grants and study loans (Husén 1986: 153-5).

The years after the Second World War involved strong economic growth and this lead to an increasing demand for educated workers. The expansion of the demand for education after the Second World War made it clear that a reform of the education system was vital (Larsson 2011; Richardsson 2010; Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004). In the 1960s the educational policy-making discourse in Sweden was characterized by the view that a close union of education and economy was both possible and desirable. Sophisticated feedback mechanisms in the form of research, surveys etc. were supposed to help determine future education needs as exactly as possible. Experts played a key role in the long-term planning of the educational system in relation to the economy (Waldow 2008: 250).

The education reforms of the 1960s meant that the Swedish system was transformed from a traditional European system (early-selection, parallel school types, many selection points and small and exclusive secondary and tertiary education) to a comprehensive, mass education system, with integrated vocational training opportunities (Horn 2007: 17). The successful comprehensivization of the education system and its subsequent democratization of further education depended upon a unique combination of factors which did not operate in other Western European countries. Sweden was not directly involved in World War II and therefore had an advantageous starting point in the context of post-war reconstruction and production. A long period of political stability and economic growth made it possible, in a spirit of consensus (although a small conservative minority took a different view) to plan and implement educational reforms. During this time of political and economic stability, the same political party was power; the Social Democratic Party. This implied a consistency in planning and implementation that is not possible when frequent changes in government take place. The labour market was comparatively peaceful, with strong employers’ organizations and trade unions and with an efficient system of negotiation.

The school system was not changed overnight. The comprehensive school reform took place over at least three decades. After a decade of inquiries and debates, followed by a decade of pilot programmes in the 1950s, a Commission evaluated the experiences and came up with the recommendations which led to the 1962 Education Act (Husén 1989: 346). The expansion of upper secondary education with the 1968 reform took place in the years of economic growth preceding the oil crisis when national economies could still accommodate the costs of their growing educational systems (Husén 1986: 161). Certainly, the expansion of the Swedish education system implied an important rise in
the costs of education: In 1920 the cost of education was less than 1% of the GNP, in the mid-1950s it was 4% and in 1970 it constituted more than 7% (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 74). With the 1960s educational reforms the per-pupil expenditure increased in constant prices in Sweden at some 70% during a 15-years period without causing any particular concern (Husén 1986: 161).

During the first reform period, the Swedish education system rested on the main pillars of non-segregation, social leveling, equality, general citizen competence and public responsibility for education (Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000). One overarching objective of education policy in the Swedish model was to gradually level social and economic gaps and thereby to counteract the most polarizing effects of the market. Swedish education policy was dominated by a view of education as a “public good” (Dahlstedt 2009: 791). Every individual should be guaranteed the right to equal education, institutionally underpinned as a fundamental social right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>The appointment of a School Commission with the aim to study educational reform opportunities. The reform proposals were presented in 1948 (SOU 1948: 27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>The Education Act launch a pilot program introducing a 9-year comprehensive school named enhetsskola.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>The primary education reform: The Education Act introduces a 9-year comprehensive primary school named grundskola.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>A new curriculum for the comprehensive primary school is introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>A new curriculum for upper secondary school is introduced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policies and debates preceding the comprehensive school reforms

In the first half of the 20th century, the Swedish education system was just as selective as most of the European systems. Primary and lower secondary school education system was divided into folk, academic, vocational, and girls schools. The parallel education system divided students to large extent by social class. Among the students who finished upper secondary education the great majority were of upper class background (Arman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 36). However, Sweden had by 1950 practically no private school sector and provisions for all were made in a seven-year primary school (folkskola). School attendance was compulsory between the ages 7 and 13. Those who wanted to continue their studies at the upper secondary level (gymnasium) were better
off enrolling into a special lower secondary school (realskola) at the age of 10 or 12, after grade 4 and 6 in primary school. The gymnasium was not the only option after the lower secondary level of realskolan. There were many vocational or semi-vocational programs that would not qualify students for upper secondary level or for higher education. Although some reforms were carried out before 1946, such as raising the age of compulsory schooling, abolishing the fees in secondary schools, introducing free school meals, child allowances, scholarships, health care for students etc., the basic structure of the education system did not change until the 1950s and 60s (Horn 2007: 17).

The idea of making the first nine years of school education comprehensive entered the Swedish policy debate in the late 1940s. Questions of streaming and tracking were central; there was consensus about the fact that differentiation was necessary, but when was it necessary and how should it be done? The “question of differentiation” (differentierings frågan) was often considered a scientific rather than a political question (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 33; Arman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 34). The education reform was thus dealt with as a pedagogical problem: how far up in the school grades would it be possible to teach all children, with their enormous variation in background and innate ability, in the same programme, not to speak of in the same classroom? In principle every single pupil should receive the kind and amount of formal schooling for which he or she is best suited. But what does “suited” really mean? And who is to determine the suitability: the school, the pupils, or the parents? Researchers and policy-makers asked: to what extent is academic talent wasted in a comprehensive school system as compared to the selective parallel school system? In the debate going on in Sweden in the 1950s this was considered to be the key problem. An argument frequently used to justify early separation of the academically gifted from their classmates was that it is a waste of talent to have the bright pupils slowed down by the dull ones. The talented pupils should to be given an early opportunity to enter elite schools or classes where they can fully develop their ability. Further, the less theoretically oriented were argued to benefit from differentiation as well, because they are spared the feelings of inferiority which arise from the comparison of their poor performances with those of brighter pupils (Husén 1986: 157).

In 1946, a School Commission was set up by the Social Democratic government with members representing different political parties but dominated by prominent Social Democrats like Alva Myrdal and Tage Erlander, Minister of Education who would became Prime Minister (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 49). The purpose of the work of the Commission was to elaborate a plan for the future school system and provide guidance on how to achieve it (Larsson 2011: 65). The Commission recommended a nine-year unitary school, which would integrate into one basic school all the school types. The Commission considered that streaming should be based on ability and it paid attention to the pedagogical and psychological scientific debates on this issue (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 36). When the Commission had to consider how the structure of Swedish formal schooling should be reshaped it initiated a research programme on the development of abilities from the age of 7 to 16, the age range of envisaged mandatory school attendance. The Commission shared the popular
conception that human beings are equipped with two rather independent types of abilities: theoretical or academic on the one hand, and practical or vocational on the other. By finding out how human abilities develop during school age, one would obtain the basis for a decision when it would be appropriate to separate the academically inclined from the more practical ones.

The School Commission envisioned new type of school by means of its curriculum and, in particular, by its methods of teaching and school work would form democratically oriented and responsible citizens with independent and critical personalities. The new school was expected to get away from the authoritarian pedagogy of the “old” school and contribute to educating harmonious and creative students (Husén 1986: 160). The structural change proposed by the School Commission in its report in 1948 was a nine-year “unitary” school, which, in two respects, was conceived as comprehensive: it would cater for all children from a given area, as well as provide all the programmes under the same roof. Hence, the unitary school was to replace the parallel schools of folk, academic, vocational, and girls’ schools. Streaming would be introduced in the 9th grade. The report from 1948 underlined that the “ability reserve” (begåvningsreserven), the capacity not taken advantage of in the current parallel system, would be better used in a comprehensive system with greater opportunities for higher education also among the less privilege classes (Larsson 2011: 70; Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 38).

Equality was a norm that guided the interest in the “differentiation problem” (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 38). Equality then meant equal opportunities to studies, including academic studies which implied that obstacles due to social and economic background had to be eliminated (Larsson 2011: 82). The separation of the academic from the non-academic pupils implied a social class separation, stronger the earlier the separation. But as mentioned above, the reform was initially conceived primarily in pedagogical terms and not as much as a social reform that would broaden the opportunity for the majority of the pupils to obtain further education. The problem was conceived as one of how far up in the grades it would be pedagogically defensible to keep all children together with their spread in academic ability (Husén 1989: 345-6; 1986:155, 159). It was in the early 1960s that social arguments advanced and become dominant as an argument in favour of postponing tracking and streaming.

The 1950 Education Act made provisions for a 10-year pilot programme where primary and lower secondary schools were integrated during the entire nine-year time span of mandatory schooling. This decision was based on the recommendations of the School Commission (Larsson 2011: 66). The municipalities were invited to launch local projects within the general framework of the 1950 Education Act. The Act called for the unification of primary and lower secondary education and total abolition over an unspecified period of all existing schools below the gymnasium. Folk, academic, vocational, and girls schools would all be replaced by Enhetsskolan, the new 9-year, comprehensive “unity school”.

**NEUJOBS**
The comprehensive primary school reform 1962

By 1962, a Government bill proposed the comprehensivisation of primary schools for the entire country (Government bill no. 54). With the comprehensive school reform all types of schools covering compulsory school age were integrated into a common school which catered for all pupils in a given area. Thus, the traditional parallelism at the lower secondary level between schools with different purposes and serving pupils with different social class background was abolished.

At that time of the reform almost half the population of pupils of mandatory school age was already in pilot comprehensive schools (Husén 1989 p. 347-8; 1986:55). The Education Act set up the new comprehensive school system and thereby grundskolan replaced enhetsskolan introduced with the 1950 Education Act. After a decade of intensive experimentation with the comprehensive schools, the Swedish parliament Riksdagen passed a new Education Act which established a ten-year period for the completion of the comprehensive school reform. The ideologically symbolic name enhetsskolan (unity school), the choice of the 1946 “political” School Commission that prepared the 1950 Education Act, was changed to grundskolan (basic school), a name with strong pedagogical overtones (Paulston 1966: 87). Nevertheless, the comprehensive compulsory education progressively achieved a planned structure, content, and philosophical orientation congruent with the egalitarian ideology underlying the Swedish welfare state.

The 1962 education reform a 9-year comprehensive and compulsory school replaced the parallel education system. Thus, grundskolan lasted from age 7 to 16 and introduced a highly centralized curriculum, allocated resources equally and centrally and set up a standardized grade point system that became the only criteria for transition to upper secondary education (Horn 2007: 17). The grades from grundskolan would hence selectively qualify for upper secondary education. The division of enhetsskolan into three stages; grade 1-3, grade 4-6, and grade 7-9 also became the model for grundskolan. Initially, the reform involved a division in the 9th grade into academic and vocational tracks. In the planning of the reform, the majority of the children were expected to go into one of the preparatory vocational lines in the 9th grade. However, in the early sixties nearly 80% of the children went into the tracks preparing for further theoretical studies (Larsson 2011; 73-4; Lundahl 1997: 94). Following from this, the division into different academic and vocational tracks was abolished in 1969 with the introduction of a new curriculum for grundskolan. Instead of the division into different tracks most of the curriculum would be mandatory for all. Some subjects from 7th to 9th grade were optional but counted the same in the transition to upper secondary school. Thereby grundskolan became completely unitary and streaming was postponed (Richarsson 2010: 116). Differences between pupils became not an organizational issue but a pedagogical problem which had to be resolved within the class room through, for instance, adaptation of the education to individual needs, more resources for special education for pupils with special needs and smaller groups (Larsson 2011: 74; Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 40-41). Indeed, in 1972 40% of the pupils received some form of special education (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 65).
The comprehensive upper secondary school reform 1968

The comprehensivization of Swedish education from a parallel selective system to an egalitarian based system culminated with the upper secondary school reform. After the introduction of the comprehensive compulsory primary school grundskolan in 1962, the upper secondary school was reformed in 1968 and made comprehensive as well. (Heidenheimer 1974: 388). Hence, the reform spirit spilled over from primary to upper secondary school and the different types of secondary schools were merged into one integrated gymnasieskola. While in 1960 25% of the applicants for the upper secondary school gymnasium were rejected (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 81), the basic form of the current post-compulsory education system, providing publicly governed education for practically all Swedish 16- to 19-year olds, was established in this time period (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 47).

The Swedish upper secondary education system brings together two historically separate strands of education and training: academic secondary education and non-compulsory vocational education and training. The 1968 reform was the first in a series that merged vocational and academic schools and integrated vocational and academic programmes. A Government bill proposed a reform of the upper secondary education in 1964 (Government bill no. 171). The adoption of the 1968 upper secondary education reform formally unified all post-compulsory education. Gymnasieskolan established a three track system (academic, semi-vocational and vocational), but with no dead-end tracks, with opportunities of transfer between tracks, and with substantial amount of general subjects in the vocational branches (Horn 2007: 17). Thus, various schools and programmes, both theoretical and vocational ones, were brought together into one unified system. This provided flexibility so that transfer from one programme to another could take place. Choice of programme would not imply definitive choice of an academic or vocational path.

The reform can be seen as a response to the growing demand for post-compulsory education and the perceived gap between the existing education system and the needs of the labour market. The difficulty of predicting future competence needs led to solutions that were intended to avoid early and narrow specialization. Therefore previous divisions between the vocational and academic schools and programmes were gathered under the same organizational umbrella. Most vocational programmes lasted for 2 years, whilst the academic counterparts lasted for 3 or 4 years. Although the proportion of general subjects increased, vocational education was still predominantly oriented towards vocational skills and did not include any core courses that were common with the academic tracks (Lundahl et. al 2010; Lundahl 1997). However, both academic and vocational programmes were organized in blocks associated with broad sectors of working life and allowed for gradual specialization. The contents of the academic programmes were modernized and were supposed to include tasks such as projects requiring autonomous student work. The final exams and certificates (studentexamen and realexamen) were replaced by more continuous evaluations (Larsson 2011: 74).
The most important changes were related to vocational education and training. Vocational education was not intended to provide full vocational preparation, but a basis for further on-the-job training. But with the upper secondary school reform vocational education became mainly school-based. The vocational programmes provided more time for general subjects than their predecessors: Swedish, working-life orientation, and physical training became compulsory subjects. The teachers of the academic programmes held university degrees, some of them even a PhD degree, while vocational teachers only had shorter, practical teacher training. These differences were reduced when, as a result of a reform of higher education in 1977, universities and university colleges were given responsibility for all types of teacher education, which were intended to be both practice and scientifically-based (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 47-8; Richardson 2009: 187).

**Actors behind educational reforms**

**The Social Democratic Party**

The Social Democratic Party in government in Sweden 1932-1976 would play a crucial role in promoting and carrying out the education reform described above. Education policy became a widely debated issue after the end of the Second World War among left wing sympathizers and in the 1950s and 60s there was a strong Social Democratic influence on education policy and debate (Richardson 2010: 110). While left wing sympathizers dominated the debate, there was a left-right division in the sense that the left argued in favour of a comprehensive undivided and unified education and the right emphasized the importance of high qualifications. Social Democrats considered the Education Act from 1950 as a decision to abolish the parallel system of education - the question was “how?” The Conservatives considered this to depend on the outcome, success or failure, of the pilot projects (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 53).

Well-known Social Democrats like Alva Myrdal participated in the 1946 School Commission. Alva Myrdal had together with her husband Professor Gunnar Myrdal spent quite some time in the United States and in 1943, they published a book under the title Kontakt med Amerika (Contact with America) which had a long chapter on American education. What particularly intrigued Alva Myrdal was that the strongly capitalist and market oriented American society had advanced more towards an equal and democratic education system than Sweden (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 46). She was interested in the American comprehensive education and the whole conception of a common basic school for all children in a given catchment area. Thus, the School Commission was more prone to look at the United States than at Germany, where an Einheitsschule began to take shape (Husén 1989: 353).

As pointed out above, the transformation of the Swedish education system corresponded to broader changes in the Swedish Social Democratic welfare state. Horn (2007) argues that the transformation of the Swedish educational system from a traditional European (early-selection, parallel school types, many selection points) to a comprehensive, mass education system with integrated vocational training opportunities was successful
precisely because it corresponded to broader universalistic ambitions of the Social Democratic Party. The overriding objective of the reform, as stated by the Social Democrats, was to “democratize” post-primary education which, at the time that the reform was initiated, was largely reserved for the intellectual and social elite. This involved providing better conditions for those who traditionally had been excluded from education and abolishing the parallel education system. Within this vein Olof Palme, Minister of Education in 1967 and Prime Minister from 1970, promoted education as a means to get rid of class inequalities (Larsson 2011: 76; Richardsson 2010: 111-2).

The school reforms, both the one on the comprehensive primary school and that on the upper secondary school (gymnasium), were launched under the dual banner of equality and the formation of citizens for a modern democratic society. Everybody should be put on the same “starting line” and begin the race for a life career on equal terms. Differences in school attainments would reflect capacity; differences in how pupils “by nature” were better or worse than the others. From the policy point of view everybody should be given the opportunity to go ahead in the formal selective system according to his or her ability - and motivation- independently of class, place of residence and parental background. The impetus was also to increase the level of education, to make education more democratic creating good citizens and promote respect for democratic values (Larsson 2011: 12; Husén 1986: 160).

Consensus and broad political alliances

The Social Democrats also forged broad political alliances which required a politics of cross-class universalism (Esping-Andersen 1990: 67). A remarkable feature of the Swedish education reform was the high degree of political and public opinion consensus. Polls conducted around 1960 showed that a strong majority in public opinion supported the comprehensive school reform (Husén 1989: 345). In the 1940s, after more than a decade in power, the Social Democrats had established strong links to large segments of the administrative and intellectual elite whose support was needed for promoting the reform. In the 1950 parliamentary debates on the proposals of the School Commission, criticism was articulated by parliamentarians of the opposition to the Social Democrats. These parties, however, held back from opposition in the final vote so the bill was passed almost unanimously. In 1962, the Education Act which was to finalize the structure of the nine-year comprehensive school reached inter-party agreement (Heidenheimer 1974: 396). There was also a wide agreement among left and right wing political parties on the importance of comprehensivization in relation to the upper secondary reform in 1968. Thus education policy was rather uniform and unitary during this time period (Larsson 2011: 83). This can be contrasted with the left-right divisions that have emerged on education policy later on, in relation to the 1990s reforms and the most recent school 2010 reform.

The labour movement and employers’ organizations

A strong force behind the quest for a unified, comprehensive school consisted of the popular movements, characteristic of Swedish society at the time, particularly the labour
movement. From their point of view, the main motive for a structural reform was to provide increased equality by providing equal access to further education irrespective of social class and place of residence. The inequalities addressed were not only between social classes but also between rural and urban areas (Husén 1986: 155).

The relationship between state, capital and labour, i.e. the Social Democratic government, SAF (the Swedish Employers’ Confederation) and LO (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation), worked in favour of the education reform (Lundahl 1997: 92). When it comes to the upper secondary school reform, LO emphasized that vocational and theoretical education should provide the individual with the knowledge and skills to take an active part in social, cultural and political life. The individual should not be barred from access to further or higher education. Following from this, the 1968 upper secondary school reform meant a step towards a mainly school based vocational training and practically all vocational education at secondary level would became part of gymnasieskolan from 1970. Indeed, an important aim of the reform was to set theoretical and practical secondary education at a more equal footing and to make integration possible (Lundahl 1997: 95). Both SAF and LO supported this reform but with different levels of enthusiasm. SAF felt forced to support the reform because of the urgent need to recruit young people to vocational training and industrial work. However, SAF argued that vocational training had become too broad on the expense of specific goals. LO supported the reform on the basis that it was another step towards an education system without class divisions and injustices, although the reform also had other economic and pedagogical advantages. One of LO’s main concerns was the extension of the general subjects in the new curriculum.

**Primary school teachers and union federations**

The School Commission and Education Ministers of the 1940s and 50s were able to count on strong allies among primary school teachers (folkskollärarna) and the larger union federations. Support for comprehensive citizenship training had been traditional in the Swedish Folk Teachers Association since its founding in the 1880s. The political climate after 1945 gave the pedagogically pro-American primary teacher associations an advantage over the more German influenced secondary school gymnasium teachers. Primary school teachers’ support of the 1948 reform proposals was strong. Their attitude in favour of reform can be understood in the light of the long-cherished goal of achieving parity of prestige and training with the elite corps of university-trained secondary school teachers. The primary teachers were ideologically and organizationally well placed to help mobilize a powerful supportive coalition. The Central Organization of Salaried Employees TCO was able to influence Liberals and Social Democrats. Their links to the popular movements, as represented by the large Cooperative Society and the powerful Trade Union Confederation LO, were built on a mutual interest in the battle against institutionalized privilege (Heidenheimer 1974: 394).
Academic experts

The Swedish professors of educational psychology recommended an early tracking of able students to the 1940 Experts Committee which considered, but failed to endorse, fundamental reorganization. In selecting research advisers, the 1946 political School Committee side-stepped the Conservatives, who had contributed to the 1940 deadlock, and initiated a strong support, and later ample funds, to empirical researchers. In Sweden education and pedagogy entered university faculties earlier than either psychology or sociology and its faculties became the initial home of behavioural studies. To meet objections from sceptics, the Swedish parliament Riksdagen had, in passing the 1950 Education Act, accepted the idea that the comprehensive school reform depended on whether the experimental activities would show its suitability. The Education Act launched a period of pilot programs and research. The 1962 Education Act drew upon the experiences of the pilot program and the research surrounding the success of the comprehensive schools. Thus, the Act counted on the support of experts within the discipline pedagogy (Larsson 2011: 68; Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 44; Heidenheimer 1974: 389).

Resistance against the reform

Secondary school teachers

While opponents of comprehensivization argued that social goals should not be achieved at the cost of lowering educational objectives, in the 1960s the reformers and their allies took the position that certain social goals, like the goal of creating social and cultural unity, were more important than purely pedagogical ones.

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, the debate about comprehensivisation was initially conducted in mainly pedagogical terms (Husén 1989: 345). According to the majority of secondary school teachers early tracking was important; a transfer of bright pupils to academically oriented school types, i.e. to university-preparing realskolor or gymnasia, should take place as early as possible in order to let them develop to their full capacity and not be hampered by their slow-learning schoolmates. Such a policy would also benefit other pupils, because they would not be discouraged by lagging behind all the time (Husén 1986: 156). Within this vein, most Swedish secondary teachers believed that both categories of students gained from early separation. A survey in 1961 of secondary teachers who had taught in comprehensive schools showed that 60 percent believed that the comprehensive school’s disadvantages outweighed their advantages, while only 3 percent evaluated in the reverse order. Those who held that social training and social relations in class rooms had worsened outnumbered by 10 to 1 those who held that they had improved (Heidenheimer 1974: 391).

The hostility of the secondary school teachers towards the comprehensive school reform can be understood in the light of loss of power. The elitist secondary school was an institution where the teachers were instrumental in deciding the fate of the students. The diminished significance of grades and entrance requirements weakened their power. The
Swedish Secondary School Teachers’ Organization (Lärarnas Riksförbund LR) was critical towards the comprehensive school reform but not successful in stopping it (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 55). The peak professional association to which LR belonged, SACO (The Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations), had only been founded in 1947 and was during the 1950s rather isolated. SACO hoped that the research findings based on the comprehensive school pilot programs would show that their warnings were accurate and that this would lead to a reversal of the policy. Instead, research findings and pro-reform propaganda demonstrated numerous social, as well as intellectual, gains. After the 1962 Education Act established the nine-year comprehensive school grundskolan, the secondary teachers decided to collaborate more positively in planning the revision of the upper secondary cycle (Heidenheimer 1974: 393, 395).

It can be noted that there was no considerable resistance among elite middle- and upper class families against the comprehensive school reform. This might be understood in the context of the law of compulsory schooling (6 years) in folkskolan introduced in already 1842. This law was adopted for nation-building purposes since Sweden was weakened after having lost Finland and education became an instrument to build solidarity among different social groups extending education also in rural areas (Larsson 2011). Folkskolan was public and included all social classes – and working, middle and upper class pupils largely went to the same schools.

The comprehensive education reforms: Effects on equality

The Swedish educational reforms of the 1960s have often been described as successful in terms of promoting equality. The comprehensive school reform settled the Swedish tradition of a unified and lengthy compulsory school. In the Swedish education system tracking and streaming take place relatively late. In international comparative research delayed tracking is emphasized as a factor that increases pupils’ opportunities to continue in higher education, regardless of social background.

As showed above, in the 1940s there were four different parallel forms of education in Sweden: folk, academic, vocational, and girls schools. Public education was indeed provided for all children between 7-13 years in the primary school folkskolan, but those who wanted to continue their studies at the upper secondary level gymnasium had to enrol into a lower secondary school realskola at the age of 10 or 12. The 1940 School Commission examined the relationship between primary education and upper secondary education. The report showed statistics of social class distribution on lower and upper secondary education, realskolan and gymnasium. The parallel education system preceding the comprehensive reform clearly divided students to large extent by social class.
Table 1: Social group distribution in percentage of the pupils in realskolor and gymnasium 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social group</th>
<th>Distribution in Sweden</th>
<th>Realskola (5 years)</th>
<th>Realskola (4 years)</th>
<th>Gymnasium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SOU 1944: 21 in in Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004, p. 34.

The overall objective of expanding educational opportunities of young people, particularly from the working-class and rural areas has been successfully achieved. Prior to the comprehensive reform only a small, select social elite had access to further education which prepared for more qualified and elevated positions in society. Before the introduction of the comprehensive schools enhetsskolan and grundskolan much fewer pupils finished upper secondary education and the majority of those who did belonged to the upper class. The great majority had access only to low quality primary education (Husén 1986: 160). In fact, when the comprehensive pilot programme began in 1950, the overwhelming majority of young people left school at the age of 14 with only a seven- year education. In contrast, in the 1980s, the great majority of all young people entered upper secondary school (Husén 1989: 345-6). Hence, the enrolment in upper secondary schools in Sweden grew significantly after the educational reforms of the 1960s. As the table bellow shows, since the 1970s the great majority of all first choice applicants for the academic programmes of upper secondary school were guaranteed a course place. But the universalization of upper secondary education would become with the 1991 reform which further integrated academic and vocational tracks and guaranteed young people a course place.

Table 2: Upper secondary school: number of first choice applicants per course place, 1971–1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic programmes</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 3 and 4 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational programmes</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The enrolment in upper secondary schools also grew significantly after the reforms in relation to social background. The table bellow shows the increase of enrolment in upper secondary education according to social class. The first group born in 1934 chose
upper secondary education at the beginning of the 1950s, before the comprehensive primary and upper secondary school reforms. The second group born in 1948 entered upper secondary education in the mid 1960s when the comprehensive school reform of primary education had been put in practice. The third group born in 1953 started upper secondary education around 1970 when both comprehensive reforms had been carried out (Marklund 1985). The enrolment appears according to social class and grades; the grade system at the time spanned from 1-5: grade 3 equals average and grade five represents the highest possible grade. The table shows a strong increase in the enrolment in upper secondary education for all three social groups. At the same time, the grades achieved in primary school clearly influenced the likeliness to enter upper secondary education.

Table 3: Enrolment in upper secondary education in percentage, according to primary education grades and social background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 1</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social group 3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The principle of equality in education appeared to be simple and straightforward until surveys began to reveal that the reforms did not bring about the equalization anticipated. Social stratification according to home background still prevailed, although it tended to move upwards in the system (Husén 1986: 160). While administrative structures were set up to counter-act parental influences, research found that working-class children generally did worse on tests than middle-class children of the same intelligence (Heidenheimer 1974: 390).

Certainly, the Swedish school system has been regarded as equitable in a comparative perspective, in spite of remaining differences in educational performance between social classes. But studies show that class differences have not decreased over time. The introduction of compulsory comprehensive schools has not been sufficient to counteract this inequality. Despite delayed tracking, variation in performance has increased, which has not been the case in many other countries with delayed tracking. The Swedish National Agency of Education has pointed out that currently other differentiating factors are at work in Swedish compulsory schools. Variation between schools has increased.
and the manner in which schools organize instruction indicates that new forms of tracking and streaming have evolved in compulsory comprehensive schools (Skolverket 2009: 36).

The education reforms carried out at the beginning of the 1990s took place in a very different context than the 1960s reforms. In the next section, the changes towards decentralization and choice in Swedish education policy will be presented and the effects of these shifts will be discussed. The reform of upper secondary education towards further integration of academic and vocational education will also be accounted for.

**Education policy reforms in the 1990s: Decentralisation and choice**

**Social, political and economic context**

Sweden went through a rapid economic, demographic and social transformation in the 1990s. The economic crisis, reaching its peak in 1992–1994, resulted in an extraordinary rise in unemployment. Traditional industries declined at the same time as knowledge intensive production and the service sector expanded and the general education level of those employed rose in all sectors. The demographic changes involved an ageing population, a wave of refugees seeking asylum and further concentration of the population to a few areas, while large regions were characterised by depopulation. The public sector was affected by cuts in social spending, deregulation and a new market and productivity orientation (Larsson 2011: 85). The structural transformations changed social divisions in Sweden. The recession had the effect of widening social differentiation and residential segregation became more marked during this period. The entrance into the European Union in 1995 was another major change. These shifts influenced and altered the political agenda and the welfare system in important respects.

Education was radically affected by the welfare state changes in the 1990s. Indeed, educational reforms are not isolated phenomena but ought to be understood as a mirror of social change. Economic cuts and new demands from the labour market directly influenced education. The recession led to decreased resources for schools and other publicly financed services (Lindblad et. al. 2002: 284). A series of reforms affecting Swedish compulsory schools were introduced at the beginning of the 1990s (Skolverket 2010b). While the school reforms of the 1960s were carried out during a period of steady economic growth and prolonged Social Democratic rule, in the mid-1970s a period of economic and political instability began and the traditional methods of political management and reform were challenged (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 49). After the expansion of the public sector in the 1960s and 70s, health and social care, education and other public services were subjected to severe cuts in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s (Lundahl 1997: 93).
During this period, the relationship between education and the economy was discussed extensively. Contrary to the 1960s, however, the confidence in comprehensive, central planning had disappeared. Following from this, the school system changed from one of the Western world’s most centralized organizations to one of the most deregulated. Steering decisions were to be delegated to a large degree to the market and the individual. The self-regulatory power of market processes was supposed to achieve a better adaptation of the educational system to economic needs than centralized planning. The possibilities for pupils and parents to choose schools increased as well as the opportunities for founding “independent schools”.

Seeing the free play of market forces as superior to centralized planning was an important characteristic of both Swedish and international reform discourse of this time. Furthermore, the concepts of “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy” have come to play a major role in the Swedish education discourse, informed by an international discourse (Waldow 2008: 251-252). From having been regarded as a “public good”, schools have come to be seen more as a “private good”. The focus has shifted towards individual choice, parental responsibility for education, efficiency, competition and individual competence as guiding principles. The principle of equality has gradually shifted from equal outcomes to the principle of equal opportunities. The education system in Sweden as well as in the other Nordic countries has more come to function as a springboard for the individual than a policy instrument for redistribution (Dahlstedt 2009: 791; Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000).

Decentralization

In Sweden welfare reforms in the post-war period were based on ideas of centralism, universality and consensus. The major education reforms in the 1960s, with a strong focus on equality goals, were initiated from the central level. Their implementation was governed by the state through a national curriculum, a great variety of special subsidies and detailed regulations concerning resources, organization, staff and daily work. Nevertheless, when the use of extensive and centralized education reforms as an instrument to promote social change did not have the expected results this lead to a loss of legitimacy of central reforms in education as in other sectors (Armnan, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 21).

Swedish education policy has been restructured faster and more radically than in most other countries. Without a doubt, the most important change in the education system in the 1990s was its substantial decentralization (Larsson 2011; Lundahl et. al. 2010; Dahlstedt 2009; Horn 2007; Lindblad et. al. 2002; Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000). During this period Swedish education policy underlined that schools should be governed from the “bottom-up” by means of collaboration between teachers, parents, pupils and other actors in the local community rather than from the “top-down”, by government and state bureaucracy. Centralized “top-down” government within the education system has gradually been defined as more and more bureaucratic and inefficient (Dahlstedt 2009: 792). For state level politicians the decentralization process represented a possibility to decrease spending and for local politicians it represented an
increase in influence. Teachers’ unions were nevertheless sceptical towards this development since they feared worse working conditions (Larsson 2011: 87).

The educational system was subject to governance reforms intended to promote decentralisation, management by objectives and results, and choice. The reform process implied that far more decisions concerning schools and education were taken at the local level, and with far more different actors involved than before. The aim of the decentralization of education was to encourage greater variation, innovation and flexibility, to stimulate local democracy and influence in education, to reduce spending and to promote efficiency (Skolverket 2010b). The state transferred almost all of its economic governance tools to the municipalities. The governance reforms presupposed that self-governing, responsible and professional teachers would choose suitable methods to attain the curriculum objectives. The introduction of management by objectives and results meant that teachers had to pay greater attention to the interpretation and concretisation of educational goals and to helping pupils attain the goals (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 49; Lindblad et. al. 2002: 284).

The Government bill on municipal mandatorship for teachers and headmasters proposed the transference of responsibility for salaries and employment conditions from the state to the municipalities (Government bill 1989/90: 41). Moreover, the Government bill on Responsibility of Schools (Government bill 1990/1991: 18) clarified the roles and responsibilities for schools. Decentralization, deregulation and goal-driven governance in education characterized the reform. At the national political level, the Swedish Riksdag and Government were to adopt clear national objectives, goals and guidelines which aimed to guarantee equality in education and high quality (SOU 2002: 121, p. 89). As school governing bodies, the municipalities became responsible for implementing and organising these activities as well as providing the right conditions for the professionals, i.e. teachers and school principals, to design activities within the framework established a the central level (SOU 2008:27, p. 52). While in 1991 state resources transferred to the municipalities for education were earmarked, since 1993 they have been included in the general amount of state subsidies for public services and activities. Thereby the municipalities can decide the amount of resources should be allocated to school activities (Larsson 2011: 86; SOU 2002: 121, p. 88).

Decentralization thus implied great freedom for municipalities in the organization of school activities and the allocation of resources to education. In fact, a central notion behind the decentralization reforms was that resource allocation would become more efficient. In terms of prioritizing and allocating designated resources, the sphere of influence of schools, at local level, has greatly increased with decentralization (Skolverket 2010a: 33). But when schools were decentralized and municipalities were given responsibility for allocating resources to schools this resulted in major variations in resource allocation between municipalities. There have, for instance, been large variations in teacher–pupil ratios between municipalities (Skolverket 2010a: 28-9). In practice, school activities have depended largely on the budget the municipality decided to dedicate to education. The goals established for education at the national level were interpreted in different ways by the different municipalities. In sum, quality in education
depended a lot on the municipality and the general regulations to guarantee minimum standards were dismantled (Larsson 2011: 149).

**Choice**

Freedom of choice was another change introduced in education at the beginning of the 1990s. The concept of equality (jämlikhet) was reinterpreted as equal value (likvärdighet) rather than unity and sameness (Armnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004; Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000). Choice as norm was considered to improve variety, innovation, efficiency and productivity.

Up to the 1990s practically all education in Sweden at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels was public. This was motivated by a wish to provide all children with an education of equal content and standard. One aspect of the changed structures for school management had to do with creating formal opportunities for different actors to found and manage schools. The system of grants and subsidies was changed, creating new conditions for the founding of “independent schools” (friskolor). The Moderate Party, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Green Party promoted freedom of choice and pupils’ vouchers. Hence, the centre-right government of 1991–1994 considerably extended the possibilities to establish independent schools. Government bill 1991/92:95 on choice and independent schools developed these ideas. The objective was to increase children’s and parents’ freedom to choose schools, which meant freedom to choose between different public schools but also to choose an independent school (SOU 2002:121, p. 93). The new government wanted to break the public monopoly in education and let market forces operate in education as well. Within this vein, all public and independent schools would be granted the same economic subsidies (Skolverket 2010b: 124). The previous requisite that independent schools had to develop school activities that substantially differed from Grundskolan was abolished. Thereby public schools and independent schools became competitors (Larsson 2011: 94).

Social Democrats and the Left Party considered for a long time that the creation and promotion of independent schools was a kind of privatization of education. From this perspective, the introduction of independent schools would lead to a market oriented education, increased inequality and segregation. Thus, Social Democrats used for a long time the concept of “private schools” (privatskolor) instead of “independent schools”. But since the decision to grant independent schools the same economic conditions as the public schools, the attitude towards independent schools has changed (Armnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 23, 55). The reform in favour of independent schools remained in place when the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994.

The large majority of compulsory and upper secondary schools in Sweden are still public schools. But the reform has implied that independent schools receive similar financial support as those in the public sector. More specifically, “independent schools” that follow the general national curriculum receive public funding while “private schools” not following the general curriculum, do not receive public funding. The basic
principle was that each school would receive a school allowance per pupil. A more favourable attitude towards the establishment of independent schools and the pupils’ voucher (elevpeng) were important features in school choice reforms in Sweden during this period (Lund 2008: 634).

The number of independent schools has increased continuously, particularly at the upper secondary level, gymnasieskolan. In 1989/1990 0.9% of the students in compulsory education went to independent schools and 1.5% of the students in upper secondary education. In 1999/2000 the corresponding shares in independent education were 3% and 4%, respectively (Skolverket 2000). Furthermore, the number of independent schools has more than doubled since the mid-1990s and the number of pupils attending independent schools had risen to nine percent by 2007/2008. Independent schools are no longer seen as just complementing municipal schools, but have, to an ever increasing extent, become an integral part of the Swedish educational system (Skolverket 2008). In 2002, it was decided that independent schools are not allowed to charge school fees (SOU 2002: 121, p. 93-4). Still, above all well-educated and otherwise resourceful parents make use of the increased choice possibilities (Lindblad et. al. 2002: 287). However, there are important regional differences in the possibilities to choose independent schools; most of the independent schools are located in the big cities and their surroundings (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 63).

Percentage of pupils in independent schools in primary and upper secondary schools

Source: Elaborated on the basis of data in Yearbook of Educational Statistics 2012
Steps towards further comprehensiveness: The 1991 upper secondary school reform

The change in upper secondary education was the most wide-ranging reform of the organization of the education system during the 1990s. In contrast, the comprehensive primary school grundskolan was not subject of such an extensive organizational reform. However, the decentralization process and the focus on children’s and parents freedom of choice opened up for greater local influence on the organization and structure of schools at all levels and the creation of independent schools at both grundskolan and gymnasieskolan (Skolverket 2010b: 124). In 1994 new curriculums were introduced for both primary and upper secondary education which implied that goals were set at state level but the municipalities were free to find the way to achieve those goals.

The 1991 reform of upper secondary education introduced greater variety of programmes, all three year long (before 2, 3 and 4 years). The impetus behind the reform was to give more pupils the possibility to continue to tertiary studies. Further, the need to adjust upper secondary education to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing labour market was stressed. Upper secondary education should do more than meet the demands of the contemporary economy and young people should also be provided with a social safety net in the form of broad education (SOU 1992: 94, p. 57). Providing the individual with more freedom of choice was emphasized much more strongly than in previous education reforms. The reform implied a step towards the universalization of upper secondary education given that municipalities were now obliged to offer upper secondary education to all young people between 16 and 20 who had finished grundskolan (Larsson 2011: 91). Young people’s right to upper secondary education was protected by law and municipalities were obliged to offer a broad selection of national programmes (Government bill 1990/91:85). The national curriculum resulting from the reform included 16 national programmes, 14 of which were vocational programmes, and a range of special, local and individual programmes. The vocational programmes included work place instruction at places of work for at least 15% of the scheduled time, an increase compared to the earlier curriculum. However, all the vocational and academic programmes included a substantial common core of general subjects: Swedish, English, civics, religion, mathematics, natural science, physical education and art/ music/ drama. A large individual project and optional courses were other common elements. In general, the differences between academic and vocational upper secondary education were reduced. Importantly, both tracks provided general eligibility to enter higher education (Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000: 110; SOU 2008: 27, p. 52; Lundahl 1997).

The national trade unions were driving forces behind the reform. They feared that the restructuring of industry and working life would have negative effects for employees unless schooling prepared them for flexibility and further development. The social partners, particularly the Swedish Employers’ Confederation SAF and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation LO, actively promoted a reform aimed at the modernisation of vocational education at upper secondary level. They argued that the existing 2-year
programmes did not provide enough qualified and flexible manpower to meet national economic goals, workers needed more theoretical education and workplace training.

Hence, the reform led to vocationally oriented programmes being more theoretical than previously. There was also resistance towards this reform; the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party opposed the extensive integration of vocational and academic studies, arguing that the preparation for higher education would be undermined and that it would be a waste of resources to force young people to study longer than necessary (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 49-50).

**Comprehensiveness - and increased differences**

Since the 1991 upper secondary education reform the enrolment at this level of education has been constantly very high in Sweden. Data from the Swedish National Education Agency shows, for instance, that in 1998 the participation on upper secondary education was 98% of the 16-19 year olds.

Table 3: Participation in different forms of education in Sweden 1998 at different ages (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of education</th>
<th>Participation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child care 1-5 years</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school 6 years</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive school 6/7-16 years</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Skolverket (1999).

A we have seen, the reform implied a step towards the universalization of upper secondary in the sense that young people’s right to upper secondary education was protected by law; municipalities were obliged to offer upper secondary education to all young people between 16 and 20 who had finished grundskolan. But while access to education has increased, studies indicate that differences in education have augmented along class, ethnic and geographic lines since the 1990s. Even if the formal divisions within the education system are few and in some cases have become less distinct, e.g. between academic and vocational programmes of upper secondary school, new divisions emerge and others are strengthened. The highest proportions of students who leave compulsory school without pass grades in one or several subjects are found in the big cities and suburbs, the lowest shares in small and sparsely populated municipalities. Children with a non-Swedish background and with poorly educated parents are over-represented among those who fail in one or more subjects in 9th grade. In contrast, students in independent schools have somewhat higher levels of achievement compared with students in public schools (Skolverket 1999).

A general principle is that family finances should not determine access to education at any level. However, during the economic recession of the 1990s, public expenditure on
education decreased markedly and in ways that tended to hit the children in most need of support. There have been important cuts in the number of teaching hours, in particular for children with special needs and children who do not have Swedish as their mother tongue. The scope of special needs support in comprehensive schools increased during the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, resources, particularly for special education and language teaching for immigrant children, have been severely reduced. Studies show that pupils do not always get access to such support, despite having been assessed as being in need of special support (Skolverket 2008).

Young people’s transfer from school to work has become much more difficult, since many entrance jobs have disappeared and the level of qualification requirements has risen. Young people who leave compulsory school without pass grades in all subjects are not admitted to the 3-year upper secondary school programmes, in practice a requirement to get a job today. Instead they are assigned an individual programme in order to complete their grades. The individual programme has a marked over-representation of children whose parents are poorly educated or have an immigrant background (Lindblad et. al. 2002: 289).

Differences between schools, areas and regions have tended to increase. The diminishing differences between vocational and academic tracks in secondary school can contribute to equality in educational careers between individuals from different social backgrounds. Nonetheless, the decentralization of educational policies, school organization and curriculum decisions leads to a variation in educational content across social strata that in turn might run counter to equalization (Grand et al. 2003, in Skolverket 2010b : 134). The decentralization of education has by many researchers been described as an international movement towards a market oriented and privatized education. Such studies have emphasized segregation and exclusion as effects of decentralization (Skolverket 2010b: 132). That differentiation in attainment outcomes between schools has increased during the 1990s is confirmed in the Systematic Review What influences Educational Achievement in Swedish Schools? (Skolverket 2010a: 23). Studies of school-choice reforms (that is, increased opportunities to found independent schools as well as increased opportunities for pupils to attend such schools) have tended to focus on the segregating and excluding effects of such reforms. But even if the majority of Swedish studies have found that segregation of schools has increased, there is little agreement about the degree to which school reforms are the root cause. One confounding problem, alluded to in the systematic review, is that residential segregation has increased during the same period (Skolverket 2010a: 22). Furthermore, parents with higher education opt for independent schools to a greater degree and the possibility to choose an independent school varies a lot in different regions and municipalities (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004: 57-8).

A number of studies indicate that forms of streaming within comprehensive compulsory schools are relatively common. Ability grouping has tended to increase. Four out of ten compulsory school pupils participate in streamed groups differentiated by attainment levels in one or several subjects. Streaming by attainment level means that pupils are
separated into various groups based on levels of achievement. Streaming is most common in mathematics, Swedish and English classes (Skolverket 2010a).

**Education policy reform 2008-11: Towards employability and entrepreneurship**

**Global trends and national context**

In this section the most recent educational reform will be discussed in the context of international trends in education and the shift in Sweden from Social Democratic rule to the right wing “Alliance” government.

Global policy trends addressing and influencing post-compulsory education; the promotion of lifelong learning, competence, employability, entrepreneurship and flexibility are clearly visible features in the Swedish reform agenda today. The Swedish public sector reforms in general and education reforms in particular have followed European and global trends, including marketization and emphasis on individual choice and entrepreneurship. Sweden’s entrance into the European Union has implied that the discourse of lifelong learning, flexibility, competitiveness and learning outcomes gradually entered the arena of education policies.

The concept of “competence” prominent in the most recent education reform has meanings which are closely related to a dominating international discourse, with quantification and comparisons as vital ingredients (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 57). The competence concept is part of an international competence discourse that is constantly present in the Swedish discussions on contemporary education, often connected to quality (Liedman 2008). The intention is to quantify performance and the competence concept is supposed to enable comparisons between individuals’ performance and efficiency.

Knowledge has also become part of the discourse of “lifelong learning”. On the one hand, lifelong learning is characterised as individuals’ ongoing opportunities and life chances, and on the other as their constant adaptation to the shifts of the labour market. While the current national upper secondary school curriculum implicitly reflects the first meaning of lifelong learning, the emphasis on competence and influence of stakeholders in the Government Official Report from 2008, Future Road: Reformed Upper Secondary Education, comes close to the second, meaning the adaptation to the rapidly shifting needs of the labour market. The recent upper secondary reform implies that there will be clearer definitions at the national level of what counts as valid knowledge and quality standards of knowledge (Lundahl et.al 2010: 53).

“Entrepreneurship” has gradually been given more scope in teaching in Sweden. The idea is that young people should consider it is just as natural to be self-employed as to be an employee. This idea has long been disseminated by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv) and its predecessor, the Swedish
Employers’ Confederation SAF. The right-wing government that took power with the 2006 election has repeatedly emphasized that entrepreneurship is one of the issues that needs to be brought to the fore in the reform of the national syllabus. According to the Government, entrepreneurship should be run like a thread throughout the entire education system. It is further underlined that the primary school should encourage the student’s curiosity, self-confidence and capacity to make decisions and by other means highlight skills that are essential for entrepreneurship (Dahlstedt 2009: 795). Within this vein, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Industry insisted in an article in Svenska Dagbladet (September 17 2011): “Teach young people to be entrepreneurs”!

The incorporation and realization of global trends are formed in and by the specific Swedish historical and cultural context (Lundahl et. al 2010: 46). In Sweden there is no widespread support for a parallel school system of the type that existed until the 1960s. The compulsory school grundskolan is broadly politically entrenched. The decentralization of the Swedish school system has, however, led to an earlier and more marked differentiation. The reform of upper secondary education proposed by the current government is also a manifestation of the tendency towards earlier streaming. The importance of pupils’ performances and choices in grundskolan will increase (Skolverket 2010b: 125). The independent schools have challenged equality by adding other actors providing education than the public. This can be balanced with the increased choice that has been the motivation of promoting independent schools and more local organization in general.

Considering the development towards greater differences and inequalities, it is not surprising that more government control instruments have been added (Skolverket 2010b: 126). It has been argued that the principles of management by objectives and results needs to be strengthened and developed to ensure that the quality of education is improved (SOU 2007: 28, p. 27). The lack of clarity and consistency in the central government message to the local level is considered to have contributed to teachers being reduced to their own solutions in their planning at the local level (SOU 2007: 28, p. 30). With the most recent reform education continues decentralized with municipalities as the main responsible but central state control increases by establishing a clearer framework for school activities. At central state level the requirements on independent schools have become more detailed (Larsson 2011: 161). The Education Act from 2010 establishes the same rules for both public and independent schools. All schools have to follow the same rules of teachers’ qualifications, time of instruction and curriculum. Special rules for religious independent schools are specified in the Education Act.

**A shift away from comprehensiveness: The 2010 upper secondary school reform**

In the 2006 election campaign, the centre-right wing alliance that subsequently came to power announced its intention to separate the academic and vocational programmes of upper-secondary education and introduce a modern, flexible apprenticeship training (Allians för Sverige 2006). Once in office, the Minister of Education Jan Björklund promptly finished the preparations for the upper secondary school reform. A
Commission was initiated with terms of reference that coincided to a large extent with the stated intentions in the election manifesto. The Commission report SOU 2008:27 Road to the Future — Reformation of upper secondary education was presented in 2008. The report proposed a new structure for Swedish upper secondary education, with particular emphasis on changes in vocational education. The proposal aimed at higher quality in both vocational programmes and programmes that prepare students for further study (SOU 2008:27, p. 51). The major problem identified was that upper secondary education was too uniform. This resulted in both insufficient preparation for higher education and inadequate training for occupational work. While many students in the vocational programmes had difficulties in completing their education, there was also a gap between vocational education and the needs of industry. This was considered to reduce the employability of young people (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 50).

A Government bill largely based on the proposals in the Government Official Report was delivered to Parliament in 2009 (Government Bill 2008–09: 199). The decision to reform of the upper secondary school system has come into force in 2011 and will be developed in the years to come. The reform of upper secondary education aims to promote the provision of competence and competitiveness of trades, companies and individuals. While economic growth and restructuring are addressed, the social functions of education are downplayed. Economic needs are primarily defined at trade and enterprise levels and, hence, vocational programmes should be better matched to the needs of business and the collaboration between schools and trades should be strengthened. Education at all levels is expected to contribute to entrepreneurship and provide young people with the knowledge of how to start and run businesses. Apprenticeship training at upper secondary level is considered advantageous to both young people and employers. In vocational programmes subjects that are important from a democracy and citizenship perspective are explicitly reduced in favour of vocational preparation.

At the core of the proposed reform is a clearer distinction between programmes preparing students for work on the one hand, and further studies on the other hand. Upper secondary school should prepare in a better way for working life and further vocational education, and higher university education respectively. This will be achieved by differentiation of entry requirements and establishing much stronger boundaries between the contents of vocational and academic subjects. The contents of core subjects will be adapted to the main character of the vocational programmes. Furthermore, upper secondary schools will provide two different kinds of qualifications and degrees: vocational and academic. The contents of general subjects are intended to be adapted to the educational goals of the different academic and vocational programmes. There is no intention to make all students eligible for higher education. The contents and quality of the natural science and social science programmes are meant to be adjusted to the demands of higher education. Vocational education and training students can pursue options that can provide them with eligibility to higher education, but that is up to them. The new upper secondary school degrees will come into existence in 2014 (Larsson 2011: 169-70; Lundahl et. al. 2010: 50-3).
This new trend towards greater differentiation between vocational and academic tracks implies a shift away from the goal of comprehensiveness that has guided earlier reforms. The sharp division between vocational and academic strands has also been the most controversial aspect of the reform. Lundahl et. al. (2010) argue that while the second reform period in the early 1990s was characterised by a gradual shift from education as a common good to stressing the individual’s freedom of choice among a multitude of alternatives, the current reform of upper secondary education means a partial restoration of older, traditional values and objectives. The reform breaks the trends towards the homogenisation of upper secondary education and theorising of vocational education. New courses will be subjected to a stricter quality assessment and young people will be encouraged to choose options that make them more employable. The balance between satisfying the individual’s desires and the needs of the labour market seems to have shifted in favour of the latter. The present reform strongly emphasises the importance of knowledge that is relevant to employability and it must be defined in close collaboration with the main stakeholders: economic sectors and employers offering occupations of various kinds on the one hand, and higher education institutions on the other. But the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise has not been altogether convinced. The Confederation has argued that the competence demands of the industry are constantly developing and multifaceted and in many cases include sound knowledge of general subjects (Lundahl et. al. 2010: 55-6).

Towards enhanced quality or an unequal school?

The preparation and adoption of the school reform of 2010 has lead to the on-going debate about the problems and future of the Swedish education system. During the last decade the OECD PISA studies (OECD 2004, 2007) have also been widely debated in Sweden. Declining results in primary school, and their causes, have been an important issue. Swedish education has declined in its attainments in reading comprehension. The studies show that attainments in Mathematics and Science have declined significantly since 1995 (Skolverket 2006). At the same time, Sweden still tends to score above average from an international perspective. The developments have occurred after the introduction of independent schools and decentralization of education. But there is no agreement on what the causes of the declining results are. And there exist very different views of what to do about the problem of declining attainments.

The centre-right wing parties - The Moderate Party, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democratic Party- that form the “Alliance” in government and stand behind the reform defend the importance of grades, the accumulation of knowledge and improving results, increased discipline, entrepreneurship and the division into highly competitive theoretical education and apprenticeship training. Stricter national control and regulations have been introduced; the introduction of the national school inspection, increased number of national tests, new rules on the grade system, clearer knowledge requirements and curriculum and new rules regarding the qualifications of teachers (Larsson 2011). The argument is that the education reform will lead to higher quality in Swedish schools.
The leader of the Liberal Party, Jan Björklund, has been the Minister of Education since the centre-right wing parties formed government in 2006 and has been one of the most prominent figures in the public debate. Björklund has vigorously criticized the Social Democratic legacy in education and argued for the importance of grades, exams, order, discipline and knowledge. In an article in the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet the Minister of Education together with the Swedish Secondary School Teachers’ Organization LR (Lärarnas Riksförbund) strongly criticizes the decentralization of education carried out in the 1990s and promotes the return to state responsibility and centralized education. He argues that the decentralization has led to teachers’ low status, qualifications and wages and to the great differences in allocation of resources and obtained results across municipalities (Svenska Dagbladet March 15, 2011). The other parties in the government do, however, not support such a change even if they are often critical to the effects of decentralization.

Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Green Party have forcefully criticized the recent education policy reforms and the trend towards inequality and segregation. The comprehensiveness of upper secondary education is defended by the opposition parties. While the 1991 reform built on the assumption that all students, regardless of their future occupations, would need a common core of knowledge of Swedish, English and other general subjects, the integration of academic and vocational education is abandoned in the most recent reform. The opposition parties have pointed out that young people will have to make career decisions at a very early stage, the risks of dropouts and deadlocks will increase, class differences will be exacerbated and changing career paths will become more difficult. In addition, it is argued that a large proportion of young people who are currently attending a vocational programme plans to participate in some form of higher education later on, but this will become more difficult. At the same time, the industry and the labour market will not find people with the required qualifications (Lundahl et al. 2010: 51). Furthermore, the Left Party has emphasized the importance of smaller groups, more teachers, increased resources to special education and pupils’ democracy. Pupils’ results on Mathematics and reading comprehension should not depend on the support they can get from their parents. The economic gains of independent schools are contrasted with the impoverishment of the public schools (Aftonbladet December 27, 2011). The Social Democrats emphasize the importance of adult education opportunities (Komvux) in order to guarantee a high enrolment in tertiary education (Social Demokraterna 2011).

The media has also contributed to the debate drawing attention to problems in the Swedish education system, education policy and current reforms. For instance, a series of reports under the title “the unjust school” has been presented in Swedish public radio, discussing the tendencies towards inequalities, segregation, the lack of status and authority of teachers, etc. (Sveriges Radio 2011). A wide range of stakeholder in education have participated in the debate; pupils, teachers, parents, politicians, academics etc. And the debate carries on.
Conclusions

The aim of this case study on Swedish education policy has been to examine the different educational reforms carried out in Sweden 1960-2010, with a special focus on the shift towards -or away from- a comprehensive educational system. The case study highlights the content of the reforms, the contexts in which they were adopted, the actors behind the reforms and discusses their effects on equality. The Swedish education system has gone through three major waves of reform. The conclusions from the study of these different reform periods will be summarized below.

1960s

The first wave was the comprehensive school reforms of primary and upper secondary education in the 1960s. The case study shows that the spirit of these educational reforms coincided with the ideology of the Social Democratic Party in government in their emphasis on equality and universal rights. These values also underpinned the Swedish universalistic welfare state during its “golden age”; the time of its expansion in the 1960s and 70s. One overarching objective of the reforms was to gradually level social and economic gaps. Swedish education policy was considered as a “public good” and every individual should be guaranteed the right to equal -public- education, a fundamental social right. The time of the first wave of reforms was a period of political stability and economic growth. The Social Democrats were in power during four whole decades (1932-1976). This implied a consistency in planning and implementation of education reforms. Additionally, Sweden was not directly involved in the Second World War and therefore had an advantageous starting point in the context of post-war reconstruction and production. The labour market was comparatively peaceful, with strong employers’ organizations and trade unions and with an efficient system of negotiation. A long period of economic growth made it possible to increase the social spending on education without causing any particular concern. The strongest actor behind the reforms was certainly the Social Democratic Party, but there was a wide social and political consensus on the importance of comprehensive education. This consensus can also be understood as informed by the broader support for the “Swedish model” at this time. None of the opposition parties voted against the reforms. The Social Democrats also established broad alliances, with the labour movement in general and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation LO and the union of primary school teachers in particular. In comparison with the strong and wider support in favour of the comprehensive reforms, the resistance of the secondary school teachers and their organization Swedish Secondary School Teachers’ Organization was weak. There was no significant resistance among elite families against the comprehensive school reform. This can be related to the law of compulsory schooling (6 years) in folkskolan introduced in 1842 for nation-building purposes. Folkskolan was public not private and included all social classes - and working, middle and upper class pupils largely went to the same schools.
The Swedish educational reforms of the 1960s have often been described as successful in terms of promoting equality. The reform settled the Swedish tradition of comprehensive education with a unified 9 year compulsory school and an integrated upper secondary school. The overall objective of expanding educational opportunities of young people, particularly from the working-class was achieved. Prior to the comprehensive reform only a small, select social elite had access to further education. The compulsory nine-year primary school was fully established in Sweden by 1972 and by then the enrolment rate was close to 100%. Likewise, enrolment rates in upper secondary schools in Sweden have grown significantly after the educational reform of 1968 and participation would become universal.

1990s

The second wave of education reforms was in the 1990s. Education was radically affected by the welfare state changes in the 1990s. The economic crisis resulted in an extraordinary rise in unemployment. Traditional industries declined at the same time as knowledge intensive production and the service sector expanded and the general education level of those employed rose in all sectors. The recession had the effect of widening social differentiation and segregation became more marked during this period. The public sector was affected by cuts in social spending, deregulation and a new market and productivity orientation. Contrary to the 1960s the confidence in comprehensive, central planning had disappeared. The most important change in the education system in the 1990s was its substantial decentralization. During this period Swedish education policy underlined that schools should be governed from the “bottom-up” rather than from the “top-down”. Centralized “top-down” government within the education system was defined as bureaucratic and inefficient. For state level politicians the decentralization process represented a possibility to decrease spending, while decentralization implied great freedom for municipalities in the organization of school activities and the allocation of resources to education. Freedom of choice was another change introduced in this period. Up to the 1990s practically all education in Sweden at primary, secondary and tertiary levels was public. One aspect of the changed structures for school management had to do with creating formal opportunities for different actors to found and manage schools. The centre-right wing government (1991-94) wanted to break the public monopoly in education and let market forces operate in education as well. Pupils’ vouchers were introduced and public and independent schools would be granted the same economic conditions and subsidies. Thereby public schools and independent schools became competitors. Studies have highlighted that differences between schools, areas and regions have tended to increase since the 1990s. The decentralization of educational policies, school organization and curriculum decisions has been criticized for leading to greater inequalities. Differentiation in attainment outcomes between schools has increased since the 1990s. These can be considered unforeseen consequences of the changes in education policy.

The 1991 reform of upper secondary education introduced a further integrated three year long upper secondary school. The differences between academic and vocational upper secondary education were reduced. All the vocational and academic programmes
included a substantial common core of general subjects. Both academic and vocational tracks provided general eligibility to enter higher education. The reform implied further universalization of upper secondary education given that municipalities were now obliged by law to offer upper secondary education to all young people between 16 and 20 who had finished primary school. The impetus behind this reform was to give more pupils the possibility to continue to tertiary studies and to adjust upper secondary education to meet the requirements of the rapidly changing labour market. The national trade unions were driving forces behind the reform. The social partners, particularly the Swedish Employers’ Confederation SAF and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation LO, actively promoted a reform aimed at the modernisation of vocational education at upper secondary level. In contrast to the tendency towards greater inequalities mentioned above, the diminishing differences between vocational and academic tracks in secondary school have been seen as contributing to equality in educational careers between individuals from different social backgrounds.

2010

Global policy trends addressing post-compulsory education, such as the promotion of lifelong learning, competence, employability, individual choice and entrepreneurship are visible features in the Swedish reform agenda today. The concept of “competence” is related to the quantification of performance and is supposed to enable comparisons between individuals’ performance and efficiency. The discourse of “lifelong learning” is linked to individuals’ opportunities and life chances, and their constant adaptation to the shifts of the labour market. “Entrepreneurship” has gradually been given more scope in teaching in Sweden. According to the current centre-right wing government, entrepreneurship should be run like a thread throughout the entire education system. The recent education reform promotes the provision of competence and competitiveness of trades, companies and individuals, while the social functions of education are downplayed. The decentralization of the Swedish school system has led to an earlier and more marked differentiation. The independent schools have challenged equality by adding other actors providing education than the public. As a response to these developments and to promote greater quality, the government has introduced new control instruments establishing a clearer framework for school activities, curriculum and teachers’ qualifications, more national exams, etc.

The 2010 Education Act implies a wide-ranging market-driven reform of upper secondary education. This reform is a manifestation of the tendency towards greater differentiation between academic and vocational tracks. Upper secondary school should prepare in a better way for working life and higher university education respectively. It is argued that this will be achieved by differentiation of entry requirements and establishing much stronger boundaries between the contents of vocational and academic subjects. The contents of core subjects will be adapted to the main character of the vocational programmes. Upper secondary schools will provide two different kinds of qualifications and degrees: vocational and academic. Social Democrats and the Left Party in opposition have pointed out that young people will have to make career decisions at a very early stage, the risks of dropouts and deadlocks will increase, class
differences will be exacerbated and changing career paths will become more difficult. The reform definitively breaks the trends towards the homogenisation and integration of upper secondary education. The knowledge that is relevant to employability is enhanced.

References


Government bill 54 (1962) on the reform of mandatory education (Prop. nr 54 ang. reformering av den obligatoriska skolan).

Government bill 171 (1964) on the reform of upper secondary education (Prop. nr 171 ang. reformering av de gymnasiala skolorna).


SOU 1944: 21 Sambandet mellan folkskolan och högre skola. 1940 års skolutrednings-betänkande och utredningar II.


Chapter 3: Educational tracking in Germany: six decades of hesitant and disaggregated reform?

Anna-Elisabeth Thum

1. Introduction

The debate around educational reforms – and particularly late tracking - has once again been re-sparked in Germany: two main catalysts have been (1) the recent shift of the Germany-wide distribution of political powers towards parties supporting comprehensiveness of the school system (Der Spiegel 2011a, Der Spiegel 2011b) and (2) the publication of unfavorable PISA results for Germany in 2004 and 2007 (Schlicht 2009:1). In 2011 for the first time since 1953 a ‘red-green’ coalition governs Baden-Wuerttemberg, a traditionally conservative state and the Social-Democratic Party (henceforth SPD) continues to gain in polls (see for instance ARD 2011).

In this research project, we focus on a single aspect of an educational reform, namely the comprehensiveness of the educational system. We understand the comprehensiveness of the educational system as characterized by (a) the age/time of tracking and (b) the level of unification of curricula across performance groups. Educational systems with later age of tracking and more unified curricula are considered to be more comprehensive. We understand tracking as the separation into different schools.

The idea of later tracking in education is a policy idea that is supposed to decrease the socio-economic gradient – the strength of the relation between social background and educational attainment – and increase equality of opportunity in education (cf. Causa and Chapuis 2009, Schuetz and Woessmann 2004). Schlicht (2009:1) explains well the sociological origin of the interest in this question and the reasons why educational inequality is seen as negative in modern societies: educational inequality is connected to a waste of resources, it is seen as unjust and it is believed to be a fundament for stability and functioning of democracy. She refers to the belief that structures of the education system and education policies can influence the relationship between inequality of opportunity in education and PISA results as ‘neo-institutional approach’ (Schlicht 2009:6). Schlicht (2009:2) points out that the educational inequality of opportunity in Germany has been named as a reason for the unfavorable PISA results (Prenzel 2004, 2007).

---

1 We would like to thank Galina Potjagailo for her excellent research assistance in compiling the case study for Berlin.
2 Program for International Student Assessment (OECD)
3 „Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland“ (Cooperation of public broadcasting stations in Germany)
4 As opposed to streaming which we understand as the separation within the same school.
We understand an educational reform as a nation-wide or at least Laender-wide reconfiguration of at least one sector of the educational system. This reconfiguration can take place in one round or it can be a bundle of different policy changes pointing in the same direction. In Germany there has not been a reform of this type despite a permanently on-going debate on educational reforms. In this paper we develop the hypothesis that a consensus among policy makers, researchers, the public opinion and stakeholders has not been found but that there have been reform movements, reform ideas and policy changes:

| Hypothesis: The German education system has moved to some extent towards a more comprehensive system but in a hesitant and disaggregated way. In Germany no nation-wide reform of at least one sector of the educational system has taken place but a series of policy changes which did have an effect of partial educational systems in the Laender. Consequently we hypothesize that the German education system has moved towards a more comprehensive system to some extent. |

and we ask why the reforms were only in a hesitant and disaggregated way:

| Question: Why were the reform attempts hesitant and disaggregated? |

Factors determining this destiny of German education reforms are likely to be a composition of conservatism and historically-based fear of change, federalism combined with cultural sovereignty of the states and a highly differentiated political party system (multi-party system), rigidity of the education system, disaccord within the reform movement, strong position of parents and popularity of the Gymnasium as an elitist institution which hints at reproductive features of the system. Adherents of innovative movements - such as the Reformpaedagogik which advocates a strong view on the abilities of the child rather than its social background - needed to fight hard against these tight structures. It can be said, however, that there were legislation changes destined at creating a system characterized by more equal opportunities, but these did not stem from a reform as such.

Throughout this paper we examine the adequacy of this hypothesis by analyzing the history of reforms, the structure of the German education system, the context of reform ideas and the forces affecting the debate around these ideas. Our focus is on the post-war period and on Western Germany: in the pre-unification period we focus on West Germany since we are most interested in a continental education model. We include in our discussion elements of comprehensiveness from the East German model since they entered the discussion on the development of a German education model after 1989.
The paper is structured in the following way: in the second section we analyze the history of reform ideas in Germany, in Section 3 we present the German education system and examine it for elements of comprehensiveness, the fourth section designates the social, political and economic context, the fifth section presents an analysis of the forces and actors affecting the political debate, the sixth section provides a short analysis of changes that have actually happened, the seventh section looks at tracking (changes) at the federal level and their outcomes and the seventh section concludes by looking at the current situation.

2. A history of reform ideas: a view on the specific dynamics of the German debate

In this section we provide a timeline giving an overview of to some extent significant changes to the German nation-wide education system in terms of tracking and the ‘tripartite’ system. It shows that despite the presence of a permanent education reform debate, a large-scale policy reform implying obligatory measures has not taken place in Germany. It also shows the strong ideological and political inspiration of the debate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Stuttgart Hohenheim resolution: proposal to modify the tripartite organization advances towards more comprehensiveness of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>with the independence of Germany, a possibility of change occurred but high preference for the Weimar Republic system hampered this. German educationists and civil servants, churches, universities, employers, teacher and parent associations were against the reform plans of the Allies. (Ertl and Phillips 2000: 407 and Horn 2007:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>set-up of the Deutscher Ausschuss fuer das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen (‘German committee for education’) to observe the German education system and elaborate advice and recommendations. They mainly found that a fundamental change of the system needed to be undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Düsseldorf Abkommen: attempts of unification of West German education system, modern model of the tripartite system Ertl and Philipp 2000), amendment of the Muenchen resolution in 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Rahmenplan: This was a general nation-wide plan to justify the tripartite model by describing the three types of secondary education for three different psychological types of students. This division is based mainly on the separation into practical or theoretical inclinations of pupils. It was a plan to maintain a tripartite system but to ease the transfer between the three tracks. Robinson and Kuhlmann</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1948: Stuttgart Hohenheim resolution: proposal to modify the tripartite organization advances towards more comprehensiveness of the system.

1949: with the independence of Germany, a possibility of change occurred but high preference for the Weimar Republic system hampered this. German educationists and civil servants, churches, universities, employers, teacher and parent associations were against the reform plans of the Allies. (Ertl and Phillips 2000: 407 and Horn 2007:20)

1953: set-up of the Deutscher Ausschuss fuer das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen (‘German committee for education’) to observe the German education system and elaborate advice and recommendations. They mainly found that a fundamental change of the system needed to be undertaken.

1955: Düsseldorf Abkommen: attempts of unification of West German education system, modern model of the tripartite system Ertl and Philipp 2000), amendment of the Muenchen resolution in 1954

1959: Rahmenplan: This was a general nation-wide plan to justify the tripartite model by describing the three types of secondary education for three different psychological types of students. This division is based mainly on the separation into practical or theoretical inclinations of pupils. It was a plan to maintain a tripartite system but to ease the transfer between the three tracks. Robinson and Kuhlmann
1967) interpret it as a counter-piece to the work of the Deutscher Ausschuss fuer das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen.

1960s: Discussion of an education expansion – initiated by the Sputnik shock in 1957, the recognition of the importance of an educated population and US attempts to expand their educated population – comes up. It is recognized that the percentage of students enrolling into university needs to be increased. Furthermore, the discussion of Gesamtschule comes up. Gesamtschule, as explained below, is a comprehensive school in which students study together up to the tenth grade.

1960: Bremer plan: This was a general nation-wide plan for educational reconfiguration. It was submitted by the at the time biggest German Teachers Union (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Lehrerverbaende). It proposed a slightly modified version of the Rahmenplan. Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967:321) and Phillips (1995:24) see the reason for this not more innovative proposal in pressures from within the Union who prevented proposing a more innovative suggestion – motivated partly by their self-interest to preserve the Gymnasium. This Union was mainly made up of teachers of any type of school from kindergarten to university with a majority from elementary and middle schools (Enderwitz 1963: 47). Opposers of the Bremer plan also claimed it tried to copy Eastern elements. (ibid, page 48).

1963: The Deutscher Ausschuss fuer das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen (‘German committee for education’) formulates a review of the reform period and writes that the tripartite system reflects the three main fields of profession existing in modern life: the practical, the theoretical and the practical-theoretical type (Deutscher Ausschuss 1963:9 in Lenhardt 2002:7). This reflects a belief in a predestination of students to certain types of school.

1964: Hamburger Abkommen: set a common frame to education and introducing more long-term planning as well as educational experimentation. The publication of Georg Picht’s (1964) “Die deutsche Bildungskatastrophe” (‘The German education catastrophe’) pushes forward the discussion on educational expansion. The Social Democratic Party proposed a more radical plan than the Rahmenplan or the Bremer Plan (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:322). Their goal was a more integrated and comprehensive stage from grade 7 to grade 10. To this end they proposed the introduction of a Foerderstufe.

1965: establishment of the Bildungsrat (‘council of education’). This body does not lack funding nor means to research educational questions properly (Robinson and

---

5 Foerderstufe comprises a 5th and 6th year after primary school in which pupils are not tracked into different types of secondary school yet but are still together in order to give them time to develop their skills further.

1967/1968: student revolts and Marxist emancipation theories enter in the discussion on expansion and democratization of the education system.

1970s: Koproikanische Bildungswende (Leonhardt 2002:8) which reflects a belief in a universal ability to be educated

1973: Bildungsgesamtplan (‘complete plan of education‘): a strong discussion about Gesamtschulen

1989: re-unification and chance for reform, but no reform took place only small changes and the Eastern states mostly adapted to the West German system; abolition of the allgemeinbildende technische Oberschule (POS), which was an almost fully comprehensive school. But there was a will by pupils, parents and teachers to introduce reforming measures (Wilde 2002:40). During the time of the GDR any criticism of the education system was prohibited and with the end of the system in 1989 reform discussions took place to a large extent – as Kingdon’s (1984) ‘window of opportunity’ opened: until the end of 1989 more than 8000 proposals reached the GDR’s Ministry of Education (Ministerium für Volksbildung) (see Volkhard 1991).

1999: Husum agreement of upper secondary education with the aim to raise and harmonize standards in the traditional core areas of upper secondary education

2008: Dresdner Erklärung: qualification initiative: the slogan Aufstieg durch Bildung encompasses the idea of equality of chances

Today: see Section 6 and 7

3. The German education system and its elements of comprehensiveness

The foundations of the German education system as it is today lie in the Weimar Republic. After the Second World War Germany was split into East Germany (1949-1990) and West Germany. While in East Germany a centralized system based on Marxist-Leninist ideology was introduced, in West Germany a decentralized system

---

was established. In 1990 the West German system was transmitted with few exceptions to former East Germany.

At first sight the German education system does not have many comprehensive elements compared to other European systems. In fact, apart from Austria Germany is the only country in which students are selected already at the age of ten (Lenhardt 2002:12). Most researchers argue that the German education system has not much changed since the 1950s (Horn 2007:19) and in the 1950s, when there was a chance for a reform of the system after the Second World War, most voices argued for a system as in the Weimar Republic (Ertl and Philipps 2000:392).

Mainly due to the cultural sovereignty of the Laender educational issues can be organized quite differently across the Laender, but the general underlying structure holds across the entire Bund. This underlying structure is still based on the Rahmenplan in 1959 (see above) and it is depicted in Figure 1 – a chart retrieved from Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg (2007).

After pre-primary school (Kindergarten) all children need to start with four years of obligatory primary education (Grundschule) at the age of 6 or 7. They then receive a teacher recommendation (Uebertrittszeugnis/Grundschulempfehlung) as to which type of secondary schools they should go at the age of ten. The binding nature of this recommendation by the teacher differs across the Laender: in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria this recommendation confirms the ability of the child to go to either school. In most states the parents still have the right to choose the school for their children but freedom of the parents varies across the states.

Lower secondary education (Secondary I or Sekundarstufe I) is split in three main tracks: Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium. Ertl and Phillip (2000) argue that this “tripartite” system is deeply encrusted in the German education system. Saporito and Sohoni (2007) show that a decisive factor of determining the type of secondary school a pupil will visit after the elementary school is his or her social background. This implies that those who visit the Gymnasium usually stem from a more favorable social background. Apart from the three main tracks there is also a fourth possibility: the comprehensive schools Gesamtschule (see below for a detailed analysis). These schools are an alternative to the criticized ‘tri-partite’ system but have not yet gained high enrollment rates since they are not compulsory so far.

---

8 Rust and Rust (1995) show that in East Germany even before the re-unification the East Germans were already in favor of a West Germany-oriented education system.

9 Reasons for the difficulty to promote a nation-wide reform are discussed below.

10 See Table 9 on page 50 in Bellenberg et al. (2004) for the exact freedom of parents across the Laender. The table shows that only in Bayern and Baden-Wuerttemberg school law is set above the rights of the parents.

11 Their discussion comes up in the 1960s as shown on page 5 and have been introduced in the 1960s and 1970s as mentioned on page 12.
The age of tracking depends on the state (see Table 1): typically children are tracked after the 4th grade at the age of ten. However, in some states such as Berlin and Brandenburg there is a binding stage of 2 years, which prolongs the primary school up to the 6th grade so that pupils are tracked at the age of twelve. These 5th and 6th years are given in a separate school and are referred to as ‘orientation stage’ (Orientierungsstufe), ‘observation stage’ (Beobachtungsstufe) or ‘support stage’ (Förderstufe).

Upper secondary (Secondary II or Sekundarstufe II) is split into three possibilities:

- The well-known dual system (Berufsakademie): pupils absolve the 10th grade and then change over from the Gymnasium to a polytechnic institution in which they learn and work at the same time. This system has proven a useful parachute for the problem of youth unemployment, by which Germany was not hit (The Economist 2012).
- Full-time vocational schools: students acquire a degree - Fachabitur - allowing them to pass on to a university of applied science Fachhochschule
- Upper secondary school: students stay in the Gymnasium until they reach the final baccalaureate degree Abitur which gives them access to the university system. In 2009 however, the Kultusministerkonferenz KMK (committee of ministers of culture) published a decision on the access to the university system by those who do not have Abitur (Kultusministerkonferenz 2009) for various graduates from vocational programs.

The tertiary system is then divided into the university system and a university of applied science (Fachhochschule).

As will be discussed in more detail below, the system is characterized despite its rigid tripartite structure by a disposition of the states to create permeability between the tracks within this system shown in Figure 1. As shown in Table 1 by 2000 the numbers of students ascending into higher types of schools is still small but there is a large discussion to further elaborate on the permeability of the German education system to increase possibilities for equal opportunities in education through permeability (see Linten and Pruestel 2011).

In the remainder of this section we analyze a set of elements of the German education system, which were created based on an idea of educational comprehensiveness. We
argue that these elements support our hypothesis that there are hesitant and disaggregated reform elements towards comprehensiveness in Germany.

We begin by assessing comprehensive schools promoted by political movements, we then analyze comprehensively oriented schools promoted by pedagogical movements, continue with the comprehensive system in the former GDR and then take a look at all-day-schools and at a prolongation of primary schools which is introduced in some German states. As a next step we analyze the vocational track in terms of its comprehensive nature. We conclude by analyzing the revision of curricula and other bridges as a means of joining the different tracks.

**Comprehensive schools: Gesamtschulen and Gemeinschaftsschulen**

The two major types of comprehensive schools in Germany are *Gesamtschulen* (aggregate schools) and *Gemeinschaftsschulen* (community schools). Both types of schools are optional type of schools and they are a minority and only to be found in several states. The main difference is that in *Gesamtschulen* differentiation can still be present in form of the three types of secondary schools on campus, whereas in *Gemeinschaftsschulen* all pupils are taught together up to the eighth or tenth grade.

There are two types of *Gesamtschulen*, the 'co-operative' (three types of secondary schooling on one site) and the 'integrated' (all three types of secondary schooling in one unit). Up to the tenth grade pupils are educated together on one campus. They have been a topic of discussion from the 1960s onwards. The promotion of comprehensive schools was traditionally a political movement that was understood as a preparation for a socialist society (Keim 1973). In 1970 the German education council for the construction of the German education system (*Deutscher Bildungsrat fuer den Aufbau des Schulwesens*) proposed a structural plan (*Strukturplan*) in which they propose a comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) as an experimental alternative to the tripartite system but the efforts of the education council remained fruitless on a political level (Jungmann 2008:36). During the experimental phase until the early 1980s some states introduced this type of schools substantively in the 1960s and 1970s but they always remained experimental. In the late 1970s the Gesamtschule was a political issue between the Conservative Party (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) with the latter strongly advocating a reform towards more *Gesamtschulen*. In fact, it can be observed that the states governed by the Social-Democrats (SPD) introduced in the 1970s and enlarged in the early 1980s this experimental concept of comprehensive schools whereas states governed by Conservative Party (CDU/CSU) largely abstained from an introduction of this system (Jungmann 2008:38). In Nordrhein-Westphalen in 1978 the SPD tried to introduce Gesamtschulen all across the state but the legislation was not implemented mainly due to the oppositional CDU, teacher and parent unions and

---

12 Strukturplan 1970: 26 seqq; see Jungmann (2008:36)
13 The reasons for this are seen by the authors as the negative forces outlined in Section 5.
churches organizing public actions against the reform. More than 3.6 Million signatures against the reform were collected (General Anzeiger Bonn 2006).

Figure 1: The basic underlying structure of the German education system

Source: Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg (2007)

*Rälschule and Hauptschule are pooled together.

Source: Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg (2007)
The concept of *Gesamtschulen* remained experimental and could not become a substitute to the tri-partite system: the forces (see Section 5) such as the Teachers Union of the *Gymnasium*, the *Philologenverband*, fighting for the tri-partite system were too strong (Jungmann 2008:39): a school system matching the existing innate abilities was sought, which a comprehensive school system would not be able to deliver\(^\text{14}\).

Today, *Gesamtschulen* are seen as schools which can to some extent moderate the link between social background and educational attainment (Schlicht 2009: 8, Lechinsky and Mayer 1990). Freitag and Schlicht (2009) and Schlicht (2009:29) however do not find a significant reduction through co-operative *Gesamtschulen*\(^\text{15}\) of educational inequality of opportunity in Germany in terms of easing the access to the *Gymnasium* for all social strata. One reason for this might be that the reputation of *Gesamtschulen* is not very favorable and as outlined below parents seek certain elitism for their children’s education.

A small percentage of German pupils enroll in *Gesamtschulen*. However, the percentage is growing over time as Figure 2 shows. In 2004 the enrollment rate for this type of schools reached its peak with 8.78% but in 2009 the percentage still lies at 7.8% starting off at 0.5% in 1971.

**Figure 2: Distribution of enrollment across tracks in upper secondary general education**

![Distribution of enrolment across tracks in upper secondary general education](image)

*Source: own calculations based on data from the BMBF (Federal ministry of Education and Research)*

---


\(^\text{15}\) Data constraints in the PISA-E dataset did not allow assessing integrated *Gesamtschulen*. 
Gemeinschaftsschulen do not have a clear-cut definition (Wiechmann 2009). Historically they are connected to the abolishment of Konfessionsschulen (religious denomination school)\textsuperscript{16}. Today they are connected to political initiatives such as “Laenger gemeinsam lernen” and “Inklusion” (see Section 5 for more details) and they are entering the current debate on educational reform more and more (Wiechmann 2009). The concept – differently to the Gesamtschulen – is based on the idea of no differentiation by performance at all. The weak should learn from the strong. In terms of its organization – not the contents – the Gemeinschaftsschule can be interpreted as similar to the model of the former GDR.

Today the discussion around Gesamtschulen and Gemeinschaftsschulen is again a topic of current importance (see for instance Der Spiegel 2011b): It is the however rather the concept of Gemeinschaftsschulen which is present in the current debate rather than that of Gesamtschulen – in fact Gemeinschaftsschulen are a very popular concept in the current debate and are discussed as an alternative to the tri-partite system (Jungmann 2008:18). Current developments confirm these findings: The Social Democrat minister of culture of the traditionally conservative state Baden-Wuerttemberg announces that she is planning to introduce a much more powerful Gemeinschaftsschule in order to improve PISA results (Der Spiegel 2011b), in Bavaria the state parliament fraction proposes a concept of the Gemeinschaftsschule\textsuperscript{17}. Main reasons for this expansion of the discussion around comprehensive schools can be seen in the PISA results and the Europe-wide discussion around them and the change in political power distributions in the traditionally conservative countries: Baden-Wuerttemberg is now headed by a majority of the Social Democrats (SPD).

The practical introduction of Gemeinschaftsschulen (or Gesamtschulen) should take into account that there might be self-selection of either weaker or less able (in terms of cognitive skills measured by the PISA scores) students into this type of school (see for instance Thum and Potjagailo 2012) – if as it is now this school concept is an alternative to schools in the co-existing more selective system. This self-selection would mean that there is a segmentation into Gemeinschaftsschulen (or Gesamtschulen), which would clearly not be the aim of a policy aiming at more comprehensiveness in the education system. This fact should be considered when implementing policies towards more comprehensiveness: the characteristics of the type of comprehensiveness introduced (prolongation of the primary school or a comprehensive school) as well as the characteristics of the incentives such a policy will create should be taken into account.

\textsuperscript{16} Konfessionsschulen were schools in which children of the same religious denomination were educated.

\textsuperscript{17} For a more detailed discussion of the current situation see Section 8.
Montessori, Walldorfschulen, Landerziehungsheime and Einheitsschulen

Montessori, Walldorfschulen, Landerziehungsheime and Einheitsschulen are schools based on the idea of a comprehensive schooling system. They are a minority in the German education system in terms of numbers of students enrolled (see Figure 2) and graduating but they are free for anyone to access.

- Montessori schools were founded from 1907 onwards by Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and others and cover the education of individuals from child age to their adulthood. Based on the idea of the reform educationalists this type of school is founded on the idea of educating individuals according to their ability rather than their social background. In Germany there are now 600 day-care, around 300 primary schools center and around 100 continuing schools, which operate on the basis of the Montessori principals (see Montessori umbrella organization\(^{18}\))

- Walldorf Schools are based on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), founding father of the anthropologist philosphy, which – in the educational context - places the child and its abilities in the centre of attention. The Waldorf School was the first Gesamtschule in Germany (Ullrich 2002). For a distribution of enrollment percentages into these schools over time see Figure 2.

- Landerziehungsheime (‘country boarding school’) and Einheitsschulen (‘unified schools’) were the types of schools that were advocated by the reform educationalists (for a more detailed description see Section 5). Both types of schools are based on the idea of comprehensive education. Very few of these schools exist in Germany: an example of a Landerziehungsheim is the Odenwaldschule\(^{19}\) in Baden-Wuerttemberg and an example of an Einheitsschulen is the Laborschule Bielefeld\(^{20}\) in Northrhein-Westphalia.

---

\(^{18}\) [http://www.montessori-deutschland.de/einrichtungen.html](http://www.montessori-deutschland.de/einrichtungen.html)

\(^{19}\) [http://www.odenwaldschule.de/](http://www.odenwaldschule.de/)

\(^{20}\) [http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/LS/laborschule_neu/](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/LS/laborschule_neu/)

The GDR: Polytechnische Oberschule

The system of the GDR diverged from that of the FRG. Rather than adapting the traditional Weimar Republic system as the FRG did, the GDR favored comprehensive and polytechnic schools: the *Polytechnische Oberschule* (Wilde 2002:42) combining primary and lower secondary education levels. The aim was to differentiate strongly both from national-socialist traditions as well as the ever-returning system of the Weimar Republic (Fuchs 1997:9). To this end not only Marxist and Leninist ideas were taken as an example but also pedagogical texts by at the time important Soviet educationalists such as Makarenko and Krupskaja (Fuchs 1997:9). This orientation on the Soviet system expanded and from the beginning of the early 1950s onwards the GDRs education system was adapted to the Soviet system even up to terminological details (ibid.). This development went so far that in the 1970s the USSR even adopted ideas from the GDR (ibid.). Only in the 1980s a slow detachment from the Soviet system took place (ibid.). Therefore, it can be said that in terms of its organization and underlying ideology the education system in the GDR was constructed on the basis of ideas found in the Soviet comprehensive school system and strongly adapted to the Soviet system. In fact, the POS was under strong influence of the United Socialist Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) which used the education system to implement socialist ideology into the society (Fuchs: 9 et seqq., Waterkamp:8). Attendance to POS was considered as obligation for everybody, but also a personal right. At the same time, students were expected to become „socialist personalities“ and to show support for the Marxist-Leninist ideology, strongly present in the curricula (Fuchs: 12,37; Rodden, Zymek 182).

The *Polytechnische Oberschule* (POS) was compulsory and lasted until the tenth grade. The especially talented pupils continued with the *erweiterte Oberschule* (EOS) to receive the *Abitur* and an academically oriented education. Access to the EOS was granted based on academic achievement and social activities and favored those whose parents were ideologically in line with the views of the Socialist Party *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* SED (Wilde 2002:42). Curricula included ideological contents (Wilde 2002:43).

The advantages of the GDR’s educational system were that most students had a very good level of education and that teachers did well in taking up the job of raising and educating students that the full-time employed parents could not fulfill (Schnabel (1996) and Haendle (1998) in Wilde (2002)).

After 1990 the educational system of the FRG had a dominant role and most former GDR adopted the West German system apart from some states that did not introduce the

\[21\] Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften der DDR (1983)

\[22\] The word ‘personality’ is an interesting choice of words since the concept of the school’s role in helping to unfold a child’s personality is an idea appearing in the classical German education ideal (cf. footnote 30)
**Hauptschule** (Wilde 2002:43). Adopting parts of the system of the GDR across Germany could have introduced elements that could have reduced the degree of selectivity in Germany (Wilde 2002:43, Ertl and Phillipps 2000). As described in section 2 there was a discussion on not adopting the Western German system but the West German influence was too strong. In addition financial help to East from the West in Germany - as legalized in the pact of solidarity between the new and the old states – would have made it hard to reject solutions coming from the Western Germany.

**Figure 3: Distribution of enrollment across tracks in upper secondary general education in the GDR**

![Distribution of enrollment across tracks in upper secondary general education in the GDR](image)

**Source:** own calculations based on data from the BMBF (Federal ministry of Education and Research)

**Orientierungsstufe: prolongation of primary schools**

The *Orientierungsstufe* – also referred to as *Beobachtungsstufe* or *Foerderstufe* - comprises a fifth and sixth year which the pupil visits after the four years of compulsory primary school and before visiting one of the secondary tracks and it is therefore a way of late tracking. It takes different forms in the sense that it is organized differently across the German states. Each German state is governed by a government with different distributions of political Parties – which accounts for much of the cross-state difference. The Kultusministerkonferenz (2010:30ff) gives a comprehensive overview of these different forms: they range from the 5th and 6th grade being integrated in the primary school such as in Berlin and Brandenburg to the 5th and 6th grade being taught in the three different school forms separately but with a view of fostering the children to

---

23 See Section 6 for a discussion of the case Berlin and Brandenburg, where primary school lasts six years by obligation.
give their best and reach the highest possible school form such as for instance in Baden-Wuerttemberg (Kultusministerkonferenz 2010: 30). This form of education can allow permeability of the system (see Table 1) and softens the tri-partite nature of the German education system.

**Ganztagsschule: all-day-schools as a mean of reducing inequality**

In Germany, many schools usually finish after half a day: according to BMBF 2003:1 only 5% of schools in Germany last until 16h. Arguments for an all-day school are that they increase exposition of students to a setting other than their home and would therefore have an effect similar to that of early childhood education and reduce the dependence of educational outcomes on social background (Schlicht 2009: 9, BMBF 2003). It is not enough just to introduce an all-day school - according to the BMBF 2003 the educationalist concept of all-day schools should allow for individual fostering of learning chances, combination of classroom education and extra-curricular activities, social learning, encouraging participation and qualifies personnel. Many of the proposals for an all-day school are coupled with that of a *Gemeinschaftsschule* or *Gesamtschule*. This – so far minority – type of schooling could be another way to reduce the reign of the tripartite system.

**Revision of curricula and other bridges between the different tracks**

We understand the *unification of curricula* as a form of potentially increasing comprehensiveness of the education system (see Section 1). Up to the 1970s the prospects of revision of curricula with more comprehensiveness in mind at the lower secondary level was small but social studies programs, language education and more modern education of mathematics and science are elements which could contribute to bridging the gap between the different tracks (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 322). After the 1970s the belief in universal educatability (see page 20) further reinforced unification of curricula allowing for greater possibilities to change school forms.
Table 1: Permeability between German types of Schools by Bundesland in 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bundesland</th>
<th>Ascending pupils (within Sek. 1 system) as percentage of total pupils</th>
<th>Descending pupils (within Sek. 1 system) as percentage of total pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandenburg</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessen</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Saxony</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Rhine-Westphalia</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhineland-Palatinate</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarland</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxony</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxony-Anhalt</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuringia</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Germany</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another feature bridging the gap between the different tracks is the ‘second and third chance education’ (Zweiter und Dritter Bildungsweg), which can be interpreted as an indirect way of equalizing educational opportunities. Ertl and Phillipps (2000) term this feature of relatively easy transfer between the different tracks permeability (Durchlaessigkeit). Up to the late 1960s however only 2-3% who reached higher education via vocational or further training (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:323). Table 1 gives evidence of the actual permeability by state in 2000. As mentioned above, the numbers of students ascending into higher types of schools is still small but there is a large discussion to further elaborate on the permeability of the German education system to increase possibilities for equal opportunities in education through permeability (see Linten and Pruestel 2011). Furthermore, in 2009 second-chance education was legally reinforced by the decision of the Kultusministerkonferenz, the
assembly of the minister of education of the federal states, upon the ‘access to higher education for qualified applicants without general qualification for higher education entrance’ (Kultusministerkonferenz 2009, Sekretariat der KMK:262). It allows holders of certain higher vocational education diploma to access universities, such that they do not need the Abitur anymore. This development builds on the European ‘lifetime-learning’ initiative and can be thus seen as another reflection of the internationalization of the German education system (Sekretariat der KMK: 262). (Kultusministerkonferenz 2009 and Sekretariat der KMK 2011:262).

4. Historical, economic, social and political context

The Federal republic of Germany is a democracy and historically – when split into East and West – it was based on two different ideologies based on the occupying forces. As mentioned in Section 3, this difference in ideologies was manifested in differences in the two education systems: While in East Germany a centralized system based on Marxist-Leninist ideology was introduced, in West Germany a decentralized system was established. The current education system is now a decentralized system which follows mainly the system of former West Germany. Provision of education has mainly been public but there is a growing share of private schools: these used to be mainly clerical but are now increasingly international. Enrollment rates in the private education sector have never exceeded 8% in the non-vocational sector and 9% in the vocational sector (see Thum and Potjagailo 2012: 26). In general, more children with educated parents attend private schools than without educated parents: according to Lohmann, Spiess and Feldhaus (2009) in private schools 59% of the pupils have parents with at least one parent having obtained the Abitur. Furthermore, the number of students enrolled in private schools with at least one parent with Abitur has risen faster than that of students with parents without Abitur. This development can be interpreted as a growing distrust towards the public education system, which is an object of permanent political interference.

In the remainder of this section we will provide a depiction of the historical economic as well as the social and some of the political context.

Economic context

The post-war period until the present day was characterized by a changing economic context. Immediately after 1945, Germany’s economy was characterized by scarcity and distress. Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967:327) argue that in periods as these the industry pushes more towards selectivity of the education system in order to increase efficiency by selecting the best ones and developing their skills.
From the 1950s to the 1970s, the German economy was characterized by a boom (Buchheim 1997: 91). As underlying reasons are often given the fact that Germany was in a (1) reconstruction phase after the Second World War, the (2) productivity advance of the United States that implied that other economies could be merely imitate newly invented technology rather than inventing it and a (3) human capital excess that could be used after the wars (Buchheim 1997: 94-95). Since the economic recovery after the Second World War, a qualified work force was needed and it became clear that economically and socially a reform was necessary (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 313, 327). An expansion of education became necessary. As described below this implied movements towards less selectivity in education (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 313, 387). Consequently, Foerderstufe and differenzierender Mittelbau were introduced depending on the Land.

**Political and social context**

To fully understand the political and social forces operating on the debate on educational policy change, one needs to go back to the period before the Second World War. We identified several main social and political contexts that play a key role for the development of the education system in Germany:

*Fear of change due to the two World Wars.* After the Second World War and the experiences with National Socialism the public asked for quietude and security, secured traditions and bourgeoisie: An important slogan of the time – giving evidence for this movement - by Konrad Adenauer was “No experiments!” (‘Keine Experimente!’).  

*Suppression of reform by the Nazi regime:* Social sciences were not strongly developed during the National Socialist regime (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 313) and movements such as Reformpaedagogik did not appear in Nazi documents (Roehrs 1998) and were seen as a leftist movement. Reform educationalist schools such as the Odenwaldschule were changed into a school fitting well with concepts of the National socialist government (Shirley 2010).

*Proximity to the Soviet occupied zone and the Cold War:* The public was skeptical towards policy models close to those of the communist ideology. The Cold War between the East and the West added to an atmosphere of seeking for security, tradition and ‘Western values’. Many reform ideas were seen as a ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:325).

---

24 Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany.  
Values and beliefs in the German society: The roots of the German values and beliefs connected with education are based on rather elitist ideas of the philosopher Alexander von Humboldt (1869-1859), a founding father of the Gymnasium (see Section 5). Reinforcing the impact of these beliefs is a deeply rooted fear that weak students could make the strong weaker and thereby reduce quality (see for instance Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 323). Lenhardt (2002:3) argues that the German set of values and beliefs behind the construction of the education system was based on the idea to exclude the weaker students from education by taking back on educational demands addressed to them. The reason he sees behind this is that education of weaker students is seen as hopeless and economically unnecessary. Lenhardt (2002:7) describes a belief in a certain innate predestination of pupils for the three different types of school (Hauptschule, Realschule, and Gymnasium). However, Lenhardt (2002:8) writes that in the 1970s this belief changed and a “Copernican education rebound” (Kopernikanische Bildungswende) took place: the belief in an innate predestination for the different school types was replaced by the belief in a universal ability to be educated. This is the climate in which the idea of the comprehensive Gemeinschaftsschule came up. Lenhardt (2002: 9) differentiates between the beliefs in “universal ability to be educated” West Germany and “equal educatability” in Eastern Germany. The difference lies for Lenhardt (2002) in the higher amount of rights that Western German students receive in terms of subject choice and co-determination compared to Eastern German students. The slogan Aufstieg durch Bildung (‘Social advancement through education’) has gained influence and expresses the belief in a certain non-reproductiveness of the system. At the same time, more drastic reform attempts of the 1970s – in particular those addressing the complete combination of the general education in the Gymnasium and vocational education in one school25 – failed due to resistance from elites, employers and trade unions, but also due to a lack of popularity of these ideas among the German population, not willing to give up the popular Gymnasium (Greinert 2010: 8-25).

Today (as we shall see in Section 6 and 7), the German government and the Conference of Heads of State (Konferenz der Regierungschefs der Laender) are seeking to increase the equality of chances (Chancengleichheit):

‘For personal chances in life and justice of chances in the knowledge society, education is key. ‘Advancement through education’ is a strategy to ensure that the social origin does not decide the future of individuals. A just access to education and permeability of

---

25 Two such reform ideas were under discussion in the 1970s and were also implemented during some years in form of trials: the Kollegstufe experiment in North Rhine-Westphalia and the Oberstufenzentrum in Berlin. Both institutions were supposed to combine general and vocational upper secondary education in one track thus replace the Gymnasium. The Kollegstufe was even supposed to offer the possibility to receive two diplomas, the general and the vocational one.
the education system are the main principle of responsible education policy.’
(Bundesregierung 2008:4)

Social policy context: According to Esping-Andersen (1999) Germany can be classified as a conservative system, which means that the welfare state regime is characterized by “status differentiating” welfare programs. Benefits are often distributed according to earnings and based on reproducing social patterns (see Esping-Andersen 1999 and Horn 2007). We interpret the social policy context and the values and beliefs it is supposed to be based on as an obstacle to educational reforms and therefore take a closer look at this factor in Section 5.

5. Forces and actors affecting the political debate

The political debate of educational reform – and educational tracking reforms in particular - in Germany has always been animated despite the fact that no nationwide unique reform has ever come out of it. Earlier positive forces in the debate about the tracking age came mainly from the Reformpaedagogik movement, later on the educational expansionist ideas were connected to tracking ideas and contemporary positive forces are the PISA results and OECD reports. Hampering – negative – forces in the debate were numerous and are widely analyzed in the relevant literature (see for instance Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967, Ertl and Philipps 2000 and Wilde 2009). They can be split into historical, political, social, systemic and organizational factors, which played together to hamper the development of a large-scale reform to extend the age of tracking or increase comprehensiveness. However, in line with the hypothesis of this paper and as argued in Section 2 and 3 and shown in Section 5, there have been disaggregated and hesitant reforms moving towards a more comprehensive education system.

Positive forces

Several driving forces were and are present in the debate about later tracking and more comprehensiveness in the German education system.

Immediately after 1945

Just after the Second World War the occupying forces advocated a “democratization” of the education system with equality of educational opportunity. Their proposals included an introduction of a six-year primary school. After the independence of Germany (1949) however the allies reduced their pressure to implement such reforms (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 312). Ertl and Philipps (2000) and Wilde (2009) argue that the full potential of reform after the Second World War was not used.
Reformpaedagogik and Alternativpaedagogik

Going back to the time before the Second World war we encounter an educationalist movement that existed already before the War - the ‘reform pedagogy’ (Reformpaedagogik) or later ‘alternative pedagogy’ (Alternativpaedagogik). It was a pedagogical movement in the sense that educationalists were the main driving force. One of the most well known reform educationalists is Peter Petersen (1927), who is seen as the founding father of educational concepts based on the idea of unifying different tracks to a certain degree. Reformpaedagogik is a concept based on the idea of pedagogy starting from the child and a certain philanthropist view (cf. Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi in Roehrs 1998:241). It can be placed in contrast with the Herbartism\(^{26}\), which favors a more classical and rigid style of education. First appearances of the notion Reformpaedagogik were found in the 19\(^{th}\) century but the notion was not used in a unified fashion. Later at the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century it could be understood as a movement against authoritative methods of education and today it is often understood as an alternative form of pedagogy (Alternativpaedagogik). It is connected with the Jugendbewegung (youth movement), Erste Frauenbewegung (women’s movement), Arbeiterbewegung (movement of the workers), and Kunsterziehungsbewegung (art education movement). Adherents of the movement had a strong role in discussions but never initiated a wide-range reform – even in their strongest period before 1933. As mentioned below this is mainly due to the lack of a unified definition of which reforms the movement actually advocates.

Among their pre-Weimar republic (before 1919) achievements were the experimental implementation of (Roehrs 1998):

- **Landerziehungsheime** (‘country boarding school’): this type of school was founded by Herrmann Lietz (1868-1919). The schools were situated in the countryside and focused on the education of arts and crafts, modern language and science rather than classical languages and rigid learning. Lietz was against class privileges. Existing up to date examples are the school of Salem and the Odenwaldschule.

- **Einheitsschule** (‘unified school’): this type of school was founded by Johannes Tews (1860-1937). This school is a school, in which students are educated from the pre-primary school up to university in one school.

\(^{26}\) Herbartism is based on ideas by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), who was a philosopher, psychologist and educationalist. His ideas were based the idea of the individual potential of a child which is created to serve society and its functioning.
• Arbeitsschule (‘work school’): one of the founding fathers of this type of school is Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932). The opinion of what this school was supposed to represent was not quite unanimous but it was supposed to be opposed to the traditional types of schools at the beginning of the 20th century.

During the period of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) reform educationalists had gained powerful positions in the educational ministries. Their idea was that predisposition and interests should play a role for education and not the social background (this is a modern idea when reading contemporary OECD publications). Students should have more democratic rights (Schuelermitverwaltung – administration of the pupils). Up to 1933 the Reformpaedagogik was gaining in influence and power and the development of the community „New education fellowship“ (see for instance White 2001), an educationalist journal „New Era in Education“ and the foundation of the Weltbund fuer Erneuerung in der Erziehung (‘global association for reform of education’27) in 1921, an international discussion forum for Reformpädagogik.

During the rule of the National Socialist Party Reformpaedagogik was stopped– either through prohibition or self-disintegration. The communist, socialist or socio-democratic ideas of the Reformpaedagogik movement were banned by the national-socialists. The Odenwaldschule was remodeled following the Nazi-ideas of education.

After 1945, despite the end of the regime of the National Socialists, the Reformpaedagogik had lost its momentum. In the 1960s however, together with the movement of the 68er (Achtundsechziger), members of the 1968-generation of students revolutionists and the extra-parliamentary opposition (Außerparlamentarische Opposition APO), Alternativpaedagogik again gained back some of its influence. The idea of ‘anti-authoritative education’ (antiautoritäre Erziehung) gained popularity (Neill 1998) and its socio-political results are still discussed in society.

Today, the Weltbund fuer Erneuerung in der Erziehung still exists and advocates reform educationalist ideas. Montessori and Waldorf pedagogy (as described in Section 2) are also education forms which arose from the Reform- or Alternativpaedagogik movement such as Alternativschulen (for example the schools Laborschule Bielefeld, Oberstufen-Kolleg Bielefeld, Glockseeschule) and to the present day they still exist as a minority.

Educational expansion movements

---

27 http://www.neweraineducation.co.uk/
28 http://wef-wee.net/de/start-wee.php?action=ziel
A strong reform movement was advocating educational expansion in the 1960s/1970s. It resulted from an increased demand in a qualified workforce (see Section 3) and an improvement of the economic condition (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:327). The arguments of this movement were technical-economic and political (“democratization of society”). In fact, in educational sociologist articles Ralf Dahrendorf (1961, 1965 and 1966) argued that low-income classes were not enough represented at the secondary education level. It resulted in several policy reforms (new laws) and the percentage of the population having access to higher education increased. In fact, the expansion of the Gymnasium can be shown in the figures that the percentage of the reference population finishing the Gymnasium increased from around 7% in 1965 to 30% in 1995 (Wilde 2002:43). Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967:320) suggest interpreting this quantitative expansion rather as an example of ‘a modification of the existing structure before undertaking more radical form’ which often takes place when qualitative and quantitative deficiencies exist.

**OECD reports and PISA studies**

As mentioned earlier, in the OECDs PISA studies Germany lagged behind in terms of its outcomes (Prenzel 2004, 2007). Within the context of the PISA results the OECD reports advocate education policies that foresee early childhood education and a late age of tracking (see for instance Causa and Chapuis 2009 or Schuetz and Woessmann 2004). The fact that Germany was not among the top-performers in the PISA studies and the fact that the OECD suggests later tracking as a positive feature of an education system have been and are a contemporary driving force of the discussion of education reforms in the German states. Even rather conservative states such as Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bayern are discussing concepts of Gemeinschaftsschulen (see Section 6).

**Organizations, associations and initiatives**

In the 1960s the movements, organizations, associations and initiatives advocating educational reform – and also in particular with regard to tracking - regained in strength after the post-war period. Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967:326) name the farmers’ organization and the association of philologists (Philologenverband). The farmers’ organization welcomed the central schools and orientation classes that were somewhat opposed to the tri-partite system. The Philologenverband was generally against any reform (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:323) and against experiments, but they somewhat modified their position later on (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:326).

In terms of political Party associations some of the Liberal Party’s (FDP) spokesmen were actively for a reform but not consistently (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:326).
Generally the Social-democratic party is for a more equal and less selective system but was also not consistent (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:326).

Teachers Unions held an ambiguous position in the reforms of the 1960s (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 326): One of the Teachers Unions, the biggest one in Germany at the time called Arbeitsgemeinschaft – as mentioned in Section 2 – proposed the Bremer plan (first called ‘Teachers Association Plan’) as a general reform plan. Due to pressure from within the Union the proposal was not more innovative: One motivation for the more conservative forces within the Union was the self-interest in preserving the Gymnasium (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:321, Philipps 1995:24). The majority of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft at the time was made up of elementary and middle school teachers and only a small fraction was made up of secondary school teachers (Enderwitz 1963:50). During the reform debates in the late 50s and early 60s in fact only some part of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft took pro-active roles in the reform debate but their support was taken back once remuneration and status were at stake for the implementation of innovative suggestions (ibid). Not only the adversaries within and without the Union had hampered a more innovative character of the reform but also an absence of strength of the advocates within the Union (ibid).

Today an association of different unions and associations of (Grundschulverband – association of primary schools, Gemeinnuetzige Gesellschaft Gesamtschule GGG – association of Gesamtschulen, Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft GEW – ‘trade union education and research’, Aktion Humane Schule AHS – ‘action for a humane school’, Verband Sonderpaedagogik – ‘association of special pedagogy’ and many more) are advocating and working on an initiative Laenger gemeinsam lernen ('learning longer together'). This initiative supports the concept of comprehensive schools such as the Gesamtschule. However, a current conference report of a congress organized by the Teachers’ Unions31 in Fulda in 200832 on “educational justice” (Bildungsgerechtigkeit) analyzes this notion in a critical way and explain why they believe the German school system is not as unjust as it seems: among other issues they name as an example the general low youth unemployment in Germany compared to other countries and that there are 60 ways leading to a university degree (Deutscher Lehrerverband 2008:5). These statements in the foreword can hint at their still critical position towards introducing a new education system – imported from another country – without studying the feasibility and adaptability in Germany.

Another contemporary and active initiative – developed at the beginning of the 1990s - is that of Inklusion ('inclusion') or ‘inclusive pedagogy’ (see for instance Wocken

---

29 The other Teachers Unions in Germany were usually made up of teachers from special branches of a school such as a Union consisting of only elementary school teachers.
31 Members of the Deutscher Lehrerverband are Deutscher Philologenverband, Verband Deutscher Realschullehrer, Bundesverband der lehrerinnen und Lehrer an Beruflichen Schulen, Bundesverband der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer an Wirtschaftsschulen. The Deutscher Philologenverband is seen as konservativ as opposed to the GEW (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft).
32 [http://www.lehrerverband.de/Bildungsgerechtigkeit.pdf](http://www.lehrerverband.de/Bildungsgerechtigkeit.pdf)
It advocates the stance that every child is special and heterogeneity in the classroom. It is opposed to selective education systems and can be connected to the advocates of comprehensive schools such as the Gesamtschule.

These initiatives – supported by a large number of networks – and the development of these networks in itself show together with current policy initiatives as described in Section 6 and Section 7 a growing support for comprehensive schools especially in the current debate.

**Negative forces**

There was and is however a number of strong negative forces which together hampered the development of large-scale education reforms – in particular in terms of later tracking.

**Historical obstacles**

After the Second World War a strong wish for stability (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 311, Ertl and Phillips 2000, Horn 2007, Phillips 1995) was present in Germany. This wish was strongly supported by leading university scholars (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 311-312) and it resulted in a lack of momentum (Wilde 2002). Within this context it was difficult to re-establish reform ideas, which had been strong before the regime of the National Socialists and the Second World War, such as for instance those of the Reformpaedagogik.

During the Cold War and after the German reunification in1989 a strong wish for preservation of the (West) German tradition (Wilde 2002) hampered the development of educational reform ideas. Arguments used by the school masters’ associations against the Rahmenplan and other reforms to prolong elementary schools or reform rural schools were that they were ‘communist’, ‘Eastern’ or ‘socialist’ (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 325).

Furthermore, strong historical traditions of German education (Wilde 2002) contributed to the resilience and dominance of the ‘tri-partite’ system (Ertl and Phillipps 2000).

**The educational system itself as an obstacle**

The German education system can be seen as rigid due to the strong role tradition plays. The tripartite nature is deeply rooted in the system (Ertl and Phillipps 2000, Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 322).
The strong and traditional position of the Gymnasium as the stronghold of economic success is an important factor for the persistence of the tripartite system (Ertl and Philipps 2000). The origin of the Gymnasium can be traced back to 1810 when the “humanistic Gymnasium” which was established in the Humboldt reform. Humboldt – an advocate of an education system based on the beliefs of the German Idealism ³³ - had wished a broad education for children of any social background but the Gymnasium only reached the elitist higher level of society. The wish of the parents for their children to achieve top positions in society played a role and was represented generally by the conservative party Christian Democrats (CDU).

Not only the Gymnasium has a strong and traditional role but also intermediate sector (Realschule) is strong (Sadler 1916 in Ertl and Philipps 2000). The Realschule, or Polytechnikum and later referred to as Technical College, has its origin in 1747 when Johann Julius Hecker opened the first Realschule in Berlin. It was constructed to – in contrast to the Gymnasium and universities – educate the middle and industrial social strata and can be linked to the industrialization.

Socio-cultural and political forces against reform

Both the supply side and the demand side of education were mostly against a major reform. This already hints that conservatism (Horn 2007:21 speaks of an in-built conservatism of educationists and society in general) was a strong force in the debate on educational reform. Horn (2007) and Beblavy, Thum, Veselkova (2010) link the conservative nature of a system to reproductive features of the education system: conservative states (cf Esping Andersen 1990) might tend to reproduce stratification through the educational system. Beblavy, Thum, Veselkova (2010) discuss this link by examining whether countries that are conservative in social policy will also tend to be reproductive in education policies. They find that there is no clear picture and countries differ: some countries exhibit stratification in both social and education policies and other countries only in one of the two policy dimensions or are egalitarian in both.

As such conservative forces against a major reform Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967:323-325) list secondary, intermediate and vocational school teachers and their organizations as well as parents’ organizations, universities, commercial and industrial groups and several ministries. The spokesmen of traditional secondary schools formed a vigorous opposition against reforms. Official bodies representing actors in commerce and industry were also supporters of the conservative system despite their recognition of a need for reform. They preferred the necessary changes to be implemented in a less

³³ German idealism was a movement brought forward among others by the famous poets Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller. Their beliefs were based on the development of personality and of individual facilities of the child. This is seen the ur-German idea of education (Bildung). Social inclusion was not an intrinsic objective but can be a result of believing in personality and facilities or abilities rather than social background as a determinant for development.
drastic way (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:323). Churches had religiously based arguments for rejecting changes of Gymnasium (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:324). On the political side the conservative party Christian Democrats (CDU) supported a policy of stability (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:325), which had consequences on their views on educational reform. The Liberal Party (FDP) was changing sides in the post war period at some points supporting reform and at other points rejecting it.

The arguments of the conservative side were the quality of the grades, education and students, the ‘principle of productive efficiency’, the maintenance of high levels of education and industry and that ‘those who are able will succeed’ anyway (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:323-324). Eugenics and Social Darwinism claiming that ability is genetic were also sometimes used as a foundation for the conservative arguments (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:325). Educationists were mainly conservative (Horn 2007:20) but there was also a large social support for this conservatism (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:313). The sociologist Schelsky defended parents’ rights and to maintain school as it was even though he criticized the Rahmenplan (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:313).

The counter-arguments came from the social-democratic side and they were: comprehensive schooling is less costly and certainly the promotion of equal chances in education. 

Strong position of the parents: “the principle of parental choice” (Ertl and Philipps 2000) Proposition of one school for all seemed unconstitutional since it does not respect the parents right to decide. The strong parents’ position was supported by scientists such as the above mentioned sociologist Helmut Schelsky, who criticized some reform ideas as giving the determination of the children’s chances in life to the school (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:313). The position of the parents is an important determinant of social inequality as Ditton (1989, 2005), who analyze the determinants of parental educational aspirations for their children and find that parental aspirations are more socially selective than the recommendations by the teachers, show.

Federalism (rigid structure of the federal system) combined with Kulturhoheit (‘cultural sovereignty’) of the Laender: anchored in the constitution the federalism of the education sector – combined with a strongly differentiated political party system in Germany34, that results in any decision made on education policies turns into a political decision rather than a purely factually oriented one - is a factor that does not ease the implementation of a nation-wide education reform (Ertl and Phillipps 2000, Wilde 2009). The cultural sovereignty as a characteristic of the political system makes a nationwide reform difficult (Ertl and Phillips 2000:404-405, Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:327, Wilde 2002, Horn 2007) as major changes need to be unanimously accepted by the KMK (Kultusministerkonferenz, Standing Conference of the Education

34 Germany is characterized by a multi-party system which makes complicated coalitions, conflicts of interest and consultations necessary.
Ministers) (Wilde 2002: 41) – an institution through which cooperation in education and cultural matters among the different states can take place. Due to a high complexity of the decision making process of this institution any radical reform is made more difficult – even if the government is in favor (Ertl and Phillipps 2000:405). The federalism and cultural sovereignty in Germany is not necessarily a cause for the fact that a nationwide reform has not happened but it is an obstacle for any reform idea. The presence of federalism and cultural sovereignty in Germany point to the fact that any analysis of educational reforms in Germany should take a close look at the state level as it is done in Section 6.

Contrary to some expectations, the federalist character of Germany did not spark competition among the Laender but acted rather as a buffer against innovation. Freitag and Schlicht (2009) analyze federalism as an underlying factor of social educational inequality in Germany. Philipps (1995b) defends federalism by showing up its potential of promoting variety.

The power of the conservative party (CDU): Traditionally in Germany the SPD always was on the side of the political spectrum advocating comprehensiveness of the education system (Leschinsky and Mayer 1990) even though this was not always the case (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:326). Consequently, the states with the SPD in power would be more supportive of introducing measures to increase comprehensiveness or later tracking. The Green Party advocates stronger efforts towards an educational system that fosters the inclusion of children from a socially disadvantaged background (Die Gruenen35 2011). The Red-Green coalition in Baden Wuerttemberg promises more comprehensive schools and all-day schools and speaks of an educational ground heaving - Bildungsaufbruch (Die Zeit 2011).

Finally, the “Verrechtlichung” and “durchorganisierte Gesellschaft” („over-regulation and over-organized society”) is also seen by some authors as an obstacle for reform ideas to carry fruit and provide the German education system with a nation-wide reform (Ertl and Phillips 2000).

Disaccord within the reform movements, lack of power and lack of consensus among the actors

A movement that strongly supported reforms in terms of providing the child with is rightly chances – the Reformpaedagogik – did and does not have a clear, unified idea of what it is. There were several streams of thought behind the movement which were difficult to unite against the obstacles in the debate on the education system in Germany.

Other groups advocating social equality also were characterized by an ambivalent attitude such as the largely left-wing Teacher’s Union (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:

35 ‘Die Gruenen’ is Germany’s Green Party.
Even a lack of conviction of the advocates of reform who had not been able to define a clear program was a problem (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 326).

Furthermore, the lack of political power to implement reforms (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967:322) was an obstacle for the implementation even of strong programs: even the Social Democrats (SPD) did not constantly defend the reform when put under political and electoral pressures (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 326).

**The role of the public opinion**

Finally, as a result of the strong forces against reform the public opinion (at least up to 1967) was influenced to be rather against or neutral towards educational reforms (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 327). Given the amount and strength of the ‘negative forces’ analyzed in this section, the mobilization of public opinion and political forces was hard to achieve. Robinson and Kuhlmann (1967) and Ertl and Phillipps (2001) argue that public interest and political forces would need to be effectively motivated to change something in the West German education system.

*Der Spiegel (2011)* interprets recent reforms in Northrhein-Westphalia (the introduction of an optional integrated Sekundarschule) as pure politically strategic measures rather than a real reform: „Genaendert wird nichts, aber alles ist moglich“ (Nothing is changed but everything is possible)

### 6. Tracking policy (changes) and outcomes

**Tracking policy (changes) in the Bundeslaender**

A compulsory adjournment to a later stage of the tracking age of 10 (after the 4th grade) is not found in many states (only in Berlin and Brandenburg). Usually the various types of prolongation of the primary school or comprehensive schools (Gesamtschulen) are facultative.

However, there are and have been various forms of policy changes and reform ideas leading towards more comprehensiveness in the various German states. These changes and ideas for change are quite heterogeneous across the states but so far Berlin and Brandenburg can be seen as the most comprehensive states and Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bayern (Bavaria) as the least. But this might be about to change to a large part as a consequence of a change in the distribution of power of the political parties: a very strong example of why a political power distribution can change education policy outcomes is the case of current Baden-Wuerttemberg where a red-green coalition is now

---

36 See below for a small case study of these two particular cases.
in power and proposes more radical moves towards comprehensive schools (see Der Spiegel 2011b and page 14). Table 2 shows some selected main tracking policies after primary school and selected main reforms regarding tracking policies in each German state including a short description.

Table 2: Selected tracking policy (changes) in the different German states

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tracking policy (changes)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Wuerttemberg</td>
<td>Primary school up to the 4th grade. In 2011 proposals by the government of introducing a Gemeinschaftsschule.</td>
<td>Gemeinschaftsschulen are planned to be introduced by the school year 2012/2013. It should comprise grades 5-10 and maybe 1-4 and 11-13. These schools should be all-day schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayern (Bavaria)</td>
<td>Primary school up to the 4th grade but after 6th grade pupils can change from Hauptschule to Realschule. In 2011 proposals by the SPD state parliament fraction of introducing a Gemeinschaftsschule.</td>
<td>Gemeinschaftsschulen are planned to be all-day schools and provide the pupils with the possibility of the 3 different degrees but by learning together.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Berlin              | 6 years of compulsory primary school, change from primary to secondary education after the 6th grade (compulsory). In 2006 the state government achieved the introduction of a pilot phase for Gemeinschaftsschulen, which are supposed to become compulsory. | Compulsory primary school covers 6 years instead of 4 years. Selection after 12 years of age.  
The first pilot Gemeinschaftsschulen were opened in 2008/2009. |
| Brandenburg         | 6 years of compulsory primary school, transition after the 6th grade (commonly). | Selection after 12 years of age. After reunification an SPD government was elected and the Gesamtschule was to be the |
Bremen | **Orientierungsstufe** (OS) after 4th grade. | Introduced in 1948/49 but abolished several years later (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 319)

Hamburg | **Beobachtungsstufe** (OS) after 4th grade. Recent reform proposals for a 6year primary school (Tillmann 2009) | Introduced in 1948/49 but abolished several years later (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 319)

Hessen | **Foerderstufe, Additive Gesamtschulen, Schuldorf Bergstrasse.** Transition after 4th grade but the. | **Foerderstufe** was proposed by the Social-democrats in 1964. The 5th and 6th grade can be organized in a school-form comprehensive way

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | After the re-unification one of the only two states to introduce **Gesamtschule** (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967). Transition after 4th grade with a school-type independent **Orientierungsstufe**. |

Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) | 4 year primary school with **Foerderstufe** *(Differenzierter Mittelbau)* and **Orientierungsstufe** | **Foerderstufe** was introduced in 1948/49 but abolished several years later. OS was introduced in a compulsory fashion in 1981/1982 but abolished in 2004.

Nordrhein-Westphalen (North Rine-Westphalia) | Legislation that means end of **Hauptschule** in 2011, integrated **Sekundarschulen** in 2012/2013. Transition after 4th grade, but depending on the | Current proposal by the minority government to introduce **Gemeinschaftschulen** is based on the idea that the 5th and 6th grade are generally
FROM SELECTIVITY TO UNIVERSALISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate)</td>
<td>Transition after 4\textsuperscript{th} grade with a comprehensive or school dependent Orientierungsstufe.</td>
<td>taught together and then the school can decide to be integrated or not from 7\textsuperscript{th} grade on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarland</td>
<td>Abolished Hauptschule in 1996. Transition after 4\textsuperscript{th} grade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachsen-Anhalt (Saxony-Anhalt)</td>
<td>Mittelschule instead of Hauptschule and Realschule in 1990. Transition after 4\textsuperscript{th} grade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleswig-Holstein (Silesia-Holstein)</td>
<td>Orientierungsstufe (OS). Transition after 4\textsuperscript{th} grade. Gemeinschaftsschule possible from 2007 onwards/</td>
<td>Orientierungsstufe (OS). introduced in 1948/49 but abolished several years later (Robinson and Kuhlmann1967: 319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thueringen (Thuringia)</td>
<td>Mittelschule instead of Hauptschule and Realschule in 1990. Transition after 4\textsuperscript{th} grade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former GDR</td>
<td>Polytechnische Oberschule (POS)</td>
<td>POS was compulsory and lasted until the tenth grade. Some continued with the “erweiterte Oberschule ” (EOS) to receive the Abitur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study Berlin

As it has been mentioned above, Berlin and Brandenburg can be considered as the most comprehensive federal states in terms of schooling in the sense that they are the only states with a six-year primary school. Therefore, tracking between school levels takes place at a higher age in these states and pupils attend the comprehensive Grundschule for a longer time. Traditionally, political parties and groupings that supported an extension of primary education duration were also in favor of comprehensive schooling on the secondary level, such that the two ideas are directly linked. In Berlin, the six-year primary school was introduced in 1948 and has stayed intact since. Brandenburg was the only one among the five new federal states (former GDR states) to adopt the Berlin model of a six-year primary school after German reunification in 1991. In other federal states, primary education always comprised four years, while in some states as Hamburg and Bremen, the six-year primary school was introduced for a short period, but then abandoned. This begs the question of why later tracking was introduced in Berlin and Brandenburg, but not in the other federal states. In particular, which political forces and historical circumstances were behind this variation between federal states? In the following, we lay the main focus on the case of Berlin, as Brandenburg basically adopted the Berlin model of primary schooling after reunification and similar political forces were behind the two decisions.

The Grundschule, the German primary school in its current form, was created during the Weimar Republic in 1920. It was defined in the Weimar Constitution as a ‘school common to all’ (Jung et al.: 21), constituting the building block for further education. It was thus given a strongly comprehensive character. The duration of the Grundschule was fixed to four years, which constituted a compromise between political parties and interest groups. Already in the Weimar Republic there were proponents of a six-year primary school, namely the German Teacher Association (Freie Lehrergewerkschaft Deutschlands)\(^ {38} \). The Social Democrats, the German Democrats (liberal) and the Centre (catholic party) were in favor of the four-year primary school, while the conservative German National Peoples Party had argued in favor of a three-year primary school (Fuehr: 94 et seq.).

Just after the end of the Second World War, a short period of reform willingness and democratization of the education system prevailed among most political parties and among parts of the population, in particular in the North of Germany and less so in the conservative Southern federal states. Even though this movement died out after a few years with the beginning of the Cold War and as traditionalist structures started to prevail again, the six-year primary school in Berlin and – during a short period – in some other federal states was the result of these reform ideas (Fuehr:95).

\(^{38}\) The German Teacher Association can be considered as the parent association of the Education and Science Workers’ Union (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, GEW) that exists today and supports a comprehensive education system
The reformist forces were strongest in Berlin, where during the first two years after the War there was a political consensus over most political parties and interest groups in favor of a comprehensive school system in order to achieve a democratization of the society. The left-wing SPD and its more radical counterpart in the Soviet Occupation Zone, SED, strongly supported a comprehensive school, the Einheitsschule. In March 1947, a representative of the SED Max Kreuzinger states in front of the Berlin parliament (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin): “[…] we want to move towards a school that makes the school system a truly democratic school system, a school system that is the means of education for the great masses of the people, we are in favor of a form of Einheitsschule” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin: 52). Max Kreuzinger also points out: “We rely therein on truly substantial parts of the teacher staff. […] We have collaborated tightly with the parents” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin: 56), which indicates that the left-wing parties in Berlin enjoyed support from important interest groups. Also Mancke (1977) states that Teacher Association of Berlin supported the idea of Einheitsschule (Mancke:654). But interestingly, also the liberal LDP (today: FDP) was in favor of a comprehensive school, or the conservative CDU at least did not thoroughly oppose it during the first years after the war (Mancke: 653 et seqq., Robinson: 326). During the same parliament discussion in 1947 a representative of the LDP, Georg Wolff, cites the LDP’s official statement towards school reform: “Reformation of the educational system, in particular also of the universities, with the aim of the unhindered advancement of the diligent from all social classes.” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin: 57). And further: “We are of the opinion that the entirety of our children should be unified within one school.” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin: 60). The Christian Democrats were much more hesitant, arguing against the Einheitsschule and in favor of an adjournment of the reform, though they also favored a six-year primary school, relative to the eight-year comprehensive track promoted by the left-wing parties. The CDU representative Landsberg in the Berlin parliament in 1947 states: “It seems appropriate to me – and one has to discuss even that -, that a six-year primary school is carried into execution […] However, I have to say one thing about the proposition for the school law of the SED: an eight-year basic school would dissolve the entity of higher education by itself and has to inevitably downgrade the performance of the higher school.” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin: 47-48). Another CDU representative, Maxsein, goes further in the critique of the Einheitsschule: “Reforms are generally welcomed. In its postulations thoroughly correct, she [the reform] overshoots her goals in practice. […]What does the Einheitsschule do? She combines all youthful intellectual abilities and administers them with a uniform intellectual nutrition, a method that is opposed to the individuality of intellect.” (Stadtverordnetenversammlung von Gross-Berlin, 20.03.1947: 21).

Nonetheless, all parties voted in favor of the Education Act in 1948. It introduced the Einheitsschule with an eight-year basic school track for everybody and combined a general and a vocational track on the upper secondary level. The basic school track consisted in six years of completely comprehensive schooling and two years during
which pupils were partly tracked in optional courses. This school type followed the Soviet Model and had similarities with the Polytechnische Oberschule that was to be introduced later in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the GDR. The Education Act was supported by the Allies who praised it as “one of the most important steps in education since beginning of the occupation” (Mancke: 655). The support for the school law from the part of the Christ Democrats, despite of their opposed view expressed in parliament, can possibly be explained by a lack of political power and the willingness for compromises in order to achieve at least some of their goals, as for instance the retention of religious instruction in schools and a tracking between a general and a vocational track as from the ninth grade of the Einheitschule.

However, structural and material obstacles to the actual implementation of the Education Act in Berlin arose soon, despite of the initial willingness of the politicians for educational reform. Destructed school buildings and lack of teachers after the war did not leave much space for educational experimentation and radical changes of the administrative structures of schools. Old administrative structures, however, fostered disparities between basic and higher level schools, such as differences in school fees and in pupil-teacher ratios across school types. Even though these traditional structures were supposed to be used in a preliminary way, they had already shaped the post-war education in Berlin, before the Education Act actually came into effect in 1948 (Mancke: 656 et seqq.). Another obstacle to comprehensive reforms was the beginning of the Cold War which led to a discredit of all types of educational reform that were influenced by the Soviet Model, hence also the Einheitsschule. Only the SPD continued to support the reform plan, while the initially hesitant CDU, as well as the LDP changed their position and argued against the Einheitsschule from 1949 on. At the same time, the left wing in West Berlin was weakened, as the SED, the socialist party of the Soviet Occupation Zone, did not participate in elections of the Western Occupation Zones anymore with the beginning of the Cold War. Consequently, when the conservative parties gained the majority in the Berlin parliament in 1951, the Einheitsschule was abandoned and the Berlin education system was aligned to the systems of other federal states of the FRG. Nonetheless, as a remainder of the strong reform movements in Berlin that favored longer comprehensive schooling, the six-year comprehensive basic track of the Einheitsschule was preserved in form of a six-year primary school (Mancke: 660).

In some other federal states, similar reform movements existed shortly after the Second World War, even though they were weaker than the one in Berlin. The introduction of the Einheitsschule was never under discussion in other states than Berlin, but in Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and Bremen, a six-year primary-school was also introduced in 1948. In all of these federal states the SPD was in power and promoted reforms. However, in each of these three states the six-year primary school was replaced by a four-year primary school after some years, when the SPD lost political power. In 1991, after German reunification, Brandenburg was the only one of the new federal states ruled by the SPD and also the only one to adopt a six-year primary school – even
though the geographical closeness between Brandenburg and Berlin might have also played a role.

In general, one can state that the SPD, and recently also the Greens, have traditionally been in favor of comprehensive schools and longer common education in primary schools and the CDU against. However, there were regional variations to this pattern: while in the North of Germany the SPD actively pressed ahead with reforms after the Second World War, the SPD in the Southern states was rather indifferent towards educational policy and was ready to accept compromises in this field. Correspondingly, the CDU was tougher in its support for the tripartite system in the Southern federal states than in the North. This pattern was possibly due to the different level of support from interest groups, such as parents’ and teachers’ associations, that the parties faced across the regions. In Southern federal states such as Bayern and Baden-Wuerttemberg, the political weight of conservative and educated parts of the society, that fear the disruption of the popular Gymnasium, has traditionally been larger and reforms have been more difficult to promote. The extent, to which public opinion and interest groups can influence educational policy, has become evident recently, when the coalition of the CDU and the Greens tried to implement a six-year primary school in Hamburg. Despite of the willingness of the government in Hamburg to promote such a reform, the initiative failed when put to a referendum in 2009. Many parents, as well as the German Association of Philologists (Deutscher Philologenverband – the association of teachers teaching in higher schools such as the Gymnasium – showed firm opposition against the six-year primary school, seeing it as a threat for the Gymnasium and for the achievement of Gymnasium students (Tillmann:2, DphV).

**Outcomes**

When examining the outcomes of education reforms we are interested in the relation between determinants related to education policy and the socio-economic gradient – a measure of how strongly educational outcomes react to social background. There is a vast body of literature analyzing this relationship. Schlicht (2009:3) cites a number of authors showing up the important role of the education policy for the equality of opportunity: Allmendinger (2004), Becker (2000), Becker and Lauterbach (2004), Schuetz and Woessmann (2005) and Coleman (1996). Causa and Chapuis (2009), Woessmann (2004) and Willms and Sommers (2001) can further be named. Most of these studies find that early childhood education and late selection are reduction factors for inequality in educational opportunities.
In terms of the equality of opportunity in education (measured by the PISA score in science) Germany can be placed in the upper part of the distribution across 29 OECD countries (see Figure 5). This finding is similar to a study by Causa and Chapuis (2009) who work with the 2006 PISA data base, where Germany was also placed in the upper end of the distribution between New Zealand and Hungary.

For a direct analysis of whether the above identified (partial) policy changes of the education system in Germany actually made a difference in terms of equalization of educational opportunity we refer to work by for instance Schimpl-Neimanns (2000a, 2000b), Solga and Wagner (2010), Freitag and Schlicht (2009) and Schlicht (2009, 2010, 2012).

Schlicht (2009) examines differences across Laender in social educational equality and whether these differences can be traced back to characteristics of the different education systems in the Laender. To measure the outcome of the reforms, she uses the entry into the Gymnasium and in how far it depends on the social background. She justifies this choice by emphasizing the central role of the Abitur in further outcomes in the life course and the strong effect of “being educated in a Gymnasium” on PISA results (Schlicht 2009:4). She finds that (see Figure 6) in all the social background has a significant impact on PISA outcomes and that there is a diversity of this effect across the Laender. Laender such as Saarland, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bayern (Bavaria) can be classified as displaying a higher inequality of educational opportunity whereas Laender as Berlin and Brandenburg seem to be characterized by lower inequality of
educational opportunity. When comparing this result with Table 2 we find that Berlin is one of the only states in which primary school lasts 6 years in a compulsory way.

Furthermore Schlicht (2009) finds that policies such as early childhood education, later segmentation and more all-day-schools decrease the role of social background for PISA outcomes. In terms of comprehensive schools such as the cooperative Gesamtschule\textsuperscript{39}, Freitag and Schlicht (2009) and Schlicht (2009) do not find a reducing or moderating effect of social background on PISA results.

**Figure 6: Measure of the socio-economic gradient by Bundesland\textsuperscript{40}, sorted by strength of the SEG starting from the highest, 2000.**

![Graph showing socio-economic gradient by Bundesland](image)

*Source: Schlicht (2009: 18)*

### 7. Conclusion: the current situation

As mentioned above, the minister of education of the traditionally rather conservative state Baden-Wuerttemberg announces that she is planning to introduce a much more powerful Gemeinschaftschule in order to improve PISA results (Der Spiegel 2011a). The red-green coalition in Germany plans an integrated school (Gemeinschaftsschule) from 5\textsuperscript{th} to 10\textsuperscript{th} grade and Baden-Wuerttemberg’s Prime Minister Kretschmann speaks of an ‘education take-off’ (Bildungsaufbruch) in Baden-Wuerttemberg\textsuperscript{41}. As shown in Table 2, other state governments have elaborated proposals to develop new forms of

\textsuperscript{39} As mentioned above the co-operative Gesamtschulen are those with all elements of the tri-partite system (Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium) on one site. Integrated Gesamtschulen teach pupils together up to the tenth grade.

\textsuperscript{40} For abbreviations of the states see appendix.

(mainly all-day) *Gemeinschaftsschulen* (Bavaria, Berlin, Nordrhein-Westphalen, Sachsen, Schleswig-Holstein and Thueringen).

A close study of the current debate on late tracking and comprehensiveness in the German education system shows that the topic is *en vogue* and that there are numerous proposals on the state level. When looking at the outcomes of previous reforms, as we did in Section 6, we can see that – as has been shown in other OECD countries – later segmentation has a positive effect on the socio-economic gradient in Germany. The effects of the so strongly proposed *Gemeinschaftsschule* are not clear yet.

In this article we assessed the hypothesis of whether there were reforms concerning educational tracking in Germany and whether they were hesitant and disaggregated (see page 3). Our analysis shows that the issue of educational reform is a problem and a vividly discussed topic in Germany. The strong tradition of the German education system, federalism combined with cultural sovereignty of the states and the strength of the parents and their fear that their children will not enter into the higher strata of society are still persistent factors in the highly ideological debate on education in Germany.

Both historical and recent developments show that there is a quest for a system that is characterized by equality of opportunity in education and giving a chance to everyone but at the same time there seems to be strong force of holding on to the ‘tri-partite’ system. Therefore the reform ideas and reforms or policy changes have been and are mostly characterized by modifications – through permeability (*Zweiter und Dritter Bildungsweg*) and other bridges between the tracks - and additions to the ‘tri-partite’ system with a concurrent maintenance of the ‘tri-partite’ system. As Section 6 shows this is not an ineffective way of working towards an education system providing equal opportunities.
Bibliography


Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland ARD (Cooperation of public broadcasting stations in Germany) (2011): Deutschlandtrend im November 2011
http://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/deutschlandtrend1408_mtb-1_pos-4.html#colsStructure

Beblavy, Thum, Veselkova (2010): Education policy and welfare regimes in OECD countries. Social stratification and equal opportunity in education, CEPS working paper, Brussels, Belgium

Bellenberg, G.; G. Hovestadt and K. Klemm (2004): Selektivitaet und Durchlaessigkeit im allgemein bildenden Schulsystem, Arbeitsgruppe Bildungsforschung University of Duisburg/Essen,
http://www.gew.de/Binaries/Binary34032/Studie_Selektivitaet_und_Durchlaessigkeit.pdf

http://www.bmbf.de/pub/ganztagsschulen-zeit_fuer_mehr.pdf

http://www.bmbf.de/pub/beschluss_bildungsgipfel_dresden.pdf


Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg (2007): Economic gains from publicly provided education in Germany, SOEP papers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research 28, Berlin, Germany.

Fuchs, H.-W. (1997); „Bildung und Wissenschaft in der SBZ/DDR.” Universitaet der Bundeswehr Hamburg. Beitraege aus dem Fachbereich Paedagogik, ISSN 0175


http://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.339719.de/09-38.pdf


Picht, G. (1964): Dei deutsche Bildungskatastrophe, Olten, Freiburg, Germany.


Sekretariat der Staendigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Laender in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2011), ‘Das Bildungswesen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2010/2011.’ KMK, Bonn

http://collections.europalocal.de/muradora/objectView.action?pid=svv-Steno_GBerl_Koerp_1947_Bd.2_1_20

http://collections.europalocal.de/muradora/objectView.action?pid=svv-Steno_GBerl_Koerp_1947_Bd.2_2_21


Waterkamp, D. (2010): „Education in Germany. Twenty Years After the End of the German Democratic Republic.” European Education, vol. 41, no. 4, pp.8-23


Appendix

Abbreviations of the German states
BB – Brandenburg
BE – Berlin
BW – Baden-Wuerttemberg
BY – Bayern
HB – Hansestadt Bremen
HE – Hessen
HH – Hansestadt Hamburg
MV – Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
NI – Niedersachsen
NW – Nordrhein-Westphalen
RP – Rheinland Pfalz
SL – Saarland
SN – Schleswig-Holstein
ST – Sachsen-Anhalt
SH – Sachsen
TH - Thueringen
Chapter 4: The Politics of Educational Reform in Great Britain (1945-2010). The process and implementation policy change and its consequence for educational inequality
Simon Toubeau

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to examine the political economy of educational reforms in the United Kingdom from 1944 to the present, focusing specifically on reforms aiming to tackle the comprehensiveness of the education system, connoted by the age of tracking and the presence of a unified curriculum. The second objective of the chapter is to analyse the consequences of tracking on educational inequality.

The literature suggests that it is useful to adopt a policy-process perspective that examines educational reform as a type of policy change that goes through the stages of agenda-setting, decision-making, implementation and feedback, all within a set of structural constraints (Merritt and Coombs 1977). There are six main conjectures guiding the present analysis. i) Given the centrality of political parties to the system of parliamentary government, parties are the key actors driving and enacting reforms; moreover parties act in response to changing ideas and public demands. ii) Pro-equality reforms aiming to abolish tracking will be associated with left-wing progressive forces that espouse a discourse of equality of outcome and that are committed to an interventionist policy in the management of the economy and the provision of welfare. Conversely, reforms aiming to maintain tracking will be associated with right-wing forces that espouse a discourse of equality of opportunity and endorse a minimalist state intervention. iv) The concentration of power in the hand of the executive means that while there are a wide-ranging number of actors and interest groups involved in the policy-making process, such as civil servants and teachers’ unions, parties in office will tend to impose their preferences. v) The decentralisation of authority in education means that the preference and compliance of local actors will condition the degree to which national policy is implemented. vi) Reforms delaying or abolishing tracking will translate into a reduction of educational inequality, and vice versa.

The chapter is structured in seven sections. The first briefly presents the main waves of education reform in the UK, while the second outlines the main drivers of these reforms and the third highlights their association with changes in welfare policy. The fourth section studies the role of the central government in the policy-making process; the fifth examines how decentralisation and changes of government conditioned the enforcement of education policy, paying particular attention to the case of Scotland in the sixth section to illustrate the importance of local preferences. The seventh section dwells on the consequences of educational reform for educational inequality in England and Scotland. The conclusion summarises the findings.

42 In the UK, tracking is generally referred to as selection.
43 Educational inequality is defined as the disparity in education quality between pupils of a same generation, and is measured by the standard deviation in student test scores. Inequality of educational opportunity on the other hand is the extent to which student performance is conditioned by individual background factors.
The waves of educational reform in the UK

Efforts to alter the comprehensiveness of the educational system in the UK can be delineated into four main waves of reform, specified in Table 1, each of which corresponds with the enactment of legislative act(s) or governmental circular that established a distinct policy towards the age of tracking and the educational curriculum. Each period also corresponds, broadly, with the predominance of distinct education structures.

Table 1. Properties of principal educational reforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Legislative Acts</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Education Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1944–1965)</td>
<td>Conservative-Labour</td>
<td>1944 Education Act</td>
<td>No effort at reversing overt selection</td>
<td>No effort at introducing curriculum</td>
<td>Tripartite System</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tripartite system (1944–1965)

The first discussions regarding tracking in the post-war period centred on the interpretation of the provisions of the 1944 Education Act, the foundation of the post-war consensus on education passed by the Conservative government, but later implemented by the Labour party. The 1944 Education Act was widely interpreted as a highly progressive full-scale reform that opened opportunities for secondary education by: i) making education compulsory for all
children until the age of 15 and ii) phasing out tuition fees for secondary schools. In spite of the ambitious spirit of this Act, nothing was undertaken to delay the age of tracking or introduce a national curriculum. The 1944 Education Act thus legitimated the existing tripartite system of schooling based on elite grammar schools, secondary ‘modern’ schools and technical vocational schools, into which pupils would be transferred after primary school, at the age of 11.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{The introduction of comprehensive schooling (1965-1979)}

The selection principle was tackled in the mid-1960s when the Labour party came to office with the commitment to introduce comprehensive schooling.\textsuperscript{45} This objective was not realized through any radical reformist legislation rather, the Labour party interpreted Section 8 of the 1944 Education Act as giving LEAs discretion to re-arrange schools.\textsuperscript{46} The new policy was implemented through the distribution of a procedural decree (Circular 10/65) to the 163 LEAs, in which the government’s declared its intention to “end selection at eleven plus and eliminate separatism in secondary education” (DES 1965). Thus, the execution of the government’s policy depended entirely on the political willingness of LEAs to observe the provisions of Circular 10/65 and initiate reforms. When the Labour party returned to office in 1974, it resorted to a more direct top-down approach, with the ratification of the 1976 Education Act. There was no attempt in this period to offer a common curriculum across different type of schools.

\textit{The introduction of ‘quasi-markets’ (1979-1997)}

The reversal of the Labour party’s policies was undertaken gradually by the Conservative party after its return to office in 1979, in a series of laws (1979, 1980, 1986, 1988, 1993).\textsuperscript{47} The 1988 Act constituted a full-scale reform that targeted both the principle of selection and the existence of a unified curriculum. It created the space for the re-introduction of selection: i) overtly through the creation of Grant Maintained Schools (GMS) and City Technology Colleges (CTCs), which established their admission policies based primarily on pupil interest and ability;\textsuperscript{48} ii) covertly, by limiting access to schools at a point where the supply of available places equaled the demand for places by parents and by giving schools the autonomy to

\textsuperscript{44} In addition to this, there were independent schools (known as ‘public schools’) and religious schools

\textsuperscript{45} Comprehensive schools were secondary public schools that did not select pupils on the basis of exam performance, and were thus meant to include pupils of mixed ability and various interests from different social backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{46} As Chitty (2004: 20) argues, there was no suggestion that the goals laid out in that section be achieved necessarily through a tripartite system of schooling and there was certainly no \textit{proscription} of the establishment of comprehensive schools by LEAs.

\textsuperscript{47} The 1988 Education Act in fact constituted a culmination of a flurry more specific acts that repealed sections of the 1976 Acts that required LEAs to proceed with comprehensive re-organisation (1979 Education Act), that begun the process of handing control of school governing bodies to parents (1980 Education Act) and that forced LEAs to develop a curriculum policy which was to be disclosed to parents by school governors (1986 Education Act).

\textsuperscript{48} Grant maintained schools were those which chose to opt-out from the management of LEAs and receive their funding directly from the central government, and were to be introduced following parental ballots. City Technology
establish their own admissions criteria.\(^{49}\) There was no return to the tripartite system and to 11+ examinations, but elements of selection were introduced on the basis of different criteria across different types of schools. One additional was the introduction of the National Curriculum—a broad curriculum, for all pupils, age 5-16, consisting of three core and seven foundation subjects, to be assessed during four key stages, by the Department of Education and Science (DES).

The maintenance of ‘quasi-markets’ (1997-2010)

The legacy of the Conservative party was pronounced in the field of secondary education. Once it returned to office in 1997, the Labour party’s policies were associated with the persistence of tracking through the maintenance of ‘quasi-markets’ and the preservation of a national curriculum. The Labour party actively pursued education reform, passing three Education Acts (1998, 2002, 2006) which maintained the prevailing system of selection. This was achieved by: i) maintaining the grammar schools and their system of overt selection based on ‘11 plus’ examinations; ii) creating ‘specialist’ foundations schools and academies which overtly selected their pupils on the basis of ‘aptitude’ and covertly selected them by favouring students with a social background that enabled them to reach a genuine ‘choice’. The Labour party maintained the national curriculum but narrowed it down by introducing the National Learning Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) to improve standards in these core skills.

The drivers of educational reform

In order to appreciate which set of conditions were conducive to educational reform in the UK, it is helpful to dwell on three drivers that encouraged successive governments to pursue educational reform: hegemonic ideas, economic competitiveness, and electoral interests.

Hegemonic ideas: psychological views on intelligence

A fundamental factor that shaped the visions of the Labour and Conservative parties in the early part of the post-war period was the predominant beliefs on the influence of innate factors on pupil performance. The 1944 Education Act was shaped by the widely held belief, propagated by the educational psychologist Cyril Burt (1933) that intelligence was an innate mental ability, independent of social context, that could be assessed through intelligence tests, and which bore a strong relationship with social class. Why this view of intelligence was translated into a specific selection system can be attributed to the influence of Burt’s theories over official thinking. The Hadow Report (1926) had defined adolescence as taking place at the age of 11, and recommended that this be taken as the natural breaking point between primary and secondary education. The Spens (1938) and Norwood (1943a) reports suggested that there were three types of minds corresponding to three types of schools: grammar schools for the

---

\(^{49}\) School governing boards were given greater control over the selection of students, which would depend on a number of different factors—such as geographical proximity, the established links with feeder elementary schools, the place of the demand in the order of applications, the existing presence of a sibling in a school.
academically able, technical schools for those with an interest in applied science or art, and secondary schools for those with a practical mind set. These ideas were largely adopted in the White Paper that preceded the 1944 Education Act, which made it clear that “all children should receive the type of education for which they are best adapted.” (1943b: 29)

Changes in official views on intelligence created the momentum for the introduction of comprehensive schooling. A revolution of minds took place among psychologist in the late 1950s, which discredited prevailing theories on innate intelligence and emphasised the influence of social factors (Vernon 1950, 1960). This perspective found resonance in subsequent official reports, including the landmark Robbins and Newsom Reports (1963; 1963) which contained the statement: “that intellectual talent is a variable that can be modified by social policy and educational approaches”. Thus, the distilling of a new orthodoxy the psychology of intelligence created the setting for the reforms aiming to abolish tracking.

_Hegemonic ideas: macro-economic policy_

Changes in ideology regarding the management of the economy were also at the source of educational reform. There was a strong commitment to the ideology of Keynesianism in the UK, which was predominant from end of the Great Depression to the late 1970s and shared by the Labour and Conservative parties (Hall 1989). It proposed that the government had a responsibility in correcting smoothing business cycle fluctuations and preventing unemployment and deflation, by stimulating aggregate demand through fiscal and monetary policy (Blinder 2006). One of the core ideas was that the government should stimulate micro-level activity through public investment, and that investment in education would enhance the skills and productivity of the workforce. The lag separating the emergence of Keynesian economic policy from the introduction of comprehensive schooling in the mid-1960s can be explained by the priorities assigned to expanding access to secondary education and building the pillars of the welfare state such as the National Health Service (NHS). It was only when the Labour party adopted a strongly egalitarian position and sought to correct the inequality created by social background, as well as to meet the aspirations of its increasingly mobile electoral base, that comprehensive education become a policy objective (Kogan 1975: 28)

The changes in education policy in the late 1970s were expedited by the transformation of economic orthodoxy. The bi-partisan consensus on comprehensive education that existed up to the late 1970s was undermined by the demise of the Bretton Woods regime and the economic crisis generated by the oil-shocks of 1973, which engendered a wholesale questioning of Keynesian policies, as the commitments to demand management and full employment became increasingly untenable in the face of spiralling inflation. Monetarism became the dominant ideology guiding economic policy, which implied a prioritization of inflation-targeting and a decrease in public spending (McCallum 2006). The contingent concomitant to monetarism was neo-liberalism, which prized the involvement of the private sector in the financing and delivery of public goods and the creation of competitive market conditions in the public sector (Apple 2004). 50 The essence of the education reforms passed during the 1980s was to bring

---

50 The main propagator of the neo-liberal orthodoxy in the late 1970s, was the British Conservative party, which experienced an ideological revolution with the arrival of Margaret Thatcher as party leader and with the growing sway of the ‘New Right’- an eclectic group of thinkers espousing neo-liberalism and social conservatism
competition into the schooling system by affording parents a choice in the market place of schools, by forcing schools to be made accountable to parents for their performance, and by encouraging the expansion of good schools and the closure of the poor schools (Gordon and Whitty 1997).

**Economic competitiveness**

Educational reform was one of the measures deployed by British governments to improve the country’s competitiveness in the face of growing international economic integration (Green 2003). This became visible in their efforts to introduce comprehensive schooling and vocational training, in order to improve the stock of human capital (Becker 1964). A wider range of jobs required specific skills and more advanced qualifications, and a more sophisticated industrial society need to produce a comparably sophisticated workforce. International comparisons could not be ignored as an economic super-power like the U.S had an education system built on the comprehensive model. Harold Wilson aimed to persuade public opinion of the merits of comprehensive schooling by arguing that educating more young people and investing in human capital was an economic necessity in an increasingly open and competitive economy (Wilson 1971). The party’s manifesto emphasised the importance of investing in people through ending of segregation in secondary schools (Labour 1964). The Labour party thus couched its discourse in terms of the relationship between wealth creation and equality: widening access and improving quality became the method through which to mobilize the country’s resources.

This aim of strengthening the British economy became a motif of both the Conservative and Labour parties. During the 1980s, it was the grumblings of industry that first alerted the Conservative party of the inadequacies of the existing system, as the leading employers expressed their dissatisfaction with the shortage of skilled and knowledgeable workers (Chitty 2004). This complaint served to focus the Conservative party’s attention on the need to restore rigour in teaching, through the introduction of a national curriculum, and to make better provisions for vocational training. When the Labour party returned to office in 1997, it embraced a ‘developmental’ (Marquand 1988) perspective on education and training. The economic imperative and commitment to human capital was clearly evident in the Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett’s foreword to the 1997 White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*: “we are talking about investing in human capital in an age of knowledge. To compete in a global economy, we will have to unlock the potential of every young person” (DfEE 1997).

**Electoral Interests**

How these ideational changes translated into education policy proposals was mediated by the parties’ electoral interests. Education policy in the UK is a profoundly political matter, reflecting the divergent aspirations of different social groups in a class-divided society, as well as the strategies of parties to represent the interests of their constituents (Collins 1971; Kogan 1975).

In the period 1944-1965, the parties accepted the basis of the tripartite system. The Tories were conscious of the importance of correcting the social injustices that were perpetrated by the
British education system and were committed to modernizing the education system (1971). But as the representative of the upper social classes that benefited most from the tripartite system through access to public schools, universities and the professions, the Conservative party resisted any elimination of selection, framing their argument in a discourse in which there was a parity of ‘esteem’ between types of schools. The Labour party espoused a comparable class-based understanding of British society. It was clearly committed to achieving social reforms, but this did not translate into any top-down attempt to impose the creation of comprehensive schools on LEAs. The Labour party was in fact split on the question: the left-wing of the party-Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the party Conference - had voted in favour of creating comprehensive schools, but this never persuaded the leaders of the party, including the Minister of Education Ellen Wilkinson, who saw grammar schools as the beacons of quality run by the public sector, which, now that they were free, would encourage social mobility. Thus, the Labour party accepted the meritocratic argument that performance should determine school destination and the only measure envisaged for opening access was to make secondary schooling universal.

A distinct feature of the introduction of comprehensive schooling was the relative absence of partisan contestation over the issue. The consensus was due in large part to the shift of the Conservative party’s position. In the first half of the 1950s, it was unequivocally hostile to the creation of comprehensive schools. But, the gradual change in official thinking became irresistible. So did the disquiet of middle-class parents - the party’s electoral base - about the principle of selection, which might see their children being displaced from grammar schools by bright working-class pupils. By the time Edward Boyle became Minister of Education (1962-1964), the Tories had, by and large, accepted the notion articulated in the Newsom report, that all children had an equal opportunity to ‘develop’ intelligence. Meanwhile, evidence on the operation of the tripartite system had also provided the egalitarian wing of the Labour party with the ammunition necessary to advance its for the introduction of comprehensive schools.

Electoral strategy also underpinned the shift of the bipartisan consensus to the right in 1979. Amid a growing sense of crisis in the education system, the Conservative party leaders believed that rather than compete with the Labour party by adopting leftist policy positions, a more rewarding electoral strategy would be to offer a clear profile to the middle-class voters that were increasingly disillusioned with the performance of comprehensive schools and were being denied access to more privileged forms of education. But the Labour party had done much to shift the partisan consensus to the right in the twilight of its years in office. Facing a period of electoral decline and appreciating the growing salience of the education issue among the broader public, the Prime Minister Callaghan made a U-turn in 1976, criticizing the weak standards of the existing comprehensive system disclosed by the Bennett Report (1976), which highlighted the sub-par performance of pupils taught with informal, pupil-centred methods in vogue in certain comprehensives. This created the space for the Conservative party’s market-based solutions.

---

51 As a result of these motions, the commitment to creating comprehensive schools was included in the party’s manifesto in the 1945 general election.

52 One glaring failing of the tripartite system was that grammar schools did not hold a monopoly over schooling the academically able. Fifteen years after modern schools had introduced General Certificate of Education (GCSEs), the success rate in those exams among those that had failed to enter grammar schools (50 percent) was almost as high as the selected pupils (59 percent).
These solutions were adopted up by the Labour party in the early 1990s, whose ideological renewal and education policy were driven by electoral calculations “which subordinated working-class interests to middle-class support” (Hatcher 1998: 497). During the early 1990s, the Labour party moved to the middle ground to broaden its electoral appeal beyond its dwindling base in the working class and to target voters in what Blair called ‘middle-income, middle-Britain’ (Seyd 1998). This policy shift was first evident in the Policy Review (1988-1991), which heralded a conversion to ‘supply-side socialism’ and redirected state activity towards support for training and research (Shaw 1993). In the field of secondary education, it was felt necessary to uphold the virtues of diversity and competition, since these consumer-oriented principles appealed to aspiring middle-classes’ hopes for selective education and upward social mobility (Tomlinson 2005: 130).

But, the Labour party’s market-based approach was married to social democratic policies for tackling social exclusion and increasing employability, concerns which affected core elements of its electorate, such as the disaffected urban youth. The party created Education Action Zones (EAZ) and the ‘Excellence in Cities’ programme and increased financial resources in areas of greatest disadvantage. But these initiatives continued to involve the financial participation of the private sector and the establishment of quasi-markets in which schools could offer flexible curricula and specialist programmes that catered to the particular needs and interests of their customers (Dickson et al. 2002). Thus, the Labour party’s pursuit of middle-class voters was balanced by efforts to meet the needs of a concentrated client group, albeit again with liberal policy instruments.

Thus, political parties absorbed ideational transformations in their environment and adhered to the imperative of improving the country’s economic competitiveness. But concrete policy proposals were generated in response to the demands of their constituents; the partisan consensus that existed was in large measured induced by the objective to secure the support of middle-class voters which successively opposed the prevailing system, whether selective or comprehensive.

Education and welfare policy

British governments’ policies towards tracking and curriculum unification were embedded in a specific set of welfare policies. The UK can be classified as a ‘liberal’ welfare regime in which welfare benefits have been typically meagre and means-tested, thus curtailing the de-commodifying effect of welfare and crystallising the system of social stratification (Esping-Andersen 1990). The expectation is that the comprehensiveness of post-primary education

53 A indicator of the preservation of the bi-partisan consensus on the right of the political spectrum was the fact that the 2006 Education and Inspections Act (DfES), which introduced trust schools that could be formed by commercial enterprises and could set their own admission arrangements, passed with a significant rebellion of Labour backbenchers and with overwhelming the support of the Conservative party.

54 The government sought in particular to increase the enrolment of share of the 16-19 age group- an area where the UK lagged below the average for OECD countries. The 2003 Act, Opportunity and Excellence aimed to increase the number of vocational qualifications, renew the apprenticeship system and insert these initiatives within a partnership between employers, Regional Development Agencies, the Sector Skills Council and LEAs (Pring 2005)

55 This categorisation is an ideal type. In fact, like all real welfare states, the British welfare state is a hybrid case. Comparatively, the size of the UK welfare state was average. In certain policy areas, such as targeted income-support programmes (pensions, unemployment, family benefits), payments are modest, and the UK shows ‘liberal’ tendencies. But this is offset by the large and costly interventionist polices in other areas, such as universal healthcare programmes and public housing, where the UK displayed social democratic tendencies (Arts and Gelissen 2002).
policy and welfare policy should be inversely related: in liberal welfare regimes, education policy is conceived as a preventive tool for redressing inequality, enhancing an individual’s potential social mobility, which may mitigate the recourse to state hand-outs and the welfare state’s long-term requirement for social assistance (Heidenheimer 1981; Castles 1989).

There is evidence of this trade-off, from a comparative perspective, if public spending is used as the indicator of policy priorities. Liberal regimes lag behind in social insurance expenditure, but they spend more on education in absolute terms than conservative regimes and as much as social democratic regimes, while their share of total spending devoted to education is the greatest (Hega and Hokenmaier 2002). In addition, there is a negative association between real spending on social insurance and the share of total spending devoted to education. However, if policy outcomes or policy instruments are used as indicators, the evidence is weaker. Liberal regimes lead in general education participation at the secondary level, given their relatively low level of vocational training, and are more socially inclusive than conservative regimes (Pechar and Andres 2011). This is congruent with the finding that the UK displays a high degree of intervention in the stratification process both through its welfare and education policies (Beblavy et al. 2011). There is further evidence of this relationship from a longitudinal perspective.

The construction and expansion of the welfare state (1945-1976)

The widening of access to education in the period 1945-1976 coincided with the construction and expansion of the welfare state and the introduction of interventionist social legislation. There was an appreciation of the power of the central government to finance and deliver social services, which became universal social rights of citizenship (Marshall 1950). The Labour governments were the most activist. The Labour party was the founder of the pillar of the welfare state, the National Health Service (NHS), run on a national basis and paid for out of general taxation and free on the point of access. This was matched by the introduction of a universalistic National Insurance system which offered equal benefits to all in case of unemployment, disability, old age, ensuring that citizens enjoy a minimum living standard. This egalitarian agenda was broadened when the party returned to office in 1964. It focused with great purpose on social policy, tackling in particular child and old-age poverty, replaced a flat-rate contribution to national insurance with a progressive wage-related benefits scheme and oversaw an unprecedented increase in welfare spending (Glennerster 1945).

In spite of the widespread depiction of this period as one of policy ‘consensus’ (Kavanagh and Morris 1989), the Conservative party held strong reservations about the expanding welfare state, comparable to its initial hostility to comprehensive schools. It resisted the idea of a universalist social security system financed out of general taxation, which it saw as a means to redistribute wealth rather than simply to relieve poverty, and it preferred a national insurance system in which benefits were allocated on the basis of need. As a corrective to Labour policy, the Conservative government (1951-1964) sought to contain the volume of spending on the NHS, to give a greater role to the private sector in building public housing, to encourage tenants to become owners and to abolish rent controls (Lowe 1993). But, given the popularity of welfare policies among the middle classes, the Tories were limited in what they could dismantle, and

56 The system of National Insurance- was developed more cautiously and was far less generous than continental welfare states, reflecting the reluctant collectivism of Beveridge, the resistance of the Treasury, the pessimism about the state of the economy, the fear of antagonising industrialists with high social costs (Rhodes 2000: 163-4).
spending on health, education and pensions increased in line with demographic growth, albeit gradually from earnings-related contributions.

**The dismantling of the welfare state (1976-2010)**

The economic crisis of the late 1970s, created a setting ripe for introducing retrenchment policies. Alongside the disenchantment with comprehensive schooling and the gradual introduction of ‘quasi-markets’ in education, came a sustained effort to dismantle welfare policies. The Conservative party lead the assault on the welfare state. The government sold a vast stock of public housing owned by local councils to sitting tenants and shifted housing subsidies to means-tested benefits. Aggressive cutbacks were made to income-supporting programmes, such as child and unemployment benefits. A new indexation lowered the real value of pension benefits which encouraged individuals to flock towards personal pension schemes in the private sector. However, the record in the area of healthcare was patchier: it sought to substitute private health insurance for public provision, but it faced widespread opposition from the public, which remained in favour of maintaining social provision. Thus, there were important limitations, emerging from the ‘lock-in’ effects of welfare expansion on public expectations (Pierson 1994, 1996), on the Conservative party’s attempt to dismantle the welfare state.

The return of the Labour party to office was marked by a dual strategy that catered to its two main electoral client groups (Rhodes 2000). In the same way that it promoted diversity and choice in education, the Labour government encouraged an internal market within the NHS and encouraged private sector involvement capital investment projects. The government also sought to continue the privatisation of pension provision and to diminish the contributory pensions (Clark and Emmerson 2003). The ‘New Deal for Employment’ and ‘Welfare to Work’ programmes were designed to encourage youngsters to get jobs in the private or voluntary sectors, to enter education and training, or risk losing their unemployment benefits (Hodgson and Spours 1999; Hyland and Musson 2001). Pension benefits and housing subsidies were also increasingly subjected to means test. Alongside the programmes however, the Labour party also provided more generous income-support programme such as child and family benefits, and Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs), financial schemes designed to support students undertaking unpaid work-based learning.

**The policy-making process**

The preferences of political parties was situated at the pinnacle of a broader environment in which operated a host of social and political forces that identified the problems in modern education, set the agenda of the government and provided the intellectual fodder for policy proposals. The main evolution in the policy-making process evident in the post-war period was a simultaneous diffusion of power away from civil servants and towards ministers and advisers. Depending on the nature of the policy reform, it received either the endorsement or rejection of different teachers’ unions, but the latter never wielded a veto over policy decision.
**Power from the centre: ministers and civil servants**

The 1944 Education Act was elaborated by Rab Butler who acted as a member of a national coalition government comprising the Labour and Conservative parties, in consultation with various bodies, including teachers and administrators in the Board of Education. These actors collectively expressed a commitment to the widening of opportunities and to the improvement of education service, in order to meet the social objectives of the post-war era, such as an efficient work force and a strong social fabric. As a result, Butler received considerable support in his mission from a variety of progressive social forces: his Labour Junior Minister, the teacher and trade unionist Chuter Ede; the Trades Union Congress (TUC); the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple and from the left-wing and liberal press, such as the Manchester Guardian, the Times and the Economist (Barber 1994). The ideas shared by the elites of British society certainly bolstered the overall initiative of reform.

The Act instituted one principal change in the policy-making process by creating a Ministry of Education, whose main prerogative was the disbursement of financial resources to LEAs. In defending the selection principle at the basis of the tripartite system, the Conservative and Labour leaders were aligned with the preferences of the civil servants in Whitehall which, for reasons of administrative convenience and inertia, preferred to maintain the existing system and funnel the new pupils into the ‘modern’ schools. Attempts to allow students in modern schools to access external examinations that would provide the qualifications necessary for continuing their education, were prevented on the basis that such schools were for children from labouring classes, “whose future employment will not demand any measure of technical skill or knowledge” (Ministry of Education 1945: 13). Thus, even if the left-wing of the Labour party had managed to persuade the party’s leaders of the importance of eliminating selection, they would have faced a significant barrier, in the form of the mandarins in the Ministry of Education.

The introduction of comprehensive schooling in the mid-1960s continued to follow such a top-down process, emanating as government decree. In spite of the partisan consensus surrounding this policy, the attempt at eliminating selection was controversial and generated opposition by organized groups. Teachers were ambivalent at best. The National Union of Teachers (NUT), member of the TUC ideologically close to Crosland, appreciated the weaknesses of the tripartite system, but tried to rescue it by introducing ‘flexible bilateralism’ and circumscribing the generalization of comprehensives by limiting their construction to rural areas or new urban sites. The National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS) vociferously opposed the measure, and proposed an increase in selection standards, as a way of filtering bright pupils into modern schools. The Grammar School Head-teachers Associations (GSHA) also defended their schools and joined an alliance of grammar school parents that had mounted an opposition campaign ‘Save our Schools’. The rhetoric deployed by this movement appealed to the principles of excellence and justice against that of equality conjured by the Labour party. It was feared that the hurried replacement of venerable institutions by industrial-sized schools for mass education in the name of social engineering would lead to a levelling down of academic standards. Teachers’ unions hostile to the policy received considerable support from the national media, which depicted comprehensive schools as ‘blackboard jungles’ staffed by left-wing teachers.

---

57 Grammar and Modern schools would be maintained, but the latter would be divided into an academic stream that would result in the awarding of a GCE, comparable to grammar schools, and a modern stream.
The main consequence of this organized obstruction was the ushering of a variegated system of comprehensive schools at the local level (Kerckhoff et al. 1996).

The diffusion of power: ministers and advisers

During the late 1970s and 1980s, the media became crucial in propagating the sense of deterioration in the school system and lambasted the elimination of selection as part of its general antagonism towards the progressive reforms of the Labour government. Picking up on the findings of the Bennett Report and the William Tyndale Affair— an isolated case of zealous ‘progressive’ pedagogical techniques that downplayed the three Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic)—a number of important tabloids with wide readerships such as The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror painted alarmist pictures of declining educational standards across the UK, and their responsibility in causing unemployment and the erosion of public order. In the public mind, progressive teaching methods became inextricably linked with comprehensive school organization, forcing the government to address the problem and provide clear policy solutions.

These were instead conjured by the policy-making machine that comprised the Downing Street Policy Unit on the one hand and the DES on the other, which both vied for influence in shaping the substance of education policy. The Policy Unit, created to assist the development of policy in the Cabinet, gradually overshadowed the DES following Thatcher’s gambit to strengthen the position of the Prime Minister vis-a-vis to Ministers. Its members had strong links with a number of prominent neo-liberal think tanks, such as the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Hillgate Group, which collectively became a crucial fount of market-based policy proposals, such as education vouchers. The DES did however exert influence over the establishment of the National Curriculum. The reason for this specific attachment related firstly to the long-held conviction that the failures of education were related to the content of teaching and the accountability of teachers, rather than to the organization of schools and, secondly, to the more self-interested reason that the curriculum could be rationally administered and assessed by the central department, thus aggrandizing the power of the bureaucracy. The establishment of the National Curriculum flew in the face of the measures envisaged by the neo-liberal faction that believed that a variable curriculum could be one the main selling points of schools in a competitive market for education. Its eventual inclusion in the 1988 Education Act was due to the pressure civil servants exerted on the Minister of Education, Kenneth Baker, who saw many of his powers increase.

There had been broad support among teachers for a common curriculum for comprehensive education, but many were displeased with the vast number of subjects and the level of prescription over the content and with the assessment of pupil performance through tests that were tailored for the purpose of accountability (the results of which bore significant

---

58 The Wilson government had also revolutionized social policy by changing divorce laws and introducing equality of pay between genders, lowering the voting age to 18, legalizing abortion, decriminalizing homosexuality, relaxing censorship laws and abolishing capital punishment.

59 In addition to this media frenzy, a series of pamphlets written by prominent right-wing philosophers and authors between 1969 and 1977 (known as the ‘Black Papers’), also sustained the onslaught on the suitability progressive teaching methods and their association with comprehensive schooling and egalitarianism. The early pamphlets resurrected deterministic theories of intelligence and defended the restoration of selection and streaming, and discipline through corporal punishment, while the later papers endorsed the introduction of education vouchers.
consequences for their school and career). Initially, teachers were incapable of resisting the drive for uniformity imposed from the centre. But, by the early 1990s, disquiet over assessment examinations developed into a ballot by the biggest unions (NUT, National Union of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, NASUWT, Association of Teachers and Lecturers) for boycotting all national curriculum tests, a measure which led to an eventual relaxation, but not abandonment, of the assessment methods.

The New Labour party’s relationship to the set of stakeholders involved in the policy-making process followed the mold created by its Conservative predecessor, and the government’s agenda remained under the tight control of a number of special advisers working in Number 10. The inordinate influence wielded by these unelected advisers caused disquiet among the mandarins of the Department of Education and Employment who were resentful that a team with such little experience at management and delivery were neglecting to solicit the expertise of civil servants and to act in concert with the Department. There was further unease about the potential ‘politicisation’ of the civil service that could accrue from the political appointment of task forces, but, overall, there was little in this relationship that engendered a serious struggle for power.

A comparable relation was maintained with the education establishment. At first, the Labour party’s education policy received an enthusiastic reception from the teachers’ unions, such as the NUT and NA, and from LEAs- in spite of its equivocal stance toward selection- in part because it had made popular promises such as increasing spending on education, cutting class sizes, opening access to education and restoring control over funding to LEAs. The main outstanding critic of the government’s policy was the lobby group CASE (Campaign for State Education) (1997), which did not support the selection of pupils in specialist secondary schools or the abandonment of the policy on ending grammar schools. But, when it became clear in the 1997 White Paper that selective admissions would be allowed in specialist schools on the basis of ‘aptitude’, teachers and educationists became alarmed, arguing that selection and specialism would create hierarchies of schools in a class-based and competitive society (Benn and Chitty 1996). However, as was the case with earlier official warnings from the National Commission on Education (1993) on the dangers of creating hierarchies among maintained schools, these reservations were brushed aside by the Labour party leadership.

Policy enforceability and continuity

The two significant variables conditioning the capacity of successive governments to enforce their policies on selection were first, the decentralisation of policy implementation (Ambler

---

60 Prof. Michael Barber was largely credited for coining the slogan that intervention in schools should be ‘in inverse proportion to success’ (Barber 1996), and who as Head of Standards and Head of the Delivery Unit, also exercised influence over appointment to Task Forces. David Milliband, a former education researcher at a centre-left think tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), focused on issues of further education and training and drafted the 1997 and 2002 White Paper. As a vocal critic of comprehensive schooling, the academic and columnist Andrew Adonis ushered in the ‘era of diversity’ for the Labour party and encouraged academies to become a new generation of grammar schools at the vanguard of a meritocratic system.
1987) and second, the continuity of policy beyond the life of a single government or party leader.

A National System, Locally Administered

The 1944 Education Act introduced a “national system, locally administered” based on a partnership between the central department, the LEAs and the schools.\textsuperscript{61} This arrangement allowed LEAs independently to instigate reform initiatives, but they nevertheless remained under the “authority and control” of the Ministry. Thus, decentralisation turned out to be a significant but ambiguous factor conditioning the implementation of a government’s policy on comprehensive schooling. One the one hand, early local experimentation in comprehensive reform by certain LEAs provided the examples necessary for the Labour government to encourage the broadening of such initiatives. On the other hand, reluctant LEA’s still had the power to respond to the Labour government’s initiatives depending on their political preferences. As Kerckhoff et al (1996: 144) state: \textquotedblleft a decentralised system of local democracies made the progress of comprehensive re-organisation vulnerable to changes in party politics.\textquotedblright

The Labour party’s term in office witnessed the steady unfolding of comprehensive schools across the country. But, the pace of progress was uneven- two thirds of students still remained within the tripartite system and the reforms were geographically uneven, with bastions of local opposition to re-organising the system. The main reason for this variation in implementation was the weak enforceability of the policy which, according to Ben and Chitty (1996:29), was due to the wording of Circular 10/65, which \textit{requested}, rather than \textit{required}, LEAs to prepare plans for re-organisation. This distinction was the subject of debate within the Labour party, as the left wing decided in Conference in 1963 that the only method through which to ensure uniform implementation was a top-down instruction obliging LEAs to reform secondary schools. Crosland on the other hand, was more attuned to the partnership between central and local government and to the resilience of opposition to comprehensive schools. This appreciation of the constraints of local terrain meant that the circular did not impose a single pattern of re-organisation, but rather, outlined four main types of schools from which LEAs could select.\textsuperscript{62}

What did ensure the sustained creation of comprehensive schools was the decision of consecutive Labour and Conservative governments to continue accepting LEA proposals for the re-arranging of schools. When the Conservative party returned to office in 1970s, it was widely believed that the Minister of Education, Margaret Thatcher, would put a halt to the initiatives of LEAs. Thatcher, who never hid her personal attachment to grammar schools, issued Circular 10/70, which announced that the central department would no longer accept LEA plans. But, the momentum unleashed by the Labour party’s reform was too powerful to counter, and LEAs

\textsuperscript{61} While the Ministry set national norms such as the school leaving age and allocated resources to LEAs, the latter enjoyed considerable autonomy to organize schools and allocate resources between them. Schools and teachers on the other hand shaped the content of education- the curriculum.

\textsuperscript{62} The four types were: 1. The orthodox comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18; 2. a two-tiered system based on a junior and high school into which pupils would transfer at age 14; 3. A two-tiered system based on a comprehensive school for pupils 11-16, combined with a sixth-form college (devoted to preparation for the ‘Advanced’ Level of the GCE); 4. A two-tiered system comprising a middle school for pupils 8-12 or 9-13, followed by upper schools with an age range of 12-18.
continued to submit their plans—albeit as individual school plans—which Thatcher was compelled to accept. In fact, her period in office witnessed the highest number of accepted submissions for the creation of comprehensive schools and at the time of her departure in 1974, the majority of pupils were being educated in the comprehensive system.\textsuperscript{63} When it returned to office, the Labour continued the trail it had blazed. Dissatisfied with the continued reticence of certain LEAs, it abolished 154 direct grant grammar schools and passed the 1976 Education Act, which exhorted LEAs not to base admissions into school on the principle of selection.

The uneven re-organisation of the comprehensive schooling system

Allowing LEAs to exercise discretion in re-organising the local schooling system meant that the comprehensive movement took place ‘from the bottom up’, and that the pace of change of reform was highly uneven across and within LEAs. By 1974, comprehensive schools had grown to represent 42.2 percent of schools, educating 55.7 percent of students (Kerckhoff et al. 1996: 195). However, these authors find that by 1974, 42 LEAs had effected complete transitions to the comprehensive system (all state supported secondary schools were comprehensive), while 19 had failed to establish a single comprehensive. The remaining LEAs persisted with a bipartite system in which modern schools effectively became comprehensive schools that continued to co-exist alongside selective grammar schools. Indeed, much of the local resistance to comprehensive re-organisation involved efforts to retain grammar schools. There was also some unevenness in the organisational forms of comprehensive schools within and between LEAs, with some offering late intake (up to age 13) and sixth form education (up to 18), while others did not.

The main factors affecting the dynamics of this uneven transition were primarily political rather than socio-economic: Labour-controlled LEAS tended to adopt comprehensive reforms earlier and more fully than the Conservative-controlled LEAs, in particular by transforming existing selective schools into comprehensives. Labour controlled LEAs with high educational resources also tended to provide for late intake and sixth forms in comprehensive schools, thus abating the residual effects of inherited form the selective system.\textsuperscript{64}

The implication of this trend was that it effectively maintained a selective ‘system’, which, as we will see in the final section, mitigated the potentially egalitarian effects of the reform. Within LEAs, it meant that even where comprehensive schools were created, if grammar schools continued to exist, then the comprehensive schools existed within a selective ‘system’. Indeed, by 1974, the majority of comprehensive schools were in LEAs that maintained selective grammar schools. Moreover, there also continued to exist important differences between comprehensive schools (linked to the timing of their creation and their organisational origins as purpose-built, modern, grammar or amalgamated schools), in what they could offer to pupils in

\textsuperscript{63} Nevertheless, the retention of grammar schools meant that a dual-system persisted and that only half LEAs were genuinely comprehensive. Moreover, where grammar schools were retained, they became synonymous with good schools while the comprehensive were afflicted with lower status.

\textsuperscript{64} Kerckhoff et al. (1996) find that the two organisational types of comprehensive schools (late intake and sixth form vs early intake and no sixth form) was linked to the characteristics of the schools from which they originated: comprehensive schools built from modern schools were less likely to offer late intake and sixth forms than those originating from grammar schools.
terms of duration of study and educational achievement, meaning that not all comprehensive schools could offer an equal academic and schooling environment.

The main consequence of this uneven re-organisation was that the comprehensive schools included a smaller share of high ability students than they could have under a fully comprehensive system, as the persistence of the selective mechanism meant that the most able pupils were ‘creamed’ from comprehensive schools and would continue to attend selective grammar schools (Kerckhoff 1986; Kerckhoff et al. 1996). This prevented comprehensive schools from establishing a mixed composition of social backgrounds and ability levels that were meant to underlie its egalitarian effects on pupil performance. Given that comprehensive schools continued to attract students from the middle to lower ability range, and that not all could offer education beyond the compulsory leaving age of 16, the social divisions that had once existed in the tripartite system between grammar schools and modern secondary schools were effectively channelled into and reproduced in the comprehensive system (Manning and Pischke 2006).

Thus, the decentralisation to LEAs in governing the re-organisation of schools and the distinct local political preferences regarding the timing, pace and scope of reform ushered in a highly uneven comprehensive system that exhibited an important degree continuity with the previous tripartite system, in the differences that persisted both between comprehensive and grammar schools and within comprehensive schools.

**Centralisation and Privatisation - Conservatives**

In contrast, the Conservative government’s achievement in creating a competitive market place for education and in re-introducing selection was shaped by the centralization of levers at its disposal. For existing comprehensive schools, the introduction of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) in combination with the principle of open enrolment ensured the effective creation of ‘quasi-market’ conditions (Ref). The centralization of enrolment and allocation criteria meant that the discretionary power of LEAs was removed; funds thus followed parental choice of schools. The National Curriculum was also imposed on teachers and then subsequently assessed, by the Minister of Education, the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council, which set the attainment targets and assessment tests.

For the newly created GMS and CTCs however, the ‘devolution’ of initiative to parents and to the private sector meant that the government’s power of enforceability was weakened. The opting-out of comprehensive schools from LEA control depended on the decision of parents in a ballot and the anticipated rush never materialized: by 1992, only 422 out of 24,000 schools had voted to opt out (Ref). A similar problem afflicted CTCs. Dubious about the likely returns on their investment, employers from industry were reluctant to provide funding, and the 15 CTCs that were eventually established were funded by the government. In much the same way that the establishment of comprehensive schools depended on bottom-up initiatives of LEAs, the creation of the Thatcherite flagship schools was also undermined by decentralization.

---

65 The central government would fix the ‘relevant student’ number to be enrolled in a school (based on 1979-1980 numbers), while the budget that the school governing board received from the LEA would be determined by a weighed per capital formula.
But, the direction of education reform survived the change of party leadership, as the new Prime Minister, John Major, continued with policies to encourage privatization and competition. One of the key aims of the 1993 Education Act was to increase the number of GMS by changing balloting rules, allowing independent, special schools and clusters of schools to opt-out and forcing ‘failing schools’ to become grant-maintained. By the time the Conservatives left office, there were 1,115 GMS, accounting for 20 percent of pupils in secondary schools. This went a considerable way in achieving the Conservative party’s desire for selection, as most GMS employed selection criteria (either overtly or covertly), while remaining comprehensive in name.

Centralisation and Privatisation - Labour

The ‘New’ Labour party continued the trend set by the Conservatives in centralizing powers in the hands of the Secretary of State for Education. In his relationship with schools, the Secretary of State set the regulatory framework: schools had the freedom to select their status and those choosing the foundation option continued to own their assets and premises and to recruit their staff. The principal tool that curtailed the autonomy of schools was the national curriculum, as the government imposed the teaching of a numeracy and literacy hour as part of its NLS and NNS, and continued to assess the ability of schools to teach successfully the curriculum on the basis of their performance at standardized examinations.

In a break with Conservative policy, it was initially envisaged that the enforcement of those standards would be undertaken in partnership with LEAs. But, with the Standards and Framework Act (1998), the central government overrode their authority in two ways. First, it dictated how LEAs had to allocate funding, preventing them from using funding to incentivize good performance. Second, the central government used examination results and the inspection of schools and LEAs by OfSTED to determine the fate of schools. Those deemed to be ‘failing’ could be closed down, privatized, or transformed into academies, while those that performed well had earned the autonomy to innovate, and to modify the curriculum and teacher’s pay.

But relying on the private sector proved to be as frustrating for the Labour government as it was for the Conservatives. For the newly established EAZs, there was shortfall of private sector participation. The idea that businesses would take a lead never materialized, forcing LEAs to make bids for most of the first zones. Private companies were also slow to take over individual ‘failing’ schools. Instead they took over the day-to-day running of education from a number of LEAs in London, but in most cases did not prove more competent in meeting agreed targets. Academies also experienced important difficulties finding sponsors, meaning that the government exempted certain universities and colleges from paying the £2m fee to sponsor an academy. Thus, because it ultimately depended on the bottom-up involvement of private companies, the government’s policy was limited by decentralization.

66 The LEA of Southwark transferred its services to the engineering group W.S. Atkins, but performed so badly that it pulled out and was replaced by another group the Cambridge Education Associates. The latter had taken over the Islington LEA and were penalised by the DfES for failing to meet targets. One successful case of private sector participation involved the Telfrod CTC which had formed a company making profit selling educational services.
The succession by Gordon Brown, resulted in a striking degree of policy continuity, given the latter’s reservations about the modern education agenda. There was a continued commitment to the ‘developmental’ perspective, as the 2008 and 2009 Acts raised the education leaving age to 18, introduced more work-based apprenticeships and part-time education and training. This continuity was replicated in the enthusiasm of the Schools Secretary, Ed Balls, for expanding the number of academies, as they were lauded for turning around low performing schools. The Labour party’s policy towards selection thus survived the change in party leadership.

Decentralisation to Scotland

The significance of decentralisation as a variable conditioning the implementation of education policy is further illustrated in the case of Scotland. Education was one of the three components of Scottish autonomy that remained under the authority of civil society and local government until the late 19th century, when social functions were taken over by the Scottish Office.

The existence of a distinct legal system and a decentralised administration entailed a separate policy-making process: the British government enacted separate Education Acts for Scotland, which were prepared by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Committees in Westminster. This structure of territorial representation enabled the central government to take into consideration the different policy styles and traditions present in Scotland (Brown et al. 1998). The presence of pluralist and corporatist elements in the policy-making process meant that the different groups involved in the education community, such as teachers, parents, inspectors, examination boards, local authorities were consulted over policy decisions by government bodies, namely the Scottish Education Department (SED) (MacPherson and Raab 1988). The content of the legislation aimed to preserve Scottish national identity, partly defined in terms of communal solidarity and social justice, and Scottish education traditions, which included a broad curriculum, the avoidance of early specialisation and an important role for the public sector, notably the local and county councils, in managing education structures.

The abolition of selection

The strength of this tradition became visible in the mid-1960s with the introduction of comprehensive schooling. With the passage of Circular 10/65, Scottish LEAs re-organised schooling along comprehensive lines. The major point of contrast with England and Wales was that Scottish local authorities did so more completely. The result was that selective schooling was replaced by a single school serving all pupils, infusing considerable uniformity of schools goals, curricula and principles of education. By the early 1980s, 95 percent of Scottish pupils attended comprehensive schools (MacPherson and Raab 1988).

The enthusiasm of local authorities in Scotland can be explained by precedent and politics. The Scottish Advisory Council on Education had recommended a comprehensive system, with a core curriculum and examination as early as 1947, so there was early support on behalf of the

67 The Scottish Grand Committee was composed of all 72 Scottish MPs (this dropped to 59 after 2005), and considered the committee stage of Scottish bills, but could not vote on motions. The Scottish Standing Committees scrutinised legislation and was composed of MPs from the government majority.
educational institution. In addition, sparse population in rural areas had led to the creation of analogous ‘omnibus’ schools and one fifth of secondary schools already had opted for a comprehensive arrangement by 1965, both of which facilitated the ‘comprehensivisation’ process (Bryce and Humes 1999). In addition, there was a strong party political effect. Save for the 1955 general elections, the Labour party had won the most votes and seats in Scotland since 1945, and by 1964, it had become a hegemonic force. Scotland thus followed the Labour party’s shift to emphasising equality of attainment.

Partial resistance to ‘quasi-markets’

The enthusiasm of Scottish LEAs for comprehensive schooling meant that the Conservative party’s programme for educational reform engendered a good deal of resistance. The ‘New Right’ agenda was enforced through a series of laws that affected both England and Scotland.\(^{68}\) This was made possible by the size of the Conservative majority- the legislation could always be passed because of the weight of English MPs in the government’s ranks- and by the weakening of the institutions of territorial representation. The Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, avoided taking independent policy initiatives preferring to apply the centre’s policy to Scotland. His successors, Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Forsyth were Thatcherite ideologues that argued the consumerist message in matters of education (Midwinter et al. 1991).

The consequences of the Conservative party’s policy were notable: by the mid-1980s, about 9 percent of pupils entering secondary school did so outside their catchment area, increasing to around 12 percent in urban authorities (Adler and Raab 1989). But, this was still far less than what was witnessed in England. The main reasons for this weak implementation lie in the preferences of the Scottish public and the effect of the extant education structures. There was little enthusiasm on behalf of parents to take over the running of schools, or interfere in teacher’s professional judgement. When it came to parental choice, again parents were less keen, reflecting the fact that choice was simply less meaningful in Scotland: the success in re-organising the system along comprehensive lines meant that there were far fewer establishments that could offer distinct structures; moreover the Scottish curriculum and system of examinations reinforced the homogeneity of the maintained system. In the end, only two schools were to opt-out, but did so to resist closure from the LEAs and to obtain resources directly from the Scottish Office (Pickard 1999). So the decentralisation of power to parents and

---

\(^{68}\) At the basis of the reformist agenda was the 1981 Education Act (Scotland) which gave parents the right to request that their child attend a school outside their designated attendance area. The School Boards (Scotland) Act gave parents power over school management and the Self-Governing Schools (Scotland) Act 1989 transfer budgetary powers to school governors and gave parents the right to demand that their school ‘opt-out’ of LEA control.

\(^{69}\) The party’s weak feeble parliamentary representation from Scotland created problems when it came to working the system of administrative devolution and ensuring a Conservative majority in the Scottish committees, but the government simply appointed English MPs, further eroding the legitimacy its legislation and rule north of the border.
school boards was again one of the main constraints on the implementation of the government’s policies.

Devolution in Scotland

Devolved structures of government for Scotland and Wales were created by the Labour government in 1998, reflecting the party’s commitment to devolution as a corrective to the disjuncture between the public policy preferences of these regions and the policies enacted by the British central government under the Conservatives. The consequences of devolution for policy divergence in the field of education have been conditioned by historical legacies and by multi-level party politics. Given that secondary education was debated within a Scottish framework prior to legislative decentralization, there was already some scope for divergence, albeit within the context set by the central government’s policy. So, what would be achieved by the new Scottish government in reference to the past policy and policy pursued in England would differ in a matter of degree (Keating 2005).

Between 1999 and 2007, the scope for divergence was somewhat mitigated by the simultaneous presence of the Labour party in central and regional office, in particular given that the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) tended to embrace the agenda of the ‘New’ Labour party and to emphasize themes such as choice and standards. But the Scottish government did nevertheless strive to reflect the distinct traditions of the Scottish public, reflecting partly the intensity of competition that the SLP faced on the left of the political spectrum in Scottish elections. In the policy-making process, this has been achieved by encouraging a ‘new style of politics’ (Brown 2000) that is more consultative and participative, and by enabling the professionals and LEAs to retain influence in the process. Regarding the substance of policy, it has been achieved by retaining the public sector as the most significant source of schooling provision and by allowing comprehensive schools to remain the cornerstone of the educational system (Raffe 2005). Since the SNP was voted in office in 2007, it has maintained the same line as the previous administration, but placed education at the heart of the nationalist project by emphasizing that the public provision is a key component to ensuring fairness and addressing inequalities in a modern and inclusive Scottish nation and by placing education as a strategic component for the competitive positioning of Scotland in the ‘new’ knowledge economy (Arnott and Ozga 2008).

The effect of policy on educational inequality

It is now appropriate to evaluate the effect of education reforms on educational inequality. One way to capture this relationship is to look at the socio-economic gradient (SEG), the link between socio-economic status and student performance. The hypothesis is that tracking students into different schools increases inequality in educational performance and the SEG (Willms 2003).
Cross-national perspectives

One common finding emerging from cross-national studies is that earlier tracking is indeed associated with larger educational inequalities. Several OECD reports confirm the strength of this relationship, showing that earlier tracking increases the influence of school environment-measured by average socio-economic intake-on student performance (OECD 2004, 2007a; Sutherland and Price 2007). Schutz et al (2008) and Woessman (2009) also show that the age of tracking is negatively related to family-background effects (FBE).

The degree of educational inequality in the UK is however difficult to ascertain. Schutz et al (2008) show England scores highest on the family-background effects (FBE) on individual student performance, and thus that it provides students with the least degree of educational opportunity. This result is nevertheless difficult to reconcile with the comparatively late age of overt tracking in the UK (age 16), with respect to a country like Germany, which exhibits a similar level of background effects, but where tracking occurs much earlier (age 10).

The OECD studies present a more nuanced picture. The influence of school environment on student performance is on par with the influence of individual background (around 52 points), and below the OECD average of 62 points, suggesting that the UK offers a degree of educational opportunity which is above the OECD average (Causa and Chapuis 2010). This is corroborated by subsequent finding that within school variation in student performance (78) is higher than between school variation (35). For the purpose of comparison, the OECD average is (65) and (42) points respectively, while for Germany, the figures are (42) and (70) respectively, as is to be expected from a country with earlier tracking (OECD 2010). This is consistent with the position of the UK as a country with late tracking in which schools are generally socially inclusive.

In spite of this however, socio-economic factors continue to exert a relatively strong influence on performance differences in the UK: 87 percent of the variation in between-school performance is explained by the school’s socio-economic intake, whereas the OECD average is 57 percent. The influence of socio-economic factors can be better ascertained through a longitudinal and comparative analysis of the consequences of education structures.

Social class in the tripartite system

Through their decision to maintain the system of selection, the Labour and Conservative parties cemented the class structure’s relationship with the education system. Floud et al.(1958) show that there was an increase in the share of working-class pupils entering grammar schools after

---

70 The effect of school environment, measured by between-school differences in socio-economic intake, is a proxy for the effect of tracking. It is assumed that tracking induces segregation and a more homogeneous intake, hampering the peer and contextual effects that are associated with the improved performance of pupils from a lower socio-economic background.

71 In Schutz et al (2008), FEB is measured by the number of books in a household, student performance is measured by achievement tests in TIMSS. In Woessman et al (2009), family background is measured using the PISA index of Economic, Social and cultural Status (ESCS)

72 In a socially inclusive schooling system, the distribution of socio-economic background in each school reflects the distribution of socio-economic background in the system.
the abolishment of fees in 1944, continuing a trend that reflected the liberalisation of the school system and the increasing size of this social segment in the age group. However, this did not reflect an increasing ‘class-chances’: whereas the 10 percent of working class pupils entered grammar school in the 1930s, this figure increased only to 12 percent in the North and 14 percent in the South. Looking at pupils of high abilities, across all social classes, it was found that nearly all children from professional classes would enter grammar schools, whereas this figure was 50 percent for lower middle class and 25 percent for the working class (Floud et al. 1958: 143).

The authors argue that this was due not to unfavourable competition, since working-class pupils were actually over-represented in the free places. Rather, this was due to environmental factors that influence a pupil’s chance of success in examinations, such as parent’s level of education and attitudes towards education, and family size. Thus, the presence of tracking mechanism meant that environmental factors linked to social class influenced the performance of pupils, and thus their selection into schools, and the distribution of educational opportunity.

Comprehensive vs. selective schooling

The evidence regarding the consequence of comprehensive vs. selective schooling for educational inequality presents a very mixed picture, largely due to the difficulties involved in arriving at reliable estimates of the impact of selection in a system in which ‘comprehensivation’ is an ongoing process that is incomplete within and across LEAs (Fogelman 1984).

A first set of studies conducted during the early and mid 1980s used the National Child Development Study (NCDS) to identify the efficiency and equity of educational attainment of pupils attending comprehensive and selective schools. Such studies however faced several methodological thorns such as establishing a clear definition of school type, and situateing schools within a selective or comprehensive ‘system’ (Kerckhoff 1986), establishing a similar intake between comprehensive and selective schools to control for the effect of social class, using a refined measure of social class ((Marks et al. 1983), and having a direct measure of ability.

The study that comes closest to mitigating such problems (Steedman 1980), finds that there is no systematic difference in examination results between comprehensive and selective schooling. Kerckhoff et al (1996) corroborate this finding by showing that, controlling for ability and

73 The access to working class pupils opened especially in the South, as this group represented a smaller portion of the population, where the share jumped from 25 to 42 percent between 1934 and 1953. In the North, where the share of working class pupil was already high (52 percent) in 1934, it actually dropped to 44 percent, reflecting the higher participation of lower middle class pupils coming from elementary schools.

74 This over-representation is measured by comparing actual participation, relative their predicted participation based on the IQ level necessary for entry, given the number of set number of places, and assuming a fixed social and intellectual composition of the age-group. This over-representation was produced by the protection of working-class pupils that came primarily from elementary schools, from middle-class pupils that came primarily from fee-paying schools.
student background, there were no differences in the achievement of students in comprehensive and selective schools. There was nevertheless a tendency in comprehensive schools for high ability students to perform at lower than average levels and for low ability students to perform at higher than average levels. Finally, by testing the effect of schooling ‘system’ (rather than school type) across ability and social class categories, Galindo-Rueda and Vignoles (2007) find that selective schooling only had a positive effect for the intermediate-skill manager group, rather than a monotonic effect across social class categories, and that when looking at specific combinations of ability and social class, ability seemed to be the dominant factor.

Another approach is to assess the effect of social background on educational attainment over time. Here the results are less ambiguous and point to the persistence of class inequalities in educational achievement (measured by qualification obtained rather than test scores) (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). By comparing two cohorts (born in 1958 and 1970) with the NCDS and the British Cohort Survey (BCS), Bynner and Joshi (2002) find that there was no reduction across cohorts in the influence of parental social class on the level of qualification obtained: the differential in qualification attained between the child of an educated professional and an uneducated unskilled worker was the same in 1974 and 1986. Blanden and Gregg (2004) show a clear rise in the impact of family income on degree attainment over time, even if data limitation prevents them from assessing its causal influence via other aspects of social background. The results confirm the notion that with the growth of income inequality, the introduction of ‘quasi markets’ translated into growing of educational inequality.

Educational inequality in Scotland

Yet another approach is to compare the consequences of the change in schooling system with Scotland, where the abolishment of selection was more thoroughly and evenly undertaken across LEAs. In a longitudinal analysis of three cohorts that entered secondary school in the first and second half of the 1970s, and the first half of the 1980s, McPherson and Willms (1987) find that comprehensive re-organisation had positive effects for both efficiency and equity. There was a rise in the mean level of attainment between the first and third cohort. Moreover, there was a trend towards equality of socio-economic status (SES) in the levels of attainment,75 with a reduction in inequality from between the first and third cohort.76 Thus, the re-organisation of schooling along comprehensive lines was associated with a reduction in educational inequality.

The reversal of comprehensive education through the introduction of ‘quasi-markets’ was associated with a return of educational inequality. It should be underlined that the enactment of the Education Act 1981 (Scotland) had a small effect in Scotland, as almost 90 percent of parents did not make requests for a non-designated school. However, the exercise of choice did produce a growing social segregation between schools, as the parents that exercised choice were predominantly educated and from middle and upper classes, and chose schools with higher socio-economic status and attainment rates (Adler and Raab 1989; Echols et al. 1990). The increasing segregation then led to an increase in the incidence of choice, generating growing

75 This is measured by the attainment of a pseudo-pupil whose SES lies one standard deviation below the nationally average SES for the middle cohort, relative to the attainment of a pseudo-pupil with the national average SES for the middle cohort.

76 The findings confirm the results of an earlier study looking at a single cohort in which average attainment was raised through helping students to progress beyond the minimum (Gray et al. 1983).
isolation between students from middle-class and working class backgrounds (Willms 1996). This translated into a marginal increase in educational inequality as chosen schools had higher attainment rates (11 percent of a standard deviation) than designated schools, controlling for the types of pupils (Willms and Echols 1992). While the magnitude of this effect is small, due to the small number of parents exercising choice, it is in the expected direction.

The results of these investigations resonate with the assessment of the OECD (2007b). The continued predominance of the comprehensive structure means that the variance in the performance of students is low - the lowest in the OECD save for Finland- and that most of this variation (70 percent) is within rather than between schools. This means that inequalities in attainment do not accrue from unequal access to good schools, but rather from the unequal capacity of students to benefit from good schools. The influence of social status on attainment in Scotland is nevertheless within the OECD average: 18 percent of the distance between the lowest and highest attainment levels in mathematic scores is explained by socio-economic status, compared to a low 11 percent in Finland and a high 24 percent in Germany (OECD 2007: 63). This is driven in particular by the difficulty of school-level factors (such as teacher-pupil ratios, pedagogical methods) to correct for individual level differences in social background and ability.

Even if it is difficult to confidently demonstrate the benefits of comprehensive education for reducing educational inequality in England, the comparison between the cases of England and Scotland does offer convincing support for the argument that the abolishment of tracking is associated with a reduction of educational inequality, while the introduction of ‘quasi-market’ structures is associated with a increase in educational inequality.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to examine the political economy of educational reform in the UK since 1944, aiming to tackle the comprehensiveness of the education system, and to trace their effects on educational inequality. It did so by adopting a policy-process perspective that analysed the conditions that produced comprehensive reforms during the mid-1960s, and contrasted this episode with the introduction of quasi-markets from the 1980s.

The chapter shows that educational reforms that aimed at the abolishment of tracking took place under specific conditions. They were driven by hegemonic ideas in psychology that emphasised the role of environmental factors as well as by Keynesian orthodoxy that privileged the role of the state in stimulating growth. Such reforms were also associated with the pro-equality agenda underlying the expansion of the welfare state and were supported primarily by left-wing forces, such as the Labour party and trade unions. In contrast, the educational reforms that introduced tracking (either overtly or covertly) were driven by psychological views that emphasised innate attributes, and by economic theories that downplayed the role of the state and privileged the private sector and market reforms. Such reforms were associated with welfare retrenchment policies and received the support of right-wing forces.

The social forces that played an ambiguous role in the process of reform were the middle classes, the civil service and teachers. State-wide parties endorsed policies that were preferred by the middle class, which oscillated between supporting a selective, comprehensive and
market-based system. Civil servants and teachers tended to support the status quo, though teacher’s unions were divided according to whether or not they represented teachers in selective or independent schools. Teachers were never sufficiently strong to prevent the implementation of party policy, but Ministers did strongly influence the substance of education policy, even as they gradually lost relative power to think tanks and special advisers in the cabinet.

Decentralisation was the key variable conditioning the implementation of reforms. In England, the creation of a fully comprehensive school was conditioned by the decentralisation of power to LEAs. Local political preferences made for a highly incomplete and uneven transition that reproduced the social divisions that existed in the tripartite system, by maintaining divisions between comprehensive and grammar schools, as well as significant organisational differences between comprehensive schools. This problem did not arise in Scotland, which witnessed a thorough re-organisation of the schooling system along comprehensive lines. Similarly, even while the Conservative party reduced the autonomy of LEAs, the creation of quasi-markets was curtailed by the decentralisation of power to parents. In England, fewer parents that expected voted for their school to ‘opt-out’ of LEAs, while in Scotland, few parents exercised their right to place their children outside the designated schools. The establishment of quasi-markets was also disappointed by the limited involvement of the private sector in the funding and running of vocational training schools.

Finally it was found, through a comparison between England and Scotland and a comparison of each region over time, that the abolishment of selection, where thoroughly undertaken, did reduce educational inequality. In England, the existence of a tracking mechanism in the tripartite system was associated with a high influence of social class on pupil performance, and while the evidence about the effects of comprehensive schooling is mixed, the introduction of quasi-markets is associated with growing educational inequality. In Scotland, the re-organisation of schooling along comprehensive lines was associated with a reduction in educational inequality, while ‘quasi-markets’ was associated with a slight rise in inequality.

References


Chapter 5: Political Economy of Comprehensive School Reforms:
Czech and Slovak Lands after World War I
Marcela Veselkova

Introduction

During the past century, educational systems in Czech and Slovak lands have undergone several significant changes. In contrast to Western European countries, whose education systems are less selective today than they used to be at the end of the World War II, the educational system of the present day Czech Republic and Slovakia closely resembles the educational system inherited from Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even more striking, both countries have a 40-year experience with a comprehensive schooling of children up to the age of 15, which was implemented by the Communist Party in 1948. Yet, this experience failed to shift attitudes of the public in favor of less selective schooling and the first post-communist government quickly re-introduced tracking of children into different schools at the age of 10. Similar trends can be observed also in other post-communist countries.

Post-communist countries differ from the established democracies in one important aspect. Whereas educational reforms in the West tended to be planned and sequential, the reform process in early phases of post-socialist transformation can be characterized by spontaneity rather than careful planning (Halász 2003). In their analysis of the post-communist reforms, a number of Czech scholars therefore adopted the model developed by Birzea (1996), who identifies four phases of post-socialist transformation: (1) destruction (1990), i.e the negation of existing educational regime, often bottom-up driven, (2) stabilization (1991-1992), i.e. reconstruction of the existing system, (3) restructuralization (1993-1995), i.e. attempts at coherent systemic educational reforms and (4) counter-proposals to reforms (following 1993).

In this paper, the analytical focus is on a single aspect of the reform process, namely the age of tracking. The main aim is to identify the key actors, i.e. groups of people who initiate the reform and, if successful, build the momentum, groups of people who oppose the reform and exert pressure to preserve the status quo or, on the contrary, support the initiative and take the ownership. To assess whether the reform was successful, I rely on a simple indicator of success, the percentage of age cohort in comprehensive/general tracks. Special attention is given to segregation of children from socially disadvantaged communities in schools or classrooms for children with special educational needs.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, I discuss the origins of the debate on later tracking in interwar Czechoslovakia, as these represent an important basis for the understanding of debates, which culminated in the 1948 reform. This reform effectively postponed tracking to the age of 15 and is the subject of the second part of the paper. The final two sections examine re-introduction of early tracking and mostly unsuccessful attempts at reversal in independent Czech Republic and Slovak Republic.
**Initiation of the Debate about Later Tracking**

The debate about the comprehensive schooling in Czechoslovakia dates back to the 1920s and arose in reaction to the continuing fragmentation of the educational system. When Czechoslovakia was established in 1918, basic education was provided by a five-year “obecná škola” (community school) for pupils aged 6 to 11 years (Příhoda 1945: 10; Greger 2005: 2-3, Váňová 2007: 79-80). After five years of community school, children could choose one of the following tracks. They could attend additional 3 years at community school. This, however, was a dead-end option, as completion of eight years at the community school did not enable students to continue their education at the upper-secondary level. Students with higher aspirations therefore opted for a three-year “měšťanská škola” (civic or town school) or secondary schools, i.e. a seven-year “reálná škola” (secondary technical school, real-schule) or an eight-year “gymnárium” (gymnasia – upper secondary schools). The first tracking thus occurred at the end of the fifth grade (age of 11).

Attempts to stop further fragmentation of the educational system intensified at the end of the World War I, with the looming prospects of establishment of independent Czechoslovak republic (Příhoda 1931: 6). Initially, Czech national leaders contemplated the creation of an independent Czech state. Soon they realized that a state without Slovakia would contain approximately two Germans for every three Czechs (see Felak 1994: 17-19). However, if Czech and Slovaks were one Czechoslovak nation, then Czechoslovaks comprised around two-thirds of the population to balance the one third of minorities. The new multi-ethnic state therefore rested on the notion of the single Czechoslovak nation. These aspects were reflected in the efforts to develop “plan that would be state and not just national, organizational and not just educational” (Příhoda 1931: 6). Already in 1917, a year before the end of the war, it was agreed that there was a need to build a unified four-year lower secondary school (ibid). This proposal was clearly motivated by nation-building efforts, as elites tried to dismantle Austrian-Hungarian educational system, which limited the use of the Czech and the Slovak language as the working languages at schools (Skutil 2008, Dobiašová 2006).

A number of competing proposals for unified school arose in the immediate postwar period, some of them suggesting differentiated, others non-differentiated organization of unified schooling (see Příhoda 1931: 6-9). However, none of them made it to the “Small educational law” of 1922. The first official attempt to introduce unified schooling came a year later. In 1923 the Minister of Education Rudolf Bechyně and the head of the Bratislava department of the Ministry František Mašek proposed a curriculum unification of the lower secondary and the civic school. However, the proposal was rejected on the basis of failure to address the specific needs of gifted children in the unified school (Příhoda 1931: 9). The persisting inability of the reformist movement to deliver the reform resulted in the general skepticism and resignation (ibid, Dobiašová 2007: 137). The following years were thus characterized by small incremental changes.

The reform movement revived at the first decade anniversary of Czechoslovak Republic and the reflection of the “unfruitfulness that could not be continued” (Příhoda 1931: 10). Unified, differentiated lower secondary school was therefore one of the two main points of a week-long conference “Pedagogic Week” that took place in autumn 1928 in Prague. The idea of the comprehensive schooling up to the age of 15 was endorsed also by the Minister of Education
Milan Hodža, and a number of teachers’ associations. Antonín Štefánek, the successor to Milan Hodža, therefore convened assembly of the Ministry of Education and National Edification. Although the unified, internally differentiated school was voted down (32 in favor, 16 against), the Minister declared that he considered it the „future“ (Příhoda 1931: 11-12). The new Minister of Education Ivan Déřer established two expert commissions for the school reform. The commission for the reform of the secondary schools was headed by Bohumil Bydžovský and the commission for the national schools by Václav Příhoda.

Václav Příhoda from the Philosophy Faculty of Charles University was the most vocal proponent of the unified school in the interwar Czechoslovakia (see Příhoda 1928, 1933, 1945). Příhoda was persuaded that the unified school would give access to education regardless of the social background. Inspired by his trip to the United States and the U.S., he suggested to model Czechoslovak secondary schools according to the U.S. high schools as internally differentiated schools. The proposed comprehensive educational model was thus supposed to consist of the unified community school (age 6 to 11) and a four-year lower secondary “komenium” (11 to 15), followed by a three-year upper secondary “athenaeum” (15 to 18). A number of experimental schools were opened in September 1929. However, the Ministry did not allow a full test of the unified differentiated school and the experiment was limited to differentiated civic schools. The proposed organization of the educational system was thus never implemented.

To delay tracking and the occupation choice, the ministerial commission headed by Bohumil Bydžovský proposed a common two-year curricula followed by a two-year differentiated curricula (Váňová 2007: 83). The follow-up upper secondary tracks were left unchanged. Critiques of the proposal argued that the gap in the qualifications of teachers at multi-year gymnasia and civic schools would reduce the overall quality of lower secondary schooling (Příhoda 1931: 15-16). Furthermore, the secondary school teachers, who were appalled by the intention to postpone Latin classes to differentiated upper secondary tracks, as Latin was viewed as the “best sieve and the best indicator” of abilities (Konečný 1945). Despite the fight for the preservation of Latin, or “war for Latin in prima”, the first grade in multi-year gymnasia, as one of the members of parliament dubbed it (Poslanecká sněmovna 26 November 1930), the unified curricula were introduced in 1930. However, this minor reform failed to significantly alter the educational system in Czechoslovakia. At the dawn of the World War II, the Czechoslovak educational system did not significantly differ from the one inherited from Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

**Successful Postponement of Tracking**

The debate about later tracking took off in 1945 where it had stopped before the war. In a book published in 1945 Příhoda (1945) pointed out to the socioeconomic segregation in secondary schools of interwar Czechoslovakia. Whereas clerks represented only 6.1% of population, children of clerks represented 34.2% of students in secondary schools. In contrast, agricultural workers represented 14.2% of population but children from these families represented only 1% of students at secondary schools. Příhoda believed that this segregation was against democratic principles of Czechoslovak Republic and threatened the national unity. He therefore called for a unified lower secondary school, which would “for the first time in the history of nation embrace the entire nation until the age of 15” (Příhoda 1945: 5). At the same year, Příhoda was appointed
by the Ministry of Education as an advisor for the preparation of school reform aimed at the introduction of comprehensive schooling (Greger 2005: 3).

However, Příhoda’s concept of internally differentiated unified school soon had to face the competition. Zdeněk Nejedlý, Minister of Education for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, supported undifferentiated unified school, as differentiation based on abilities was not in line with the Marxist ideology (Váňová 2007: 84). In 1946 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) announced that each member of the party would vote for the bill (Mertlík 1947: 2). The Minister of Education Zdeněk Nejedlý himself stated: “What is the point of the unified school? To evaporate that meaningless segregation of youth when by a ten-year old boy it is decided whether he will or will not be a gentleman. That is the main reason for a unified school and a unified lower secondary track.” (cited in Mertlík 1947: 13).

The proposal of the unified school and the subsequent bill draft faced the sharp opposition from secondary school teachers, parents with a high level of social and cultural capital, as well as many cultural elites (Mertlík 1947: 2, Greger 2005: 5). Robert Mertlík, the spokesman for the secondary school teachers formulated the main criticisms in his book The Danger of the Comprehensive School (Mertlík 1947). Mertlík dubbed the main argument in favor of the reform – promotion of national unity and ease of segregation – demagogic fallacies. Quality of education was his major counterargument to the reform. He believed that the quality of education at the unified school would be even lower than the quality of education in civic schools. He called for the preservation of the gymnasia and real-schule and even called for greater selectivity of these schools, which would turn them into schools for the most gifted children. Furthermore, as the bill proposal called for abolition of schools administered by churches, these were also vocal opponents of the act (Greger 2005: 5).

All debates were put to an end in 1948 after the bloodless communist coup d’etat. The law nr. 95/1948 Coll. effectively postponed tracking to the age of 15. Following the Soviet model, a single and uniform school covering the whole compulsory education period was introduced. These “basic” schools lasted eight years and were divided into two streams, which corresponded to primary (4 years) and lower secondary schools (4-5 years throughout the communist period). The tripartite systems of upper secondary education based on the European continental model was maintained at the upper secondary level: secondary general schools (gymnasium), secondary technical schools and vocational schools. Such an organization of educational system was motivated by ideological reasons. The Communist Party regarded the educational system a “superstructure”, whose main aim was “to prepare children and young people to live and work in a developed socialist society and to prepare them for the defense of the socialist homeland” (Svecová 2000: 127). To indoctrinate young people the regime relied on the uniform ideological education, the detailed state curriculum with uniform compulsory textbooks, the state monopoly of schooling, the uniform school structure determined by the state and the hierarchically centralized and uniform management apparatus (Szebenyi 1992: 20).

Although the following decade saw several reorganizations of the educational system, none of them dismantled the unified school. However, during the political liberalization of the 1960s the unified socialist comprehensive school was questioned again. The Communist party itself acknowledged that the original idea of the comprehensive, but internally differentiated school,
was deformed and led to the lowering of quality of education (Greger 2005: 6). Educator Milan Cipro argued that in the pre-Munich republic the differentiation happened very early and the selection was rigid and irreversible (Cipro 1966: 36, 38). He acknowledged that the unified school contributed to the removal of class antagonism in the society. At the same time, he openly argued that the unified school failed to take into account differences in student abilities. However, the differentiation in the ninth grade introduced in 1965 was reversed following the August 1968 invasion (Greger 2005: 6). The unified school effectively survived until the collapse of the communism in 1989.

To secure state control over the education selection process and to increase education opportunity for the working class, rigid administrative measures were introduced (Matějů and Rěháková 1996: 161). A newly implemented “quota system” reserved 50 percent of the seats at secondary schools and universities for students from working class families (Ferge 1979; Krejci 1972; Matějů 1993; Simkus and Andorka 1982; Szelenyi and Aschaffenburg 1993; von Kopp 1988). There is a general agreement that the introduction of the quotas brought a decline in educational inequalities on the secondary school level (Boguszak et al., 1990; Matějů, 1993; Hanley, 2001). However, there is much less agreement on the effect of the quota system on the inequalities at the tertiary level. The 'hypothesis of socialist transformation' suggests that an initial reduction of the effects of social origin on access to the tertiary education was reversed in the later stages of socialist development. As soon as the new elite secured its privileges and took control of the educational system, they attempted to ensure educational advantages for their own children (Matějů 1986, 1993). In contrast, Hanley (2001) believes that it was the rapid expansion of the educational system and not the discrimination on the basis of class background or political behavior that contributed to the reduction in origin-based inequalities at the secondary level.

Reversal in Policies

One of the leading mottos of the reforms in 1989 was the Deconstruction (or even destruction) of the communist comprehensive school (Greger 2005: 6), which was viewed as a symbol of the socialist egalitarianism (Greger et al. 2009: 51). The “unified school” was therefore abolished in 1990, only few months after the collapse of the communism. Amendments to the existing education law (nr. 171/1990 Coll.) enabled establishment of private and church schools and re-introduced eight-year gymnasia for gifted children. The reform process was rushed, feeding on the euphoria and the public demand for change. The move towards decentralized and differentiated educational system aimed to negate the past and restore the status quo ante (Greger 2005: 7). By mimicking the pre-Munich educational system, the new post-communist regime represented itself as a legitimate continuation of the interwar Czechoslovakia. This was exemplified also in the persona of the first non-communist Minister of Education, Milan Adam, who was an enthusiastic advocate of the interwar schooling. There is anecdotal evidence that at one of the meetings at the Ministry, the Minister stated: “Gentlemen, I decided to establish multi-year gymnasia. Get it done!” (Morkes 2010). In his speech to the Czech National Council in March 1990 he identified increase in university
educational attainment as one of the key principles of the reorganization of the Czech educational system and argued that early tracking based on abilities was necessary to prepare students for universities (Parliament of the Czech Republic 1990). The multiyear gymnasia were thus defined as an institution guaranteeing the production of the new elites (Matějů and Straková 2003: 628). In his initial proposal, Adam suggested differentiation in the sixth and the seventh grade (age 11 and 12) accompanied by possibility to change tracks in the first two years of the multi-year gymnasium and the corresponding grades of the primary school (Parliament of the Czech Republic 1990). In the following two months, the age of tracking was advanced to the age of 10 or the fifth grade (Law nr. nr. 171/1990 Coll.).

The spontaneity of the reform process is documented by the fact that the establishment of multi-year gymnasia predated the debate on the educational reform. Nevertheless, the document intended for a narrow group of experts embraced the notion that there were more disadvantages than advantages to the comprehensive schooling (Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání 1991: 12). The document pointed out that the comprehensive schooling at all types of secondary schools did not respond to different functions of these schools and different abilities of their students and suggested to secure both within- and between-school differentiation (ibid: 13).

In 1992/1993 there were already 220 schools with multi-year tracks, which provided education to almost 4% of the corresponding age cohort (Databáze ÚIV). Between 1992 and 2011, the multi-year gymnasia accommodated almost 9% of the relevant age group (Databáze ÚIV, see Figure 1). This rate would have been even higher if the multi-year gymnasia could have accommodated all interested students. Between 1997/98 and 2004/05 the demand for eight-year gymnasia was double the intake number (see Figure 2). Since 2006/2007 the success rates in the first round of entrance exams grew to almost 60% (ibid). The success rates in 6-year gymnasia were lower, falling from 49% in 1996/97 to 32% in 2004/05. This means that 2 out of 3 applicants for this track were not accepted. Afterwards, the success rates rose and were on par with success rates in 8-year gymnasia by 2008/09. In comparison, it was fairly easy to be accepted to 4-year gymnasia, where the success rates were constantly above 65%. The success rates were affected by the declining population curve: as the number of children was falling, it became easier to secure a seat at the school of the first choice.

To compete with multi-year gymnasia, primary school directors created classes with a specific focus that provided extended teaching in some subjects, such as mathematics, physical education or foreign languages. The differentiation within primary schools is employed from the third grade or the age of 8 - in case of language and from the sixth year or the age of 11 in case of other subjects (Greger 2005: 8). The proportion of pupils in extended programs of primary schools oscillates around 8% of overall number of basic school pupils, the demand for languages being the highest (see Figure 3).77 The demand in extended teaching in selected subjects is similar to that for multi-year

---

77 Notice that the demand for extended programs began to decline when the success rates for multi-year began to rise. This suggests multi-year gymnasia were preferred to extended programs at basic schol.
FROM SELECTIVITY TO UNIVERSALISM | 151

gymnasia. Particularly in case of languages and sports the demand is twice as high as
the number of places available (Greger 2005: 8). Similarly to the multi-year gymnasia,
the extended education is more common in Prague, where it is available at 35% of
schools, whereas only one out ten schools opened classes with extended education in
Plzeň or Pardubice region (novinky.cz 20 May 2008).

Figure 3 goes here.

The 1990s witnessed increasing amount of complaints from the primary school teachers, who
pointed out that the departure of students to multi-year gymnasia decreased the quality of
students and their motivation and, as a result, worsened the teaching conditions at primary
schools (Matějů and Straková 2003: 629, Greger 2005: 7). These opinions were repeatedly
echoed in the annual reports of the Czech School Inspectorate: segregation of more talented
pupils from those who continue their studies at basic schools leads to a gradual decrease in
achievement of this part of school population and negatively affects the standards of educational
processes in basic schools (ibid).

A more formal conceptualization of the problem was offered by OECD (1996). The OECD
examiners argued that the departure of students with the highest achievement to multi-year
gymnasia would transform basic schools into institutions for students with average or low
achievement. These second-rank schools would then produce students only for technical or
vocational tracks. The problem would be further aggravated by the fact that good teachers tend
to follow gifted children. At the same time, the multi-year gymnasia would create imbalances
also in academic tracks traditionally associated with preparation for university studies, as multi-
year gymnasia would become preferred to four-year gymnasia as the main educational path to
university education. The main policy recommendation was therefore to abolish multi-year
gymnasia and meet the educational needs of the gifted children in basic schools with
differentiated streams.

The Ministry was initially not sympathetic to the idea. In 1999 it re-stated the position that
multi-year gymnasia meet special educational needs of gifted children. This viewpoint was
based on „implicit and broadly shared belief that above average education is genetically limited
and that intellectual elite, in contrast to the previous equalizing policy, should be offered
segregated and more demanding education at the earliest possible age, as it was in the prewar
era. Equal access to higher educational levels and social solidarity are not yet considered
essential principles of Czech educational policies (ÚIV 1999, cited in Matějů and Straková
2003: 630).

However, at approximately the same time there was a dramatic reversal in the policies
aimed at early tracking. In June 2000 Minister Eduard Zeman (Czech Social Democratic
Party) proposed gradual elimination of multi-year gymnasia. “I believe that early
selection is wrong. By diverting elite to a single type of school, it penalizes all other
types of schools,” he argued (idnes.cz 28 June 2000). It is believed that the idea to
abolish multi-year gymnasia came from Jiří Kotásek (idnes.cz 28 June 2000, 28 October
2000), the leader of the teams responsible for the production of the strategic document
“White Paper” – National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech
Republic (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 2001) and the preceding analytical document, the “Green Paper” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 1999). The White Paper was launched by Resolution No. 277 of the Czech Government on 7 April 1999. In this resolution, the government approved the Main Goals of Educational Policy, following its policy statement in July 1998. One of the main goals was to make changes to the educational system, which would enable access of children from low socio-economic background to higher education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 2009: 10).

The White Paper was based on a number of government documents published throughout the 1990s, as well as the previously rejected OECD’s Reviews… (1996). Furthermore, in the process of writing, OECD published the results of the first PISA testing OECD 2000). The results undermined the widespread belief that Czech students were above-average. The results of 15-year old Czech students were slightly below average in reading and mathematical literacy and slightly above average in scientific literacy (OECD 2000). Furthermore, the results of PISA testing pointed out to great between school differences (ÚIV 2001). In other words, high achievers and low achievers tend to concentrate in different schools – the former tend to attend the multi-year gymnasia whereas the latter tend to attend tracks that do not lead to “maturita” exam. Four-year gymnasia and tracks culminating in “maturita” exam fall in between. However, differences were documented also for the ninth grade of the basic school. There was a significant gap between the students in basic schools on the one hand and pupils of multi-year gymnasia, closely followed by students in extended classes of basic schools on the other hand. Furthermore, the PISA results debunked the myth that multi-year gymnasia serve the special needs of gifted children. When it comes to reading literacy, 35% of students enrolled in multi-year gymnasia performed averagely and 7% scored below-average. These results can be explained by the differences in the socio-economic status. When comparing the average achievement in reading literacy of the quarter of students with the best and the quarter of students with the worst family background, the difference between the two was the fifth highest of all countries. This suggests that the socio-economic background is associated with the segregation of students into various tracks: whereas children from high socioeconomic background opt for academic tracks in multi-year gymnasia leading to university education, children from low socio-economic background remain in basic schools and continue their studies in vocational tracks.

These results reinforced the belief that policies proposed in the White Paper should address the problem of early tracking (Kotásek 2009; Holub 2007, 2010). White Paper therefore proposed “gradual elimination of multi-year general secondary schools (gymnázia). Starting from 2002, no new students should be admitted to the first year of these types of general secondary schools (Ministry 2001: 30).” The recommendation was justified by the necessity to “overcome disadvantages caused by different social-cultural levels and to introduce adequate compensatory mechanisms in order that the education system does not further reproduce existing inequalities (ibid: 18). Instead, all children were supposed to be educated in integrated and internally differentiated basic schools, which were believed to be able to satisfy even the special education needs of
highly gifted and talented pupils, provided that their efforts at differentiation and individualisation of teaching were promoted.

However, when the White Paper was introduced in February 2001 it was becoming clear that all attempts to postpone tracking were doomed to fail. Minister’s proposal to abolish multi-year gymnasia triggered fierce protests (Greger et al. 2009: 52). Previously lethargic and disinterested public started organizing petitions, internet protests and communicating arguments in favor of the preservation of multi-year gymnasia (idnes.cz 24 September 2000; rozhlas.cz 14 March 2001). Jaroslav Fišer, director of the multi-year gymnasia in Prague and one of the founders of the private education in the Czech Republic emphasized the right of children and their parents to freely choose the preferred educational path (idnes.cz 28 June 2000). Directors of multi-year gymnasia further argued that elimination of multi-year gymnasia would not lead to increase in quality of basic schools (idnes.cz 13 September 2000; 24 October 2000) and that “elite” was not a correct conceptualization of multi-year gymnasia because curricula for basic schools and multi-year gymnasia were the same (rozhlas.cz 14 March 2001). Eva Vondráková, the chairman of the Association for high ability (Společnost pro talent a nadání) argued that basic schools do not meet special needs of gifted children (idnes.cz 28 June 2000). These are bored, do not pay attention and often attract teacher’s anger to themselves. Furthermore, gifted children are often viewed as nerds by their peers (Vondráková 2000). As a result they are either isolated or give in to social pressure and adjust to the average. Critical comments came also from within the academia. According to Jiří Pelikán from the Charles University it was misleading from the Ministry to present White Paper as the viewpoint of experts, when in fact it was the viewpoint of a small group of academicians invited to work for the Ministry (Pelikán, undated). Pelikán argued that the proposal to eliminate multi-year gymnasia was based on political rather than expert premises and was even worse than “unified school” reform of 1948. Instead of elimination he suggested to reduce the number of multi-year gymnasia to accommodate only gifted children (idnes.cz 28 June 2000). These are bored, do not pay attention and often attract teacher’s anger to themselves. Furthermore, gifted children are often viewed as nerds by their peers (Vondráková 2000). As a result they are either isolated or give in to social pressure and adjust to the average. Critical comments came also from within the academia. According to Jiří Pelikán from the Charles University it was misleading from the Ministry to present White Paper as the viewpoint of experts, when in fact it was the viewpoint of a small group of academicians invited to work for the Ministry (Pelikán, undated). Pelikán argued that the proposal to eliminate multi-year gymnasia was based on political rather than expert premises and was even worse than “unified school” reform of 1948. Instead of elimination he suggested to reduce the number of multi-year gymnasia to accommodate only gifted children.

Once the public discourse framed attempts at later tracking as homogenizing, restrictive to elementary liberties and harmful to the development of gifted children, it was difficult for the Minister to search broader support for his proposal. The broad support was, however, key to the success of the reform, as Eduard Zeman was a Minister in a single color but minority government of Miloš Zeman (Czech Social Democratic Party). The conservative Civic Civic Democratic Party and the liberal Freedom Union rejected the idea outright (ibid; MF Dnes 27 June 2000). In response, Zeman withdrew the education bill draft to negotiate broad political support (epravo.cz 15.5.2001). In October 2000 Walter Bartoš, the Member of Parliament for Civic Democratic Party promised Association of Gymnasium Directors (Asociace ředitelů gymnázií) and representative of the Parents Union (Unie rodičů) that all members of parliament of his party would vote against the proposal (idnes.cz 24 October 2000). Reassurance of support for multi-year gymnasia came also from the Freedom Union. Surprisingly, Miroslav Kučera from the Czech Social Democratic Party stated that Minister’s proposal did not have full support even within his own party (ibid). The proposal was thus fully backed only by Kotásek and his team, advisory body - the Council for educational policy (Rada pro vzdělávací
Both Zeman and Kotásek suggested that the reform failed because the proposal to eliminate multi-year gymnasia was politicized (Online interview with Zeman at blisty.cz 2 September 2001; idnes.cz 13 September 2000; Kotásek 2009). Kotásek pointed out to the significant media support for opponents of the proposal and the passivity of teachers in basic and secondary technical schools, as well as academicians (Kotásek 2009). These claims are supported by the survey conducted in 2008 (Greger et al. 2009: 72). Early tracking was more supported by people with university education, who were also more likely to be parents of children in multi-year gymnasia: whereas only 25% of parents of children in basic schools have university education, 65% of parents of students in multi-year gymnasia do. More education people turned out to be the most vocal opponents of the reform.

Some academicians believed that the reform aimed at later tracking failed because there was lack of persuasive arguments about the functions of multi-year gymnasia in the educational system and the effects of their existence (Matějů and Straková 2003: 630). The following years therefore brought a number of academic papers and books dealing with the issue (see Matějů and Straková 2003, Matějů and Straková (eds.) 2006, Straková 2007, 2010). These research outputs were widely covered by media (aktualne.centrum.cz 31 July 2010).

The most important aspect of these studies was that they dismantled the prevailing belief that the multi-year gymnasia contribute to development of abilities of gifted children (see Matějů and Straková 2003). The existing gap in the achievement of students of multi-year gymnasia and students of basic schools reflects the gaps in achievement that existed prior to entry to the multi-year gymnasmium and can be attributed to differences in the socioeconomic status of students. At the same time, student aspirations of students at multi-year gymnasia are less dependent on their socioeconomic status than aspirations of students at basic schools: even students with low achievement have high student aspirations. However, it is not clear whether these high aspirations are formed at multi-year gymnasia or in families.

Straková (2010) undermined the notion that multi-year gymnasia are elite institutions for the most gifted children: 15% of students in multi-year gymnasia did not reach the 75th percentile of scores in reading literacy for the corresponding age cohort (basic schools and multi-year gymnasia combined). She then tested the contribution of multi-year gymnasia to differences in student achievement. First, relying on PISA 2006 dataset she compared the achievement in mathematical literacy of students who (a) attended basic school for nine years and then enrolled to the four-year gymnasmium and (b) left basic school in the fifth or the seventh grade to enroll to the multi-year
gymnasium. Her results suggest that there is no significant difference in achievement of students at the end of the first year of the four-year gymnasium and students who spent two to four years in the elite multi-year gymnasium. The overall better achievement of students in multi-year gymnasia can be attributed to better social composition of multi-year gymnasia. Furthermore, the national extension of PISA 2003 testing suggests that students of four-year gymnasia catch-up with students of multi-year gymnasia during the first year of their studies. The catching-up thesis is challenged by the results of the national SCIO testing, which compares educational performance of students in the fourth and the first grade. There is no difference in improvement of students from multi-year and four-year gymnasia in case of foreign languages (English and German). However, in case of the Czech language and Mathematics, the lead of multi-year gymnasia over four-year gymnasia grows bigger over time and the students of multi-year gymnasia experience the biggest improvement in educational performance (E-mail communication with Aleš Kubát, SCIO, March 2012).

However, these results should be taken with caution. First of all, the data used by Straková (2010) are not longitudinal and therefore do not enable to control for entry and exit achievement. Furthermore, Scio data are not based on random sampling and therefore cannot be generalized to the entire population. Second, the results of Straková were questioned by the Scio director, who argued that the fast catching-up process “does not quite make sense” (centrum.cz 14 September 2008). Third, although the students of the multi-year and the four-year gymnasia seemed to perform similarly in entrance exams to universities, the multi-year students were 1.6 times more likely to study at prestigious law faculties (Straková 2010). Finally, the underperformance of some of multi-year gymnasia may be related to the fact that in the capital city they encompass around 40% of the corresponding age cohort and are therefore likely to include also pupils with less than exceptional performance.

Minister Ondřej Liška repeatedly referred to these studies, although their results were contested (centrum.cz 31 August 2008). Nevertheless, he did not intend to eliminate multi-year gymnasia because he believed the topic was politicized and could turn into “another irrational coalition-opposition issue (ibid).” Instead he planned to support basic schools to enable them to compete with multi-year gymnasia. However, half a year later and mostly in response to the results of another round of PISA, he changed his mind and decided to gradually reduce the share of children in multi-year gymnasia (centrum.cz 17 December 2008). To achieve his goal he emphasized the change in the public opinion in favor of more inclusive schooling.

Although the public opinion in the Czech Republic remained more or less constant, as is documented by the numerous outbursts of protests against each single attempt to eliminate multi-year gymnasia, there was a significant shift in the attitude of political elites. In 2000 Walter Bartoš promised that the Civic Democratic Party declared that his party would vote against Zeman’s proposal to eliminate multi-year gymnasia. In 2010 this veteran head of the school parliamentary committee argued that multi-year gymnasia are unjust and create artificial ghettos, where gymnasium students are isolated from the real world, living in the glasshouse (denik.cz 26 March 2010). The change in
attitude of political elites became even more profound by the end of the first decade of the new millennium.

The new drive to reduce the number of multi-year gymnasia came at the end of the 2000s and was enabled by the decentralization in education, which began in 2000. Although the Ministry kept the rights to determine the general conceptions, establishment of schools and their governance were decentralized to local governments. The renewed attempts to reduce the number of multi-year gymnasia were thus bottom-up driven by local governments. This time, however, the issue of social segregation was not of the main concern. Rather, local governments tried to address oversupply of education, declining population curve and the budget pressures (Ministry of Education undated; idnes.cz 31 January 2011). As a result of falling number of children, multi-year gymnasia could either fall short on the number of enrolled students or accept anybody (denikreferendum.cz 14 January 2011). This was the main worry of representatives in traditionally industrial regions, who believed that children should be re-directed from multi-year gymnasia towards technical or vocational tracks (regionpress.cz 4 March 2011, respect.cz 6 March 2011). The reduction of multi-year gymnasia was thus expected to reflect the needs of the local companies: “This region has been fed by industry for 200 years and it will probably be also in the future,” argued one local representative. “We will need technicians more than gymnasium-graduates” (respect.cz 6 March 2011).

Although the Minister of Education Josef Dobeš of the conservative liberal Public Affairs supported multi-year gymnasia as a source of “competition and liberalization in education”, he believed it was necessary to guarantee the quality of education at these institutions (aktualne.centrum.cz 31 July 2010). Budget savings were of the secondary concern, he argued (idnes.cz 31 January 2011). He therefore agreed with the local governors that the percentage of age cohort in multi-year gymnasia should be reduced from 10 to 5 percent (aktualne.centrum.cz 31 January 2011). Whereas some local governments refused the idea, others found it appealing. They decided to meet the quota by gradual elimination of classes, mergers or closure of entire schools, this way easing their budgets (idnes.cz 1 January 2011). Once again, the proposal to eliminate multi-year gymnasia was met with fierce protests from parents, teachers and students (idnes.cz 22 January 2011). In response, the local governments in the south Moravia decided to open classes that were planned to be closed (idnes.cz 31 January 2011b). Further obstacle to the “optimization” of the regional schooling is posed by the number of private and church schools, which are constrained only by financing. In case they decide for the financing scheme without the contribution from the national budget, they will fall outside the planned reduction. As the tuition at these types of schools is relatively high, they will hamper the plans to address the reproduction of educational inequalities.

Slovakia

The history of the reform process in Slovakia was much similar to the Czech experience. In 1990 the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva, mládeže
a telesnej výchovy Slovenskej republiky) introduced the document titled “Duch školy” (School Spirit), which presented first ideas about the future of the Slovak educational system. According to the document, each person was supposed to be free to choose his/her educational path (MŠMTV 1990: 9-10). Mobility and removal of barriers between various levels, cycles and areas of education were emphasized. However, in the mind of authors the flexible educational system without dead ends did not equal to more comprehensive education. One of the authors argued that it was necessary to “reduce averaging of personal, emotional and intellectual levels of students at all levels and types of schools (...) to fight uniformity, (...) to create “special schools for exceptionally talented and gifted students” (...) no fear of being accused of production of elitist groups.” These thoughts were partly re-stated in the reform strategy “Konštantín”, which emphasized the free choice of educational path and free supply of educational opportunities (Ministerstvo školstva a vedy SR 1994). Although the unified schools were criticized as unable to meet all educational needs, the reform proposal suggested postponement of the tracking. It was argued that occupational decision at the end of the eighth grade of the primary school (age of 14) increases the risk of wrong decisions and the subsequent loss of motivation and failure. The first decision about the future occupation should be therefore taken at the age of 14 to 16, i.e. between eighth to tenth year of schooling. However, the replacement of the Minister put the project to the halt.

Attempts at the reform of the educational system were renewed in 1998. Project “Milénium” of 1999 brought a reversal in the official stand on early tracking. The government believed that the crucial role of the state – among other things – was to “secure equal access to education (Ministerstvo školstva 2002: 4). The change was motivated by the global factors: „We agree with the opinion of the OECD commission of experts (who recommended abolishment of eight- and six-year gymnasia in the Czech Republic) that these gymnasia restrict the basic principle of democracy – equality of chances, fair access to education, segregate students, negatively affect the quality of education in primary schools, degrade the primary schools to second-rank schools, change the status of the secondary technical schools and have a negative impact on the quality of the overall educational system.” (MS 2002: 13).

The broad right-left government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (1998-2002) therefore initiated first serious attempt to limit the number of eight-year gymnasia. The Minister of Education Milan Ftáčník (Party of the Democratic Left) noted that the eight-year gymnasia should remain a part of the Slovak educational system but their number should be reduced to turn them into truly elite institutions (Hospodárske noviny 4.7.2001). Despite the protests of parents, the Ministry of Education began to reduce the number of classes and schools in the category of eight-year gymnasia (SME 10.4.2001). However, these efforts were short-lived.

In the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002-2006), all attempts to postpone tracking fell the victim to conflicts between the Minister of Education Martin Fronc (Christian Democratic Movement) and the Undersecretary František Tóth (Alliance of the New Citizen), co-founder and head of the first eight-year gymnasia in Slovakia. As an undersecretary, František Tóth criticized all attempts to limit enrolment to eight-year gymnasia as “typically socialist” (SME 10.04.2001). Furthermore, Tóth argued that major points of Milénium had already been offered in educational process at his private gymnasium for the past ten years.
The centre-left government of Robert Fico viewed the eight-year gymnasium as elitist institutions. The Ministry of Education therefore decided to limit the number of seats at eight-year gymnasium to the 5% of the corresponding age cohort. The main aim of the limit was to limit the further expansion of these institutions and turn them into schools for the gifted children. Interestingly, this policy was motivated by both global and national factors. The Ministry of Education repeatedly cited the Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic (OECD 2007), which pointed out at the need to reduce early stratification in the educational system and the subsequent large impact of socio-economic background on performance (see Ministry of Education 2007, SME 27.05.2008). Heads of the primary schools blamed underperformance of primary students in PISA screening on exodus of the best students to eight-year gymnasium (SME 27.5.2008). This opinion was echoed by the Minister of Education Ján Mikolaj (Slovak National Party) himself, who argued that international screenings are affected by the fact that the best students do not attend primary schools but are transferred to secondary schools at an early age (Slovenská televízia 20.9.2008). Figure 4 documents the drop in the enrollment rates following the introduction of quotas. Following the introduction of quotas the enrollment in multi-year gymnasium was gradually reduced to less than 5% in 2010.

Figure 4 goes here.

However, the new policy was met with vehement protests of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region (the local government) which compared the quota to the destruction of eight-year gymnasium (Rádio Slovensko 5.12.2010). According to an anonymous pro-eight-year gymnasium parent, a number of powerful parents with children in the fourth grade of the primary school, including the chairman of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region Pavol Frešo (SDKÚ-DS), lobbied in favor of eight-year gymnasium (forum.rodinka.sk, 12 November 2010). Parents in Bratislava bombarded the eight-year gymnasium with questions of how many seats will be available (Hospodárske noviny 18.3.2011). The pressure was less severe in other parts of Slovakia. Whereas in Bratislava the demand for eight-year gymnasium exceeded the supply three to five-times, in the second biggest city, Košice, the demand for eight-year gymnasium approached 6 to 7 % of the corresponding age cohort (ibid). In response, Eugen Jurzyca, the Minister of Education (SDKÚ-DS) in the center right government of Iveta Radičová, decided to postpone by two years the implementation of the quota on the number of students enrolled in eight-year gymnasium. This move was welcomed by the gymnasium and criticized by primary schools (Rádio Slovensko 5.12.2010).

The position of other actors in society was guided by vested interests and mirrored public attitude in the Czech Republic. Non-governmental organizations, parents and multi-year gymnasium teachers were vocal opponents of any attempt to impose quotas on the number of students enrolled in multi-year gymnasium. In contrast, teachers at basic schools stepped into the debate to defend ministerial proposals. Curiously, basic schools teachers in Slovakia were more active or more covered by media than basic school teachers in Czech Republic.

The first decade following the collapse of the communism was characterized by lively discussion about the changes to the educational system and a close cooperation between the ministry of education and non-governmental organizations (Humajová 2008: 12). However,
once the initial enthusiasm subsided, the ministry of education began to approach new initiatives more rationally and bureaucratically (Humajová 2008: 14) and the reform process was often marked by the ministry’s lack of interest in research outputs of NGOs and academia (Humajová and Pupala 2008: 18).

M.R. Stefanik Conservative Institute was the most active and influential NGO in the process of educational reform. It was involved in the drafting of the educational law submitted to the parliament in 2006 (Humajová and Pupala 2008: 22) and the educational law submitted to the parliament a year later by a group of opposition members of the parliament, one of them being the former Minister of Education, who unsuccessfully tried to push through the 2006 law proposal.

Zuzana Humajová - Zimenová of the M. R. Stefanik Conservative Institute argued that the existence of the eight-year gymnasia is legitimate because these schools represent institutionalized special support for gifted children (Zimenová and Havrilová 2011, 10). Although she believed that the growth in the number of students in eight-year gymnasia was excessive, she compared quotas on the number of students in eight-year gymnasia to “socialist planned economy” (Humajová 2008). To not interfere with the right of free school choice and the right to establish schools, she suggested to tackle the dual problem of the current educational system: on the one hand, the normative financing creates incentives to establish more schools, on the other hand, there is lack of market correction mechanism, which would regulate the number of schools without complicated ministerial procedures (Humajová 2008; 2010; Humajová – Zimenová and Havrilová 2011, 10). Interestingly, Humajová – Zimenová was not familiar with the vast and growing academic literature that explores links between early stratification and education performance and suggested that arguments of OECD were not backed by research and reminded more of “social engineering” aimed to secure equality instead of development of high quality supply of education (Humajová 2008). Rather, she attributed the failure of Slovak pupils in international screenings to outdated educational standards, which do not enable students to learn how to apply theoretical knowledge to solution of practical problems (Humajová and Pupala 2008: 20).

The media overrepresented opinions of parents with children in eight-year gymnasia. Based on the existing data, these parents tend to be of higher socio-economic status (with university education). As there is no detailed survey of public attitudes towards early tracking comparable to the Czech studies, such as Greger et al. 2009, we have to rely on anecdotal evidence, such as internet forums or newspaper polls.

Majority of the commentators in the online discussion to three articles (“There will be less students in eight-year gymnasia,” “Eight-year gymnasia will remain,” and “Eight-year gymnasia will survive”) published in the right-leaning daily SME expressed opinion that early tracking is beneficial for gifted children because it gives them an opportunity to engage in more demanding, higher quality education and prepares them for university education. Part of the commentators added that instead of positive peer effects of more gifted children on the rest of the class, the causal link would be the opposite, i.e. gifted children would be demotivated by the slow learning pace. Only a minority of commentators argued that early separation might have negative effects on the students continuing their studies at primary schools.
Parents believed that it is wrong to limit the freedom of school choice (SME 10.4.2001, 27.5.2008). Majority of them believed that the education at eight-year gymnasia is of higher quality and enables their children to further develop their talents (ibid). Some pointed out that in the beginning, the study at eight-year gymnasia was fashionable (SME 10.4.2001). One of the primary school teachers noted that many parents believe that being a “gymnazista” (a high school student) is more prestigious than a basic school pupil (ibid).

On a similar note, teachers at eight-year gymnasia emphasized the right of parents to freely choose the school for their children and the quality of education provided at these institutions (SME 10.4.2001, 27.5.2008, 19.9.2008). They opposed the 5% quotas because they would lead to the reduction in the class size to 8-9 students. Although such a situation would be ideal from the pedagogical point of view, it would be impossible to finance such small classes (Rádio Slovensko 5.12.2010, Televízia Markíza). Furthermore, one of the teachers argued that although quotas would reduce the number of students in eight-year gymnasia, they would enable survival of both high and low quality gymnasia (dobraskola.com 2010). They also criticized that the Ministry of Education gave in to the pressure from international organizations (SME 27.5.2008).

Figure 5 goes here.

In contrast, primary school teachers believed that the existence of eight-year gymnasia decreased the quality of primary schools, as the best students were leaving at the end of the fourth grade (SME 10.4.2001, Slovenská televízia 20.9.2008, dobraskola.com 01.04.2010). To compete with multi-year gymnasia, many basic schools introduced extended schooling in mathematics, languages or sports (see Figure 5). However, one of the teachers noted that it is not the decay of the primary schools that is the main problem (SME 27.05.2008). Rather, he pointed out to the fact that majority of children studies at gymnasia and nobody is interested in the vocational studies. This argument is based on the belief that both eight- and four-year gymnasia primarily prepare students for university studies. Teachers also pointed out that the initial goal of the eight-year gymnasia – to serve the educational needs of gifted children – vanished with the growth in the number of these institutions (Rádio Slovensko 5.12.2010). Interestingly, none of the primary schools teachers questioned the existence of the early tracking per se and they tended to express the opinion that gifted children should be given special attention, just like handicapped children.

Segregation of children in special schools

In addition to an early segregation within standard education, there is an early and rigid division of children between standard and special primary education, which dates back to the interwar Czechoslovakia. All children were subject to compulsory education and could attend public or church schools. A number of special schools were created for Roma children who could not

---

78 One should bear in mind that this is not a representative sample but includes only a limited number of opinions selected by authors/editors of the newspaper or those who accepted invitation to radio or tv discussion.
keep pace in standard schools (Kušnieriková 2002: 682). One of the reasons for establishment of these special schools was the fact that non-Roma parents preferred schools with few or no Roma children. “Gypsy schools” (“ cigánske školy”) rested on shorter schooling hours and practical education, such as handicrafts or playing a musical instrument. Many of the students continued their studies in civic or vocational schools. However, the overall number of children in special schools was relatively low, reaching 7222 children in the school year 1936/37. By 1948/1949 it more than doubled, reaching 13589 children, and continued to mount as a result of deliberate government policies (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva).

The communist regime promoted re-education and assimilation of Roma minority (see Kušnieriková 2002, Haišman 1999, Jurová 1991). Eight point program was introduced to deal with problems, such as social backwardness and poverty of Roma, illiteracy or low school attendance rates of Roma children. Local governments were obliged to give preference to Roma children in enrollment to kindergartens and basic schools. Special classrooms or schools for “neglected gypsy children” were created by special schools in the mid-1950s. In 1958, special remedial classes were moved to standard basic schools. Their main aim was to ease transition of Roma children to the elementary schools. Since 1963 Roma students were distributed to secondary tracks based on their abilities, even if they failed to finish the basic school.

The 1970s witnessed a change in the assimilation strategy. The spending on socio-cultural integration of Roma minority increased and was used to finance school supplies, pre-school education of 3 to 5-year old Roma children, school meals or after-school care. By 1988 approximately 80% of Roma children had primary educational attainment (Kušnieriková 2002: 689). However, there was a growing divide between Roma and non-Roma educational attainment. Roma children were 14-times more likely to repeat the grade, 30-times more likely to leave basic school before the final grade and represented 24% of student body in special schools (Haišman 1999). According to the research conducted in the Eastern Slovakia in 1978, 56.6% of Roma children attended special schools, whereas Roma constituted only 8% of the population (Bajo 1985). However, another research from 1970 suggests that Roma children represented only 6.1% in special schools (ibid). The assimilation policies thus led to institutionalization of educational segregation, which intensified in the post-communist period characterized by liberalized and decentralized educational system.

Of 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Slovakia had the highest enrolment rate in basic special education programs in 2001 (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2005: 19).

Children with mental disability and/or behavioral disorders are educated in special schools with significantly reduced curriculum. The certificate from this type of school is not equivalent to the certificate from common basic school and impairs opportunities of children for further education and access to employment. Children who finished their compulsory education at the special schools can continue their education only at two types of schools – special vocational schools or practical schools. This type of education involves two to three years of professional training in vocations such as butcher, mason, shoemaker or gardener. However, the network of special upper secondary schools is limited and geographically not fully compatible with the network of special schools (Tomatová 2004: 17).
Furthermore, there is an increasing trend in special education. By 2010, almost 5.3% of corresponding age cohort was educated in special schools. In general, the percentage of population with mental disabilities is believed to fall somewhere between 3 and 4% (Tomatová 2004: 18). Furthermore, most of the children educated in special schools were of Roma ethnicity.

Exact data on Roma children in Slovak educational system and special schools are not available. Czechoslovakia stopped collecting data on students by ethnicity for privacy reasons in 1990 (Ringold 2000: 3). Furthermore, the ethnicity data are based on self-reporting and self-identification and may not be in line with the perceptions of observers. As some Roma may not consider themselves Roma or may affiliate with a different ethnic group, the official statistics often underreport the size of the Roma population. As a result, estimates of Roma’s actual level of representation in special education vary widely:

- according to the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2.2% of the corresponding age cohort was enrolled in special schools in 1989; in contrast 22.5% of Roma children attended special schools (Macháč 1989)
- among self-identified Roma 62.4% attended schools for mentally disabled in 2001 compared to 3.1% of the entire population (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva: Separát štatistickej ročenky školstva SR 2001)
- in the 2003-2004 school year, the self-identified Roma represented 39% of pupils enrolled in schools for the mentally disabled (Roma Education Fund 2004: 19-20)
- in the 2007-2008 school year, Roma officially accounted for a total of 5.3% of pupils in special primary schools and 1.6% of students in special secondary schools (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva 2007)
- based on the official data from the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, Roma Education Fund (2007: 27) calculated that the share of Romani children in special schools is nearly fourteen times greater than the share of Roma reported in standard schools
- based on director and teacher estimates Romani pupils represent almost 60% in special primary schools, 86% in special classes in standard schools and 35% in special secondary schools (see Table 1).

The segregation of Romani children in special schools is implicitly documented also by the data collected by MPC Prešov (Hvozdovič et al. 2002: 16). Whereas 11.12% of pupils in the first year of compulsory schooling were of Roma ethnicity in the school year 2000/2001, only 6.83% of children were of Roma ethnicity in the ninth year of compulsory education. Whereas Hvozdovič et al. (2002: 17) attribute the difference to an increase in Roma population, Salner et al. (2004: 7) suggest that the decrease in the percentage of Roma children in primary schools may reflect their transfer to special schools or other mechanisms of segregation of Roma children from the educational process.
The segregation of Roma pupils was repeatedly criticized by non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2007, 2010), Roma Educational Fund (Roma Education Fund 2004, Friedman et al. 2009) or Slovak Governance Institute (Tomatová 2004, Salner 2004). These actors pointed out to a number of factors that contribute to the persistence of segregation of children from disadvantaged groups. A number of studies emphasize incorrect diagnosis (Tomatová 2004, Amnesty International 2007, 2010, Haplová and Daniel 2008). Children are usually tested too early, usually in the first year of compulsory schooling or shortly afterwards. Tests are conducted in Slovak (or in minority languages, such as Hungarian). However, many Roma children do not speak Slovak well and language barrier works to their disadvantage. Roma children also rarely participate in pre-school education. In 2000, only 5.35% of children in kindergartens were of Roma ethnicity (Hvozdovič et al. 2002). In 2001 a culturally neutral test of educational capabilities was created under Project PHARE SR0103.01 - Support to the Roma minority in the educational field. Furthermore, transfers from special to common basic schools are rare. The repetition of the diagnosis at later age is not required by the law and there is a lack of professionals who have the capacity to do it (Tomatová 2004: 4, Amnesty International 2010: 5). The diagnosis is therefore usually repeated only at the specific request of parents.

The attitudes of Roma and non-Roma parents contribute to the segregation as well (Tomatová 2004: 3, Friedman 2009: 79, Amnesty International 2010: 7). Whereas objections of many non-Romani parents to their children attending school or classes with Romani children sometimes results in “white-flight,” Romani parents enroll their children in special schools because they believe that it is better for their children to obtain worse education in a friendlier environment. The normative financing reinforces the effects of the white-flight. Facing the fleeing pupils, school directors often introduce separated classes for Romani children to “save the school” (Tomatová 2004: 7). Further incentives for school directors to transfer Roma children to special schools or classes is given by the fact that the financial contribution for the child with mental disability is double the contribution for a child in standard basic schools.

Amnesty International (2010: 4) points out to disturbing prejudice on the side of educational experts, who suggested the following causes of high enrollment of Roma children in special schools: “genetic predisposition,” “incest,” “alcoholism,” “drug abuse,” or “parent criminality.”

All of the above discussed factors dominated the public discussion, which was triggered by the landmark decision, in which the District Court in Prešov ruled that the Slovak elementary school in the village Šarišské Michaľany discriminated against Romani children by teaching them in separate classrooms without reasonable justification. The court ordered the school to desegregate Roma classes, mostly consisting of children from the segregated Roma community, in December 2011. The decision was covered by most of the media and inspired numerous comments and blogs (for example, see SME 9 January 2012; Pravda 17 January 2012; Život 04/2012; Plus 7 dni 4/2012; Lukšič 2012; Marcinčin 2012; Nicholson 2012). Following the decision, non-Roma parents stopped enrolling their children to the first year of compulsory schooling (Plus 7 dni 4/2012) and declared that they would transfer children already enrolled to a different school if the classes were desegregated (Sme 9 January 2012). This would further aggravate the white-flight. According to the village mayor, parents had already transferred one hundred students to schools in nearby villages (Život 04/2012). This way the school in Šarišské Michaľany loses 130 000 euro a year in financial contribution from the state. Non-Roma parents argue that the desegregated classrooms would be discrimination of non-Roma children: “Neither
you, nor I would sit the child next to Roma child, who come to school dirty, stinky, unprepared and keeps disturbing. If the teacher has to devote his time in the classroom to lagging Roma children, my daughter will be denied the same level of education that children in Bratislava receive. I believe this is a discrimination of my child (Plus 7 dni 4/2012, see also Život 04/2012 and Pravda 17 January 2012).” The response of Roma parents to the decision was ambiguous. Whereas some Roma parents commented that things were good they were and the children did not complain (Pravda 17 January 2012), one Roma mother said that her son was looking forward attending the same class with the “white” (Plus 7 dni 4/2012).

The teachers also believed that segregated classrooms were better for children from the segregated community because “individual approach enables disadvantaged children to remove their handicap (Sme 9 January 2012). Teachers also pointed out to the lack of pre-school education of Roma children. The prejudice appeared also on the part of officials. Lucia Nicholson, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, officially declared that she would not take her 12-year old son from the desegregated classroom. However, in her blog she argued that such a statement was induced by the need to be politically correct while at work (Nicholson 2012). She stated that anti-discrimination legislation looks good on paper but is useless in the real life, where state does not invest to pre-school education and disadvantaged children slow down the progress of majority children. She stated: “Yes, I would mind if I had to clean my son’s head from louses each day he comes back from school. Yes, I would mind if his hungry classmates stole his snack. Yes, I would mind if he kept crying at home because he has to sit next to a stinky classmate. Yes, I would mind if he came home with black eye just because he was not born in the ghetto.”

In contrast, politicians and some experts were more in favor of the decision. Anton Marcinčin (Christian Democratic Party) praised the decision and argued that the segregation is mostly the result of the lack of financial and methodological assistance from the central government (Marcinčin 2012). On a similar note, policy analyst Andrej Selner suggested that if all actors responsible for inclusive education (teachers, school directors and regional governments) fail, it is the state who bears responsibility (Salner 2012). He also pointed out that in the educational system based on the free choice, parents will always look for the best educational path for their children and schools with problematic children will never be able to compete with schools without such pupils. Professor of psychology Ivan Lukšík emphasized the social causes of segregation: parents in poverty trap prefer the survival of their children to all other needs, education included (Lukšík 2012).

The case for desegregation is supported also by the pilot study, which explore the experience of Czech and Slovak Roma pupils of attending special or de facto segregated (Roma-only) schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while comparing that to their experience of attending primary or secondary mainstream education in the UK. The findings suggest that eighty-five percent of all the Roma pupils interviewed had been previously placed in a special school or de facto segregated school in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. However, in the UK the average attainment of Roma pupils (ages 9-15) in numeracy, literacy, and science at the UK mainstream schools was just below average. Furthermore, only a small percentage of the overall cohort of Roma pupils (2 to 4 percent) was regarded as requiring special education needs because of learning difficulties or disabilities that made it more difficult for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. These were given extra help within the mainstream school.
The segregation of Roma children in special schools was identified as problematic also by the government (Ministry of Education 2008, Government Office of the Slovak Republic 2011). In 2008 the Ministry of Education declared the goal to reduce the percentage of Roma children in special primary schools for children with mental disabilities (Ministry of Education 2008: 13). In 2011 the problem of Roma segregation was included in the National Program of Reforms of Slovak Republic 2011-2014 (Government Office of the Slovak Republic 2011: 20): “Slovak educational system reinforces the original inequality among pupils by early selection of children into educational streams of varying quality and contributed the reproduction of education, i.e. children copy educational achievement of their parents. In such a schooling system, children from socially disadvantaged groups, particularly from socially excluded communities have a minimum chance of obtaining an education because they are disadvantaged by their cultural and linguistic differences, amplified by poor socio-economic situation.”

To tackle the situation, a number of measures were introduced. In 2003, “zeroth” grade was introduced for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, who are not expected to cope with the demands of the first grade. An experimental project of transitive classrooms ran between 2005 and 2006. These classrooms were supposed to fill the gap between special basic school and basic school. However, none of these projects significantly decreased the level of segregation in special schools.

The degree of segregation of children in special schools in the Czech Republic is comparable to the one in Slovakia. In November 2007, the European Court of Human Rights rule on the case D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic, which was filed by 18 Romani children visiting schools in Ostrava. The Court found that the disproportionate assignment of Roma children to special schools without an objective and reasonable justification amounted to unlawful indirect discrimination in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Czech Republic was required to adopt measures to end discrimination against Roma in the education system.

In the meantime, special schools were abolished with a new Schools Act in 2005. However, several organizations argue that the Czech authorities merely renamed “special schools” as “practical elementary schools” and the system which places children in these schools and teaches a limited curriculum essentially remains the same (see Amnesty International 2010; Evropské centrum pro práva Romů and Roma Educational Fund undated, aktualne.centrum.cz 13 January 2009). The fall in the number of children educated in special classrooms was modest, reaching 4.1% of the corresponding age cohort in 2010 (see Figure 6).

In November 2010, the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg claimed that in certain areas Roma children are up to 27 times more likely to attend practical schools, i.e. the same proportion which served as basis for the findings of the Strasbourg Court (Thomas Hammarberg 2010). The League of Human Rights estimates that 70% of Roma children attend former special schools (Evropské centrum pro práva Romů and Liga lidských práv 2007). According to the special survey conducted at 2700 schools by Institute for information on education 26.7% of Roma children attend special schools, whereas only 2.17% of other Czech children do (aktualne.centrum.cz 13 January 2012). In 2008 European Roma Rights Centre visited 20 practical schools and found out that (1) in 8 out of 19 schools Roma
children represented more than 80% of pupils, (2) in 6 out of 19 schools Roma children represented 50 to 79% of pupils, and (3) only in 5 out of 19 schools Roma children represented less than 50% of pupils, with the lowest share amounting to 14% (Evropské centrum pro práva Romů and Roma Educational Fund undated: 1). Unofficial estimates suggest that Roma population accounts for 2.9% of Czech population (ibid). However, some point out to the slight decrease in the number of special schools. In Ostrava region, home to 18 students who filed complaint about segregation, the number of practical schools declined as a result of changed establisher and the subsequent integration of pupils to common basic schools (aktualne.centrum.cz 13 January 2012). On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of Roma-only schools, with zero graduates continuing their studies at secondary schools (ibid). These schools emerge predominantly near Roma ghettos. In general, if the percentage of Roma pupils at school exceeds 30 to 40%, non-Roma parents transfer their children to another school and Roma parents start nerolling their children more frequently (Evropské centrum pro práva Romů and Liga lidských práv 2007: 18). However, „white-flight“ is not the only source of segregation. Similarly to Slovakia, Roma children are segregated in separate classrooms, either with or without being identified as children with special needs (ibid: 17). The reasons for segregation are also similar to Slovakia. Studies cite problematic diagnosis of children with special needs, pressure of non-Roma parents for segregation or financing (ibid).

Discussion

In this paper we analyzed the political economy of reforms of tracking in the Czech and Slovak lands after the World War II. Our findings are as follows. First, there was a surprising persistence in public attitudes towards educational segregation. Majority of the population either supported or at least did not oppose more exclusive education. These attitudes were present in both interwar Czechoslovakia and independent Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. A forty-year experience with unified schooling during the communist period failed to change these attitudes. Rather, it reinforced the calls for the return to the pre-Munich educational system in the immediate, “destruction” period following the collapse of the communism, which was characterized by negation of totalitarian educational system.

Throughout the period of study there were only two reforms, which succeeded to change the age of tracking – the 1948 reform which postponed tracking from the age of 11 to the age of 15, and the 1990 reform, which advanced the age of tracking from the age of 14 to the age of 11. The most striking common feature of these reforms was comprehensive schooling – or the lack of thereof – used to legitimize the new regime. This argument was repeatedly used in debates about the age of tracking between 1918 and 1990. In the debates leading to the 1948 reform, the unified school was praised as a tool of nation-building by interwar reformists and used as a tool of indoctrination by the Communist Party. By bringing together all children up to the age of 15, the unified school thus appealed to political elites interested in identity building. In case of the Communist Party, the unified school modeled according to the Soviet model also communicated “constructing an international community” (Covington and Brunn 2006: 125) and could serve to legitimize the new regime. In the same line, Czechoslovak elites in 1990 attempted to legitimize the new regime by drawing links to the interwar Czechoslovakia and meet the popular demand for negation of the current system. However, both of these reforms were introduced and implemented under special circumstances, when an external shock opened a window of
opportunity for a reform – the 1948 reform was implemented following the communist coup d’etat and the 1990 reform following the collapse of the communist regime. As these circumstances are difficult to replicate, we cannot draw many meaningful policy lessons.

Yet we can derive many useful lessons from the reform failures, which were numerous. In the post-communist period there were several attempts to reverse the 1990 reform and postpone the age of tracking. However, none of them was exceptionally successful. One of the main problems was that the ministries often tried to skip the initiation phase characterized by conceptualization and explanation of the reform goals, as well as the part of the implementation phase, which should cover support for schools and monitoring of early phases of implementation (Greger 2011: 15). Indeed, when the Czech Minister of Education announced his plans to gradually eliminate multi-year gymnasia, he did so without discussing it with his colleagues. As a result, the public did not understand why the reform was initiated, what were its benefits and shortcoming. Ministries thus failed to frame the public discourse and this was soon dominated by groups with vested interests. Parents with high social and cultural capital and teachers at multi-year gymnasia exerted enormous pressures on political elites and effectively communicated their interpretation of later tracking as “socialist” and against basic civil liberties, such as freedom to choose educational path. These opinions were initially echoed also by right-leaning parties.

Further challenge was posed by the lack of political capacity to deliver reforms, as post-communist countries were often characterized by broad coalitions. Parties fearing electoral punishments had no incentive to go against public attitudes. Therefore, the quotas on multi-year gymnasia in Slovakia were introduced only in 2010 by broad government of Robert Fico (2006-2010), which did not need to negotiate support for its proposals. However, the subsequent government reversed the quotas stipulated by the first post-communist education law, once again in response to pressure exerted by parents and local governments. The surprising fact about educational reform in Slovakia was its low prioritization. Although Slovakia successfully launched reforms in healthcare or the public sector, the reform of educational system remained at the margin of interest despite repeatedly declared commitments of governments.

The discourse on multi-year gymnasia was politicized and framed as the problem of basic civil liberties. Any attempt to limit the freedom to choose educational path was labeled as “socialist”. In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia the issue of later tracking was introduced by the social democratic or leftist parties – ČSSD in the Czech Republic and SDE in Slovakia. However, the reaction to these proposals differed. Whereas in the Czech Republic the proposal was opposed by the rightist ODS and questioned also within ČSSD, in Slovakia the proposal was supported by the broad right-left government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. The opposition in Slovakia mounted only during the second Dzurinda government. Interestingly, the clash occurred between two parties from the right political spectrum – the conservative Christian Democratic Party and the liberal Alliance of New Citizen. The problem of later tracking was thus polarized along the left-right divide.

Attitudes of politicians began to change slowly only in response to unflattering results of Czech and Slovak students in international testing, such as OECD’s PISA programme. However, OECD’s interpretation of these results as a consequence of early tracking was initially contested. Nevertheless, the results were broadly covered by the media in both Czech Republic
and Slovakia and triggered the public debate. In the Czech Republic, academicians entered the public debate and offered several studies based on PISA and TIMMS datasets. In response, many Czech politicians embraced OECD’s view that early tracking leads to educational segregation of children with various family backgrounds and negatively affects educational achievement of children with low socioeconomic status. The change in attitudes in favor of later tracking cut across the political spectre and included also politicians from ODS.

In Slovakia, the public debate was more fragmented and scarcely referenced academic works. Bad results of Slovak students were more often interpreted in relation to bad curricula, which emphasized memorizing at cost of logical thinking. It should be noted that research outputs on effects of early tracking in Slovakia were very limited. Internationalization thus turned out to be a relatively important factor that shaped national discourse.

Although Czech elites were more eager to embrace the viewpoint that early tracking contributed to segregation than their Slovak counterparts, the most recent attempt to reduce the number of multi-year gymnasia was bottom-up driven. The local governments decided in favor of this move mostly due to the declining population curve, half-empty schools and the resulting budget constraints. Local representative of industrial regions emphasized also the need to direct children from multi-year gymnasia to technical and vocational tracks, which are in demand by the local firms. Once again, the decision triggered fierce protests and some local governments decided to, at least temporarily, abandon their plans.

In addition to the segregation of pupils into multi-year tracks for talented children and basic schools with differentiated curricula (standard vs. extended basic school programs), a high percentage of children attend special schools for children with mental disabilities. These schools almost entirely consist of children from socially disadvantaged communities. However, despite vague official attempts to integrate these children into majority educational system, the combination of underfinancing and parental pressure enables an easy survival of segregation. The free school choice turns out to be one of the major obstacles: facing increasing enrollment of children from families in poverty trap, parents transfer their children to schools without such children.

References


Čeněk, Jan (1922) K Reformě střední školy: Návrh učebné osnovy jednotné střední školy v republice československé. Státní nakladatelství.


Hammarberg, Thomas (2010) „Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to the Czech Republic from 17 to 19


Kotásek, Jiří (2009) „Bilá kniha po pěti letech.“


Law nr. 171/1990 Coll. (18 May 1990)


Ministry of Education (undated) „Stanovisko MŠMT k možnosti optimalizace sítě škol.“


Ministerstvo školstva (22.11.2007) “Minister školstva sa stretol so zástupcom generálneho tajomníka OECD.”

Ministry of Education SR (2008) “Návrh koncepcie výchovy a vzdelávania rónských detí a žiakov vrátane rozvoja stredoškolského a vysokoškolského vzdelávania.“


(Accessed 14 November 2011)


FROM SELECTIVITY TO UNIVERSALISM | 173
Pelikán, Jiří (undated) „Jak (ne)reformovat českou školu.“


Poslanecká sněmovna (26 November 1930) „86. schůze.“ In Spolecná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna.

Pravda (17 January 2012) “Ak triedy zmiešajú, rodičia vezmú deti preč.”


Příhoda, Václav (1945) Idea školy druhého stupně, Brno: Ústřední učitelské nakladatelství a knihkupectví.


SME (10. 4. 2001) “Riešiť problémy základných škôl obmedzením gymnázií je typicky socialistické.”


Televízia Markíza (09.01.2010) „Televízne noviny.“
Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání (1991) „Východiská a zásady přípravy školské reformy.“


eurozpravy.cz (1 August 2010) „Na víceletých gymnáziích nestudují chytrější děti, ale...“
idnes.cz (28 June 2000) „Ministr chce rušit víceletá gymnázia.“  

idnes.cz (24 October 2000) „Víceletá gymnázia se nebudou rušit.“  
http://zpravy.idnes.cz/domaci.aspx?r=domaci&c=A001024_230351_domaci_was&l=1&t=A001024_230351_domaci_was&r2=domaci

idnes.cz (24 October 2000) „Víceletá gymnázia se expertům nelíbí.“  

idnes.cz (17 August 2010) „Úroveň osmiletých gymnázií klesá, přestávají být elitními školami.“  

idnes.cz (31 January 2011) „Víceletých gymnázií výrazně ubude. Zlepší se výuka, věří Dobeš s hejtmany.“  

idnes.cz (1 February 2011) „PŘEHLEDNĚ: Jak se v krajích budou rušit či slučovat školy a gymnázia.“  

idnes.cz (22 January 2011) „Jihomoravská gymnázia i rodiče protestují proti zrušení tříd pro 330 dětí.“  

idnes.cz (31 January 2011b) „Petice studentů a rodičů zabrala, třídy pro primány na jihu Moravy vydrží.“  

lidovky.cz (11 January 2011) „A zase je tu dilema páté třídy.“  
novinky.cz (20 May 2008) „Víceletá gymnázia mají mezi řediteli škol mnoho odpůrců.“

parlamentnilisty.cz (1 October 2010) „Víceletá gymnázia? Dobeš je pro. Ale musí být nadstandardní.“

regionpress.cz (4 March 2011) “Kraj řeší víceletá gymnasia.”


rozhlas.cz (14 March 2011) „Vláda schválila návrh nového školského zákona.“
http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/domaci/_zprava/5763

rozhlas.cz (4 May 2011) „Česko prý rozděluje děti do výběrových tříd a škol velmi brzy.“
http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/spolecnost/_zprava/888358

Život (04/2012) “Nasrdená dedina: Namiesto poďakovania si vyslúžili obvinenie z rasizmu.”
Figure 1: Percentage of age cohort in multi-year gymnasia – grades equivalent to basic school – Czech Republic.

Note: Due to a change in reporting, the data for 2003/04 and 2004/05 is not available.
Source: Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávaní.

Figure 2: Success rate in the first round of entrance exams – Czech Republic.

Source: Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávaní.
Figure 3: Pupils in extended programs at basic school as a percentage of total primary education – Czech Republic.

Source: Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání.

Figure 4: Percentage of age cohort in multi-year gymnasia – grades equivalent to basic school – Slovakia.

Source: Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva.
Figure 5: Percentage of basic school pupils enrolled in extended programs (mathematics, languages, sports) – Slovakia.

Source: Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva.

Figure 6: Percentage of age cohort in special schools – Czechoslovakia.

Source: Statistical yearbooks. Various issues. Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, SR. Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání, ČR.
Table 1: Lower-bound estimates of the number of Romani pupils in special education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Number of all pupils enrolled</th>
<th>Number of Romani pupils</th>
<th>Proportion of Romani pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special primary schools</td>
<td>13807</td>
<td>8200</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special classes in standard schools</td>
<td>5590</td>
<td>4795</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special secondary schools</td>
<td>5114</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>24511</td>
<td>14789</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Friedman et al. (2009).
Chapter 6: Education reform in Spain: 

Actors and consequences of an incomplete transformation

Nicola Pensiero

1. Introduction

This case study aims to explore the political economy of education reform in Spain and its impact, if any, on the reduction of inequalities in educational attainment in the post-World War II period. In particular, the focus will be on the comprehensiveness of the educational system that is hypothesized to be the institutional factor with the greatest potential impact on the reduction of socioeconomic gradient in educational attainment. The comprehensiveness of the educational system is defined by the combination of the age of tracking and the level of unification of curricula across performance groups. Educational systems with later age of tracking and more unified curricula are considered to be more comprehensive.

The political economy of education reforms has hardly been analyzed through the lens of politics of education, yet it can provide novel insights into the process of policy making in education in comparison to the mainstream approaches, which tend to propound economic-based explanations (Bonal, 1995). The 1970 reform, which extended compulsory and comprehensive schooling to the age of 14, has been interpreted as a result of the needs of the dominant capitalist class expressed via the technocratic voice of the government in late Francoism. Education was seen as an important means for the modernization and industrialization of the country, whilst the interests behind the government of the first Franquist period were those of the military, rural and bureaucratic groups that were not interested in educating the masses (Bonal, 1995). This perspective accounts only partially for the story, as education policy can also be seen as the state attempt to manage the legitimation crisis that accompanied the industrialization and exploded in explicit protests.

The endeavors of the key actors initiating the reform and supporting its success, the groups who oppose the reform and exert pressure to preserve the status quo are analyzed to account for the process of education policy-making. At the same time, it is explored whether the sequence of reforms have been successful in reducing educational gaps between different socioeconomic groups by reviewing the literature on the topic.

The expansion of education in Spain was a major event in its social and political history and clearly increased the chances of lower classes to participate in secondary education that was previously precluded to them. Whether educational expansion entailed a
reduction in inequalities in educational attainment is, however, object of contention. Research on over-time variation in inequalities of educational opportunities in Spain has generated inconsistent results. While Martinez (2002) finds persistent inequalities over time, Carabañ (1999) finds first an increase in inequalities, followed by a decrease. The most recent study confirmed convincingly a decrease of inequalities at lower transitions, and persistence at higher levels (Ballarino et al., 2009).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: the process of reforming the education system is analyzed first for the Franquist period, then for the democratic period. The debate regarding reduction/persistence in the influence of family of origin on educational attainment is presented in the subsequent section.

2. Education as an arena of struggle between conservativism and liberalism.

Since the very formation of the modern Spanish State, education has been a symbolic media through which Spanish society grappled with fundamental questions of freedom and tradition (de Horcajo 1995, O’Malley 1995a, Maravall 1995). Education became an explicit arena of struggle between the forces of conservativism and liberalism (O’Malley 1995a: 33). Whereas the former believed that education represents foundation of the established order, the latter saw education as the bedrock for the regeneration of Spain (ibid, Maravall 1995: 42). Universalization of education and the equality of its provision lied at the very heart of the conflict. However, promotion of the school construction, equality and secularism during the Republican State was put to a halt by the outbreak of the civil war in 1936. The emphasis given to education by progressive forces ensured that the repression was all the more fierce and the remodeling of the school system along fascist lines all the more restrictive (O’Malley 1995a: 33). The national Catholic State followed exactly the opposite course. It paralyzed the building of schools and strengthened the role of the Church as the provider of education. Initially, the Church and the Falange, the nationalist political party, competed for the control of education. However, following the defeat of fascist powers in the World War II the influence of the Falange declined and the Church was left to dominate the schooling (McNair 1984: 28). Every aspect of elementary education was to be brought in line with Church doctrine (Payne 1987: 366). The main purpose of the education was to indoctrinate the masses with the ideology of the so-called national Catholicism, i.e. the close linking of ideas of patriotism and religious practice, and this way enable the survival of the regime.

As a result, the Spanish education system remained practically unchanged until the educational reform of 1970s. It was characterized by the combination of a highly stratified system and by the preponderant role of private sector in the provision of education. Primary school ended at the age of 10 with a selective exam. Pupils who intended to continue into higher education were divided into bachillerato and vocational training according to the results of the exam. The Bachillerato was divided into elementary (four years) and higher (two years) cycles. Vocational training was divided into two cycles (‘Oficiala’ and ‘Maestria’) of four and two years respectively, which could be completed at the age of 16. Vocational training was a dead-end-track as it did not give access to
university nor was there a channel between it and bachillerato. The Elementary Bachillerato was required for entry to the Middle Schools (technical, building, commercial or teacher training). After higher Bachillerato and a pre-university year, a student had to pass an entrance examination for admission to faculties and higher technical schools (Carabaña, 1998). The state had a secondary role in education compared to the private sector, and within the private sector, the Church controlled most of the schools.

This holds true particularly for secondary education. Throughout the 1950s up to 1964 more than 80% of students enrolled in bachillerato were attending a private school (National Statistics Institute). Moreover, access to education was penalized for large strata of population by the worsening living conditions that accompanied the civil war. The combination of strong stratification, privatization of education, and economic hardship accounts for the great proportion of students not finishing non-compulsory secondary education in the period 1910–1939 (Socio-demographic survey (INE 1991) in Ballarino et al. (2009)) and led to a situation, in which educational opportunities were strongly stratified by social class. Access to private schools at secondary level was restricted by the explicit elitist aim of selecting and training the ruling elite drawn from higher classes (Hanson 2000: 14). Majority of lower class pupils were excluded from the higher levels of education and high quality schools because of high fees. Instead, they were overrepresented in state schools which were oriented to ideological control rather than to training. Curriculum was characterized by centralized control, compulsory religious education, pedagogical conservatism, rejection of modern pedagogical methods, and education of girls for home life (Bonal, 2000; Carabaña, 1998; Günther, 1996).

2.1 Political Context of the 1970 Educational Reform

In the direct post-War period any attempt at the reform was halted by the context, in which this process took place, that is the Franquist regime. The characteristics of the Spanish educational policy and of the political economy in general were, largely, the result of the specific features of the Franquist regime, which was designed to concentrate authority in one person (see Gu¨nther, 1996). Authority was not to flow from below, as in democratic systems and no regime ideology was formulated. Groups and individuals outside the State Administration were completely excluded from the decisions regarding annual budgetary and planning priorities. Neither legal unions nor private firms were allowed to participate in the allocation of state resources. Only lower-order economic policies were influenced by private-sector lobbying activity (Gu¨nther, 1996: 18). It should be noted that social and political conflict as expressed by unions and parties was suppressed and class-based trade unions were replaced by vertical organizations whose explicit objective was to annihilate class conflict. Franco’s authority was used to preserve the general character of the regime and was hardly used to guide the state’s economic or social policies. Intragovernmental disputes could not be resolved as in democratic regimes by using: the threat to resign from a governing coalition, as there were no elections; by referring to an authoritative ideology, which was not formulated; by mobilizing a party, social movements, unions or private-sector associations; by involving Franco’s authority as he was not involved in most economic policy issues. The two main sources of power over decision-making processes were instead ministerial hierarchy, and the social and psychological dynamics of personal interaction. Responsibility for spending plans was highly compartmentalized as each
minister held exclusive authority over issues concerning its jurisdiction. Each department was isolated from external political pressures and Ministers were considered responsible as individuals for the policies proposed by their departments. The government did not coordinate spending decisions between departments and the function of coordinating the state spending strategies was held by the finance minister since it was the only department whose jurisdiction was involved in any departmental decision (Günther, 1996: 18). In the absence of coordinated demands and pressures, a department’s spending outcomes depended on social and psychological dynamics of persuasion, that is, on the negotiating skills of its minister, apart from his personal knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, the department’s spending was affected by the overall size of the budget pie. In 1975, in the terminal stage of Franco regime, Spain had one of the lowest level of taxation among western societies, although it had witnessed one of the most fastest economic growth of western Europe in the preceding decade. With the exclusion of social security taxes, between 1965 and 1975, all other tax revenues actually declined as a share of Spain’s GDP (Günther, 1996). The small revenues resulting from the level of taxation and, mostly, a balanced-state-budget policy and the stinginess of welfare state decreased public and private expenditure in education. During the 1960s state expenditures on education was one third than expenditures in West Germany, France and Austria, and ranked alongside third world levels (1.5% of GDP in 1964, (Günther, 1996)). Spanish rates of enrollment dampened or stagnated at every educational level during the first 20 years of the dictatorship up to 1959 and enrollment in higher education ranked alongside third world countries in 1967 (Günther, 1996).

Between 1957 and 1959 the regime abandoned autarchy as its main strategy of economic development and opened to neoliberalism. Beginning in 1957 key roles in the administration were assumed by a new cohort of technocrats, whose main goal was reaching economic growth through market liberalization (O’Malley, 1995b). These technocrats were from mainly upper-class social backgrounds and favored the ties between state administration and business and banking interests (Günther, 1996). The economic policy change was not accompanied by a political one. The Regime continued to deny political freedom and to ban political parties and trade unions (O’Malley, 1995b). The transformation of Spanish economy into a modern one converted most of rural population into a urbanized and industrial working class without urban plan and provision of services for the new working class areas. The industrialization of the country drag, therefore, vast strata of population into poor living conditions and low levels of education. The education system failed in providing a skilled labor force to the expanding industrial sector. The 1965 study of levels of education among the working population revealed that five percent had no education, ninety percent had been to primary school, three percent had been to secondary school, and two percent had been to university (O’Malley 1995b: 27). Yet, these numbers were of little concern to the ruling elites. The fact that Spain had managed to rapidly industrialize despite the fact that 87 percent of the working population had no vocational training, only reinforced regime’s indifference towards education (O’Malley 1995b: 28).
2.2 Popular Demand for the Reform

The social pressure for improved educational system in a society undergoing a process of modernization began to mount in the post-War period. Since the 1950s, initial opposition by teachers to the Regime became open and deepened throughout the 1960s (see O’Malley 1995a: 33). At least some of these opposing teachers started to participate in political protests from their university period and reinforced their political awareness as they became professional educators and as they established contacts with pupils’ families. Teachers’ resentment for their poor professional and labor conditions at all levels in both private and public schools exacerbated their opposition attitudes, led them to join clandestine activist groups and develop a set of progressive and convincing pedagogical and political ideas, which attracted many new militants across the country (O’Malley 1995a). During the 1960s, universities became a focal point of social and political unrest, which culminated in 1968 and led to the resignation of the then Minister of Education and his replacement by Villar Palasis (McNair 1984: 31). Although Villar initially intended to reform only universities, he soon realized that universities were too closely linked to the other levels of education and decided to restructure the entire educational system.

The reform process leading to the 1970 education reform was characterized by policy borrowing. Seeking to end the period of international isolation and become a member of international bodies, the Spanish government was ready to pursue ideas of equality of opportunity and the removal of educational disadvantage (McNair 1984: 31). The planning of the reform was therefore led by R. Diez Hochleitner, the Director of Educational Planning and Finance of UNESCO (ibid). His first step was to prepare a critical survey of Spanish education. The resulting White Book (Libro Blanco) was published in March 1969 and hinted that “[w]ith all the qualifications and reservations appropriate to an over-rigid classification, it would be said that two education systems coexist in our country: one, for the middle and upper class, the other for the less favoured social classes” (MEC 1969: 26-27, cited in McNair 1981: 4). As a result of such an organization of schooling, 72% of the children of company directors were in secondary schools, whereas only 4% of those of agricultural workers reached this level (McNair 1981: 14). Advice was sought also from international experts, including a specially constituted UNESCO Committee (ibid). The Libro Blanco was heavily discussed by the Church, the Francoist political party Movimiento, as well as teachers and educational experts. Despite constant attacks from the more fundamentalist elements of the Government and the Cortes, the Parliament of the epoch, the Education Bill was approved in August 1970 (O’Malley 1995b: 31). The whole reform process was quick, allegedly supported by Franco himself in his desire to re-invent himself as a liberal after a period of severe repression (McNair 1984: 33).

The 1970 General Education Act (LGE) replaced the former education system with the common school (Educación General Básica or EGB), whose aim was to “provide an integrated education, basically equal for all and adapted as far as possible, to the aptitudes and capacities of each individual” (Article 15, cited in McNair 1981: 49). This eight-year Basic General Education covered the ages six to thirteen years, divided into two sections, the first from age six to ten, and the second, with more specialist teaching, from eleven to fourteen (McNair 1981: 49). Consequently, the Bachillerato was reduced from six to three years, plus the pre-university year. Vocational training, after LGE, comprised a two-year
cycle – which was compulsory for all youngsters not taking the Bachillerato – plus another cycle of two or three years, with access either after completing the Bachillerato or the first cycle of Vocational Training. The former Middle Schools were integrated into the universities and were called 'University Schools' (Carabaña, 1998). By design, migrations between different tracks were made possible (be- tween bachillerato and vocational training and from vocational training to orientation year of university), but the necessary complicated arrangements made such solution unfeasible for many youngsters. Examinations were replaced by repeated assessments of pupils, and teachers at lower levels were given the responsibility to decide admittance to bachillerato versus vocational training and to university. It was forbidden to repeat a year in compulsory education.

The opposition to the regime remained skeptical of the regime’s capability to implement the reform. These concerns turned out to be justified. The reform’s shortcomings related to the fact that it was formulated in a top-down model by ministry officials without prior research and piloting. More important, the act could only partly be made operative, as its opponents had succeeded in depriving the act of the necessary financial support. Repetition of years was practised and combined with the lack of teacher preparation, shortage of materials to support the new curriculum and teaching methods, in accounting for the high rate of failure in compulsory schooling. The new pedagogy that inspired the act centered on concepts such as child-centredness, interdisciplinarity, and team-teaching was hardly implemented. Notwithstanding the lack of finance support, the 1970 Education Act slowly ameliorated Spain’s schooling system (O’Malley, 1995b).

The reactions to the 1970 Education Act highlighted the need for the development of alternative solutions. The Alternativa movement spread throughout the country and teachers began to formulate an alternative conception of education in Spain, which culminated in the publication of the first legal draft of the ‘Alternative’ in January 1977 (O’Malley 1995a: 34). Over the time, a separation between bachillerato and vocational training began to be viewed as the main problem of the reform. Given the young age (14) at which pupils had to decide the kind of secondary education track and the difficulties related to moving from vocational to academic training, the reform had been criticized for reproducing social inequalities in educational outcomes. The influence of family on students’ decisions in combination with the fact that pupils who failed or demonstrated lower academic achievements in primary education were encouraged to take vocational training made vocational training a second-class option in which lower-class-background and less able students were disproportionally represented. The new Bachillerato structure (1970) has been continuously criticizing on its own accord. The 1984 Libro Blanco of the Comunidad Valenciana argued that BUP was abstract, elitist too academically oriented. A group of secondary teachers denounced that the structure favored monotonous expositions requiring little student participation and creative thinking (Comunidad Escolar, 9 September 1987, cited in Boyd-Barret, 1995a). The education system in general was also criticized for its inadequacy to respond to the demand of society for youngsters prepared to live in a modern society, and for the low quality of teaching and inadequacy of curriculum. However, such criticisms may underestimate certain improvements (Boyd-Barret, 1995a).
The Spanish transition towards democracy began two days following the death of General Franco in November 1975 when Juan Carlos I was proclaimed King of Spain. Initially, Juan Carlos confirmed Arias Navarro, a loyal Francoist, as the prime minister. Given his unsatisfactorily performance, Juan Carlos replaced him with Adolfo Suárez in July 1976. In 1977, Suárez’s Union of the Democratic Centre won the first democratic elections in 41 years and faced the challenging task of transformation of Spain to parliamentary democracy. Despite expectations, the transition was smooth and fast, mostly as a result of elite pacts (Hamann 1997). This politics of consensus was largely a result of the fear of failure and memory of the Spanish Civil War. As no single center of power could dominate the political scene, a balance-of-power relationship evolved between the army, the Catholic Church, Franco loyalists, communists, monarchists and newly formed political parties, who were aware of the political consequences of the return to the political violence (Hanson 2000: 17-18). The Spanish Constitution of 1978 therefore introduced a system of checks and balances, whose main goal was to furnish an enduring stability independent of the particular political party in power (Maravall 1995: 49).

The constitution resolved a long historical struggle over education by balancing educational demands of two political ideologies: whereas the political left emphasized equality of educational opportunities for rich and poor alike, academic freedom and the parental participation, the political right argued in favor of freedom to create publicly financed private and church schools, tradition and the management efficiency (Hanson 2000: 21). Constitution therefore introduced important reforms in schooling. First, the decentralization of education from the central to the regional governments; second, teaching of and in vernacular languages, free compulsory education in private schools that receive public aid; third, universities were given autonomy.

Education system was further supported by a reform of the taxation system aimed at combating tax evasion and making tax payment more progressive. As a result, the state revenues began to rise (see Figure 1). The increased flow of revenues and the removal of the other constraint to deficit spending – that is, the balanced-budgets policy – made possible the expansion of expenditures for basic services, including education. From 1975 to the mid 1980s the UCD government implemented a counter-cyclical economic policy to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis. An increasing social spending was combined with moderate tax increases for alleviating social conflict and consolidating democracy. This policy was in line with Keynesian counter-cyclical policies employed by many West European governments throughout the first three decades following World War II (Günther, 1996).
2.4 Reforms of the Socialists

Between 1972 and 1982 Spanish economy stagnated, inflation soared and unemployment reached worrisome levels. The consequences of the economic crisis for young people in terms of unemployment were dramatic. Roughly half of the individuals under 25 could not find an occupation. In this unfavorable macroeconomic circumstances, education spending continued to increase in line with the previous phase. The election of a Socialist majority government in November 1982 initiated a new phase characterized by the abandonment of demand-side Keynesian policies in favor of a mix of demand- and supply-side policies aiming at completing modernization of the country and prepare it for becoming part of the European community. Labour force in the parastate sector was downsized and a program of privatizations was implemented aiming at enhancing the competitiveness of the Spanish industry. The PSOE policy in education continued on the inherited track of increasing spending. In the 1980s, the state spending for education reached the levels of other western advanced societies.

The socialist government also introduced a series of reforms in the educational system. Education and, more precisely, the reduction of inequalities of educational opportunities was a cornerstone of the program of the first socialist government in Spanish history. The government declared its intention to take greatly into consideration education as a means of social transformation. The reform’s objectives were, as declared by minister of education Maravall, free and compulsory education to an age in line with European standards; using education as a means to ameliorate social inequalities; change in pedagogical methods in order to improve the general school population’s academic achievements (Maravall, 1984). Great emphasis was given to new active teaching methods.
since the experimentation of the reform, as important aspects of the reform were left open to creativity of schools and teachers. Contrary to the usual procedure for implementing a reform consisting of proposals, consultation, pilot experiments, legislation and government-controlled implementation, innovations were tested directly by teachers in a process of trial and error, which involved volunteering schools.

The reform began with the University Reform Act (LRU) of 1983, continued with the Organic Act of the Right to Education (LODE) in 1985, the Organic Act on the General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE) in 1990, and finally, the Organic Law Regulating the Participation, Evaluation and Governance of Schools (LOPEGCE) in 1995. In 1983 universities were enabled to create independent study courses and to participate in the definition of the national ones. Access to studies with a limited capacity, like Medicine, continued to be managed by the Ministry of Education using entry examinations, a device which was contested by students. The principles of the LODE, which provided the guidelines of organization and management of schools, were in line with the internal democracy propounded by the Alternative. However, the implementation of internal democracy was thwarted by the failure to provide the means to facilitate democratization and the previous authoritarian system remained unaltered. The LODE, which established public funding to private schools, was seen as an excessive concession to private schools (mostly religious) which succeeded in retaining their old privileges. Due to teachers’ opposition, however, effective controls were made to compel grant-aided private schools to adapt to the same requirements as the state schools. The LOGSE extended the compulsory education to the age of 16 and introduced a comprehensive curriculum. Current enrollment and dropout rates in secondary education suggest that the changes produced by the act do not meet its expectations and its complete realization is yet to come. Finally, the LOPEGCE attempted to deepen and broaden the decentralization process at the school level.

Initial reforms in the early 1980s drew inspiration from several sources. Particularly important was the influence of Alternative, which served as a gateway for importation of educational ideas of Neil, Rogers, Illich, but also of Freinet, Marx, Engels, Lenin or Gramsci (O’Malley 1995a: 34). Although legislative initiatives introduced by the Socialist Government to an extent reflected all the elements of the Alternative, many of the proposals of the Alternative were watered down or inadequately supported (O’Malley 1995a). Furthermore, the reform debate in Spain drew inspiration from UK theoreticians of the 1970s and 1980s in areas of action research, the role of teachers’ centers and constructivist theories of learning (Boyd-Barrett 1995b: 6).

These major educational laws were passed over stiff opposition. The social forces that opposed the socialist reform were from the right wing and from the catholic church. The Catholic church, was resilient to accept autonomy of democratic institutions (ELPa’ís, 2011; Escuela, 2011). The teacher unions became the third major opponent, as public primary and secondary school teachers faced the loss of power in handling the day-to-day affairs of schools to parents, students and staff members (Hanson 2000: 27-28).Yet, the socialists held the majority in the Congress and were able to push the reforms through. The educational changes that were planned by the laws enacted during the 1980s could only partially become real because of the opposition of conservative forces in the
implementation phase. Maravall was a key actor of the politics of education reform and at the same time, as a consequence of his academic sociological record, his view can be regarded as competent, especially in relation to the evaluation of social consequences of education reform. His accounts should be interpreted in light of this twofold significance. In a recent interview with the journal 'Escuela', the socialist minister regretted that his reforms did not explicitly consider mechanisms that would compel the education system to realize all of its principles. Some areas were left unregulated, giving the possibility to subsequent PP-colored government to infringe, according to Maravall’s view, both constitutional and normative principles. The repeated claims about the defense of excellence in education made by the conservative forces, implicitly have aimed at defending or expanding privileges in private education at the expense of the principle of cost-free education at the compulsory level, which were infringed (Escuela, 2011).

Between 1982 and 1990 experimentation regarded the reorganization and redefinition of schooling in Spain such as, secondary school, adult and vocational education (only partly accomplished), compensatory education (for Romanies, travelers and immigrants), special education (mainstreaming), infant and primary education. Experimentation aimed also at fostering innovation in technologies (multi-media), language teaching (indigenous languages), school inspection, and teaching methods and teacher training. New educational reforms – targeting innovations in school practices, school management and teachers roles – were put forward in 1984. However, the socialist government could not overwhelm the resistance of corporate forces and trade unions, and, consequently, these reform proposals were abandoned in 1988, and after 1992 the situation reverted to the 1982 stage.

The LODE (1985) was designed to regulate state subsidies to private schools and to limit the expansion of the private sector. The act also aimed at subtracting power to owners of private schools and to give it to teachers and parents. This was achieved by assigning the responsibility in managing schools to the school councils.

In 1987 the Minister of Education started a discussion of the proposal for the reform with teachers, parents and society at large. The discussion lasted a year and a half. The opinions expressed were published in four volumes. In the same year students protested in participated demonstrations against examination for the access to university. The examination was maintained but in an altered form, and Ministry of education distributed more money for education. There was a major teachers’ strike too (Marchesi, 1992). In April 1989 the Minister of Education presented the White Paper for Reform of the Educational System. The White Paper included the opinions expressed by civil society, such as a general estimate of the schools and teachers needed in each province, and a financial statement of the whole cost of the reform during the nineties. At the same time, the Minister of Education presented the proposal for the basic curriculum in Infant Education, Primary Education and Basic Secondary Education. The 1989 White Paper proposed also that on completion of their secondary education students will receive a certificate comprising a record of their achievements, and the recommended future directions that are appropriate for the student. In 1990 the new law (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo) was approved by the Socialist Party, the Nationalist Parties of Catalonia and the Basque Country, the Union of the Left and other smaller
parties – around 70% of the votes. The Conservative Party, the main opposition party, voted against (Marchesi, 1992).

As for vocational training, the Education Minister, Maravall, in his introduction to the 1988 Proyecto Para la Reforma de la Educación Técnico Profesional, noted that the implementation of work experience was difficult because most pupils in first cycle were still legally too young to work. The second cycle was regarded as rigid, regulated and academic. Vocational training, apart from problems in its own accord, had a negative impact on the rest of the educational structure, damaging the last cycle of basic education, reinforcing the academicism of bachillerato and assigning to universities excessive responsibilities in technical education (Boyd-Barret, 1995a).

The 1990 LOGSE completed the process of reform initiated in the 1980s towards a comprehensive and compulsory secondary education from 12 to 16 years (Bonal, 1995). One of the principal reasons for the opposition vote to LOGSE in Parliament from the Spanish Conservative party – Partido Popular – was precisely to do with the fact that the law did not contemplate the financing of private schools at the non-compulsory levels of provision (Orrit, 1995).

Furthermore, the changes to educational system introduced by the socialists were very difficult to overhaul. When the Christian democratic Popular Party won the 1996 election, it quickly found that the change in government did not mean that the existing educational laws it had originally opposed could be changed easily (Hanson 2000: 31). Although the Popular Party ran the election on the platform of parental freedom of educational choice and the tighter links between the Catholic Church and the public powers, the government was obligated to carry out the socialist party’s education reforms. As the party did not win the absolute majority, it was unable to change the existing laws.

3. Persistent inequalities in education?

3.1 Did reforms affect inequalities?

The decreasing school selectivity associated with later tracking and expansion in education, and the improvement in family’s employment security are major determinants of the decrease in socioeconomic gradient at least at lower educational transitions (Ballarino et al. 2009). The combination of these factors has, in fact, reduced the cost that

79 The 1990 law reintroduced the possibility of failure by establishing that only those students achieving the objectives of secondary education will be awarded the title of graduado, which qualifies them for entrance into the upper secondary phase (Boyd-Barret, 1995). During 1989–90 the Ministry published for debate its Diseños Curriculares Bases that aimed to serve as a proposal for curriculum for primary and secondary education. A key objective of document was the balance of the central regulation and individual autonomy of schools and teachers. Concern has been expressed on the possibility of its realization (Boyd-Barret, 1995).
families bear in promoting their children’s post-compulsory education and consequently has dampened the educational gap between classes (ibid).

However, there are significant regional and immigrant status differences. After a decade of rapid immigrant inflow, Spain has become in the last year one of the European countries the receive more immigrants. The share of immigrant pupils in the school population has accordingly increased in the 2000s and has reached 15%. As immigrants tend to participate less into the higher levels of education and to perform less well than native students, the issue of educational attainment of immigrant students in Spain has become cause of major concern (Zinovyeva et al., 2008).

The parental educational level of immigrant students has declined since the end of the 1990s. If one considers that the educational level of native students’ parents has increased in the last decade due to the expansion of tertiary education, then it is possible to conclude that the socioeconomic resource gap between immigrants and native is enlarging.

More than 50% of the performance gap between immigrants and native students is accounted for by the student’s socioeconomic background, and up to 20% is accounted for by the characteristics of the school attended. Among school characteristics, the average peers’ parental education is the key factor (Zinovyeva et al., 2008).

From 2000 to 2006 Spanish students have performed persistently below the average OECD country in reading, mathematics and science, and the performance in reading has even worsened over the period (Zinovyeva et al., 2008). Performance and drop-out gap between immigrants and natives opens up in the compulsory level and expands with age. The most disadvantaged ethnic groups among immigrants of those coming from non-EU countries.

Girls achieve higher educational outcomes than boys in all indicators and across all levels. Girls outperform boys in many other countries, but in Spain the gap is larger, and within Spain the gender divide is greater among Moroccan and Gypsies than among natives (Encuita, 2008; Colectivo, 2002). Gender differences among these groups may be imputed to their patriarchal cultures. Girls from patriarchal cultures see education as the only means to improve their status and thereby tend to invest more in education. Only among some more traditional Muslim and Gypsy families girls are removed from school when they enter into adolescence so that they do not share a classroom with boys (Enguita et al., 2010).

3.2 Unexpected consequences of the reform: too many are excluded, too many fall behind

The above analysis suggests unexpected consequence of the comprehensive schooling, especially among the students with low socio-economic status: the universal access had
been accompanied by repetitions of the school year and higher dropout rates that have remained dramatically high until recent years. 17% of the youth aged 14–18 were primary school dropouts in 1985 (Living and Working Conditions Survey 1985, Peraita and Pastor, 2000) and represent a prominent social problem. There is consensus around the inadequacy of primary education sector in dealing with the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups that the universal access entails. Falling behind in primary schooling is particularly worrisome because there are few chances of catching up later on. Although primary education is a level that everybody should pass, 4.2% of pupils in second grade, and 6.2% of pupils in sixth grade had to repeat a year in the academic year 2006–2007 (Enguita et al., 2010). Girls tend to repeat considerably less compared to boys as expected. By the age of 12, 16% of pupils could not complete primary school in 2007. Again girls show higher completion rates than boys. The regions with the highest early dropout rates are the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands (Enguita et al., 2010). A explanation of this differences is that youth in these autonomous regions drop out because see employment in tourism as a valid alternative to schooling. In lower secondary education, rate of repetition reaches roughly 19% in the third year. In the final year the rate decrease to 13% given that many students leave lower secondary education with only an attendance certificate but without receiving a diploma as graduates in order to avoid to repeat. The result is that 42% of students attending the final year are repeaters.

Although remedial activities were implemented for restraining repetitions, these activities turned out to be largely ineffective, and repetition was widely practiced and the percentage of children not qualified to enter Bachillerato grew. Two-thirds of the children finishing the eighth grade were unable to handle properly math topics corresponding to their age, showing that primary school was leaving slow learners behind. A program of compensatory education – centered on practical training – was developed to reduce dropouts under the age of 16. The idea underlying this strategy is that students that show lower academic achievements are not at ease with school culture and values, and practical training suits in a better way their learning needs. Although the program was set up as provisional and irregular, it was soon expanded and become a regular choice (Carabaña, 1998).

The Spanish education system ranks along the bottom positions in the European Union both in terms of enrollment rates and of dropout rates. Enrollment rates are relatively high in compulsory education up to 15 years of age, then they drop for older children (16–18). School dropouts are twice as high as the one of the average European Country. High dropout rates are reflected in a low percentage of youth having an upper secondary education certificate compared to the European average (Enguita et al., 2010). From 1992 to 2000, in only 8 years, dropout rates in lower-secondary education fall from 41% to 29%, while from 2000 dropouts begun to slowly rise, reaching 31% in 2009 (see Table 1).
Table 1: Dropout rates in secondary education, years 1910–1969, 1992–2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910–1919</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–1929</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930–1939</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–1949</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–1959</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1969</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to evidence based on ETEFIL, half of students declared that the reason of dropping out of secondary schooling is rejection of studying, while one third of students dropped out because of labor market expectations (Enguita et al., 2010). Labor market expectations seem to be particularly important for students enrolled in vocational training who decide to leave school. For students who are enrolled in vocational training, leaving school before completing secondary education for entering labor market reflects partly the greater chances that they have in finding a job from even before finishing their training. Analyzing reasons of dropping out by gender, labor market expectations are adduced more frequently by males, while rejection is more adduced by females (Enguita et al., 2010). The parental socioeconomic background is a key determinant in explaining dropout in secondary education. Children of highly educated parents, natives and from private and semi-private schools are less likely to leave school early, while transitions to labor market are more likely among children of lower educated parents. Given that dropouts rarely return to the regular education system, they will probably remain unqualified during their occupational career. Policies targeting school dropouts in Spain fail in keeping them in education system because dropouts are wages-oriented. The measure implemented by the National Institute for Qualifications aiming at certifying training in the workplace goes in the direction of providing young dropouts with a basic qualification accommodating their
employment orientation. These on-the-job qualifications should orient employers in selecting youth with specific skills. Many of the school-to-work transitions in 2001–2005 among dropouts have led youth into unemployment (Lassibille et al., 2001). Youth unemployment rates are dramatically high and have even increased following the economic crisis. The youth unemployment rate of 16–19 year olds is around 50%. In this scarcity of employment opportunities, youth equipped with poor educational qualifications, such as compulsory school leavers, are at higher risk or poor earnings and precarious occupational career. They are penalized by the general educational level of employed population too. Because of the low educational level of the employed population – with 65% employed population holding a primary level – in fact, the penalty associated with low educational credentials is high in an evolving economy that requires skilled workers. Dropouts, similarly to lower educated workers, earn less and less in a scenario in which earnings gaps between lower and higher educated has been soaring in the last decades. Given that early dropouts tend to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, leaving primary school has become a trap that perpetuates relative poverty over generations (Peraita and Pastor, 2000). The attempts to retain retrieve early dropouts are probably inadequate to the challenge they face.

The reform of secondary education in the 1980s had the negative consequence of sending one third of youth (the 30% that does not graduate from compulsory secondary education, or the 34% that does not accede to post compulsory education) into the labor market without any educational credential (Enguita et al., 2010). This happened because the requirements for entering vocational training were heightened to increase the prestige of the track. Before the reform, in fact, vocational training was seen as track of failures as it was the only educational option available for those that did not gained the certificate of basic education. In order to remove the negative label from vocational training and to increase its value, reformers decided that access to vocational training was possible only after completing successfully basic general education: from compulsory secondary education to intermediate vocational training and from bachillerato to advanced vocational training. Thus, those who failed in lower secondary education could not bring any educational qualifications to labor market. Today more students than ever are leaving the educational system without any qualifications for any jobs, despite having spent more years than ever in the education system. In addition, the fact that the access to the advanced cycles is not immediate after completing intermediate vocational training has the effect of undermining the value of the lower cycles.

According to evidence based on ETEFIL80, half of students declared that the reason of dropping out of secondary schooling is rejection of studying, while one third of students dropped out because of labor market expectations (Enguita et al., 2010). Labor market expectations seem to be particularly important for students enrolled in vocational training.

80 The Survey on the Transition from Education/Training to Labor Market Insertion (ETEFIL) was carried out in 2005 to analyze the paths of different groups exiting from the educational system during the 2000–2001 academic year.
who decide to leave school. For students who are enrolled in vocational training, leaving school before completing secondary education for entering labor market reflects partly the greater chances that they have in finding a job from even before finishing their training. Analyzing reasons of dropping out by gender, labor market expectations are adduced more frequently by males, while rejection is more adduced by females (Enguita et al., 2010). The parental socioeconomic background is a key determinant in explaining dropout in secondary education. Children of highly educated parents, natives and from private and semi-private schools are less likely to leave school early, while transitions to labor market are more likely among children of lower educated parents. Given that dropouts rarely return to the regular education system, they will probably remain unqualified during their occupational career. Policies targeting school dropouts in Spain fail in keeping them in education system because dropouts are wages-oriented. The measure implemented by the National Institute for Qualifications aiming at certifying training in the workplace goes in the direction of providing young dropouts with a basic qualification accommodating their employment orientation. These on-the-job qualifications should orient employers in selecting youth with specific skills. Many of the school-to-work transitions in 2001–2005 among dropouts have led youth into unemployment (Lassibille et al., 2001). Youth unemployment rates are dramatically high and have even increased following the economic crisis. The youth unemployment rate of 16–19 year olds are around 50%. In this scarcity of employment opportunities, youth equipped with poor educational qualifications, such as compulsory school leavers, are at higher risk or poor earnings and precarious occupational career. They are penalized by the general educational level of employed population too. Because of the low educational level of the employed population – with 65% employed population holding a primary level – in fact, the penalty associated with low educational credentials is high in an evolving economy that requires skilled workers. Dropouts, similarly to lower educated workers, earn less and less in a scenario in which earnings gaps between lower and higher educated has been soaring in the last decades. Given that early dropouts tend to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, leaving primary school has become a trap that perpetuate relative poverty over generations (Peraita and Pastor, 2000). The attempts to retain retrieve early dropouts are probably inadequate to the challenge they face.

4. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the politics of education reforms aiming at expanding the comprehensive schooling in Spain. The first period of education policy up to 1970 has been characterized by the marginal role of the state in providing education. A balanced-budgets policy and the opposition of the conservative forces to expansion and equality in education were responsible for underfunding, backwardness and the marginal role of public education compared to the private sector. The comprehensive phase of schooling finished at 10 years of age with a selective exam and pupils that intended to continue into higher education were divided into bachillerato and vocational training according to the results of the exam.

The institutional context was not favorable to equalization of educational attainment. The early age at which children had to choose between academic and vocational education, and the selectivity of the exam excluded most children from disadvantaged backgrounds from
furthering their education to the secondary level. Exclusion was exacerbated by the worsening of economic situation after the civil war (1936–1939) that drugged many lower and middle class families into economic hardship.

As the state delayed to take the responsibility to provide education for the masses, the private sector, and within it the catholic church that controlled many of the private schools, was the main responsible for educating Spanish youth. The private sector was dominated by conservative forces advocating the function of school as the cornerstone of the established order. The access to private schools at secondary level was restricted by the explicit elitist aim of selecting and training the ruling elite drawn from higher classes. School fees excluded from the higher levels of education and from good schools most of lower class pupils, who, instead, were overrepresented in state schools which were oriented to ideological control rather than to training. Curriculum was characterized by centralized control, compulsory religious education, pedagogical conservatism, rejection of modern pedagogical methods and education of girls for home life (Bonal, 2000; Carabaña, 1998; Günther, 1996). Church opposed the construction of new public schools, the enhancement of teachers’ working conditions, equality, secularism and coeducation, and stigmatized public school to be a secular evil. The coalition between conservative and liberal principles, which was one of the features of political and institutional change in Europe, was not possible in Spain. The conservative power, by means of its political representatives, opposed any liberal change in education. This opposition continued afterwards, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, and affected the policy making and implementation in education. Liberalism, which could not ally with conservativism, was forced to extend its horizons over the traditional political borders and associated with socialism (Maravall, 1995).

The 1970 LGE belonged to the technocratic and neoliberist period of late Francoism, and can be seen as an attempt of the state to solve the legitimation crisis that accompanied the industrialization and exploded in explicit protests. The transformation of Spanish economy into a modern one converted most of rural population into an urbanized and industrial working class without an urban plan and provision of services for the new working class areas. The industrialization of the country, therefore, dragged vast strata of population into poor living conditions and low levels of education. Political opposition started to be expressed openly to fight against the negative consequences of industrialization and families newly installed in cities began to demand schools for their children, and the middle class demanded better education for their offspring too. Teachers constituted the main intellectual component of the movement of opposition to the regime.

At the end of the 1960s, when the popular demand made cogent the need for educational reform, the process of reform encountered a constant internal opposition representing this hostile attitude towards mass education (O’Malley, 1995b). The need to modernize the education system was finally recognized by some of the dominant classes and their representatives in the Franco Government, the Opus Dei, and by the technocratic ministers. The proposed reform was vague and weak as a result of the isolation of reformers within the government and of the hostility they faced. After a period of attacks from the more fascist components of the government, the education act was approved. However, the act could only partly be made operative, as its opponents had succeeded in
depriving the act of the necessary financial support. Repetition of years was practiced and combined with lack of teacher preparation, shortage of materials to support the new curriculum and teaching methods, in accounting for the high rate of failure in compulsory schooling. Notwithstanding the lack of finance support, the 1970 Education Act slowly ameliorated Spanish schooling system (O’Malley, 1995b).

The transition to and consolidation of democracy in late 1970 and 1980s was characterized by radical innovations in education policy. The government declared its intention to take greatly into consideration education as a means of social transformation. The reform’s objectives were, as declared by the minister of education Maravall, free and compulsory education to an age in line with European standards; using education as a means to ameliorate social inequalities; change in pedagogical methods in order to improve the general school population’s academic achievements (Maravall, 1984). However, like in the case of the 1970 law, the process of educational change was opposed by the right wing and the catholic church. The educational changes that were planned by the laws enacted during the 1980s could only partially become real because of the opposition of conservative forces in the implementation phase. Some areas were left unregulated, giving the possibility to subsequent right-wing Popular Party government to infringe, according to Maravall’s view, both constitutional and normative principles. The repeated claims about the defense of excellence in education made by the conservative forces, implicitly aimed at defending or expanding privileges in private education at the expense of the principle of cost-free education at the compulsory level, which were infringed (Escuela, 2011). In 1982 the socialist government initiated the process of extension of comprehensive education: an experimental design was set up to prolong the comprehensive phase up to 16 for volunteering centers (30 centers in 1983/4, 200 in the next two years; Carabaña 1988). The 1990 LOGSE completed the process of reform initiated in the 1980s towards a comprehensive and compulsory secondary education from 12 to 16 years (Bonal, 1995).

The effect of the later tracking on reduction of inequalities has been ambiguous. On the one hand, the decreasing school selectivity associated with later tracking and expansion in education, and the improvement in family’s employment security are major determinants of the decrease in socioeconomic gradient at least at lower educational transitions (Ballarino et al., 2009). The combination of these factors has, in fact, reduced the cost that families bear in promoting their children’s post-compulsory education and consequently has dampened the educational gap between classes (Ballarino et al., 2009).

The lack of information on more recent cohorts makes difficult to draw conclusions regarding educational transformations in the 1980s. The growing share of immigrant pupils is a recent demographic transformation that might increase inequality, as immigrants tend to participate less into the higher levels of education and to perform less well than native students (Zinovyeva et al., 2008). The immigrant status is an important determinant of dropout, as children of natives and of highly educated parents are less likely to leave school early. Furthermore, there is a regional difference in dropout rates, which tend to be the highest in touristic regions, where employment in tourism is a valid alternative to schooling.
References


Chapter 7: How do Pro-equality Educational Reforms Happen: A Comparative Perspective

Miroslav Beblavý and Marcela Veselkova

Every education system faces the issue of how long children in school should be treated in a uniform way and at what age the system should begin to differentiate between them. The uniform and differentiated treatment takes place principally through curriculum as well as actual grouping of students.

The area where countries differ most on this issue is the lower secondary education. With regard to pre-primary and primary education, there is a large degree of consensus that children should be dealt in a uniform manner. At the upper secondary level, there are countries such as Sweden and the United States, which have also largely unified upper secondary education, but they are exception rather than rule and internal school differentiation effectively breaks down uniformity. At the upper secondary level, the uniformity is also complicated by the need to prepare some students for further tertiary studies and others for labor market entry, leading to the dichotomy between general and vocational education. The lower secondary education tends to be general for all students regardless of the level of differentiation.

As this volume demonstrates, there are many ways in which an education system can deal with the issue. The differentiation can be explicit – as in Germany where children are divided into different types of schools with different curricula after Grade 4; or implicit – as in the United States, where all children ostensibly attend the same types of school until the end of upper secondary education, but residential segregation together with internal school tracking can achieve the same result. It can have same forms in the public and private education systems or have very different forms and implications.

The way an education system is set up in this regard reflects several factors, ranging from history and path dependency to distribution of power. However, it also reflects an ideational contest between two views of the role of the education system. One of them is based on the view that, in principle, every child has similar potential (mediated, of course, by family and school) and that, given properly high expectations and meaningful support, that potential can be reached. In other words, this view tends to believe in homogeneity of student potential and outcomes. The other view thinks that individuals differ in their capabilities and that the role of the education system is to properly assess everyone’s potential and then educate them respecting these limits. This view thus tends to believe in heterogeneity and “natural” stratification of student potential and outcomes.

1. Where do ideas about educational equality come from?

By the dawn of the twentieth century, new child-centered approaches to schooling began to dominate educational discourse. This new, progressivist, way of thinking about the nature of the child, classroom methods and the purposes of the school originated in the works of Comenius, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi or Friedrich Froebel and promoted active learning and adaptation of the traditional curricula to the changing needs of industrial society (Reese
However, the progressive education movement was not a single entity but a cluster of overlapping and competing tendencies (Labaree 2005: 279, Tyack 1974, Church and Sedlak 1976). In the U.S. context, two competing approaches to progressivism stood against each other. On the one hand, the pedagogical progressives emphasized the learning needs and experiences of students and championed the contributions of John Dewey. On the other hand, the pedagogical progressives, clustered around the psychologist Edward L. Thorndike, focused on re-organization of the curriculum in a way, which would enable to match differences in individual abilities with occupational roles required by a complex industrial society. Despite these differences, the two strands of progressivism shared a common dissatisfaction with the traditional academic curriculum and favored comprehensive over the separate high school (Labaree 2005: 283, Simmons 1960: 108). The ongoing debate culminated in the 1918 publication of the *Cardinal Principles of the Secondary Education* that pushed comprehensive high school on the formal agenda and argued that secondary education should no longer meet the “needs of only a few groups” (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education 1918). In fact, “social mingling of pupils through the organization and administration of the school” was viewed as means of unifying the diverse American population. The principles and practices outlined in this work were endorsed and elaborated upon by most of the major proposals for secondary education in the United States (Wraga 2001: 494). However, the influence of the progressivist movement was not limited to the United States and quickly spread to the rest of the world.

Direct influence of the progressivist movement and the U.S. organization of the secondary education was documented in three out of five case studies. In Germany, the progressive ideas were advocated by the pedagogical movement Reformpaedagogik (Roehrs 1998). Although the first notions about Reformpaedagogik were found in the 19th century, it was at the beginning of the 20th century when the movement gained momentum and became a vocal opponent of authoritative methods of education (Thum 2012: 21). The movement was thus in stark contrast with the Herbartism, which favors a more classical and rigid style of education. One of the most known reform educationalist was Peter Petersen, who advocated community education in a „general Volksschule“. Although this Volksschule was doubtless inspired by the American school system and Dewey’s philosophy of education, Petersen believed that the American experience should be adapted to the German specificities and made truly “Germanic” in character (Max Planck Institute 1983: 57). Numerous experimental schools were set up before 1919. However, the growing influence of reform educationalist was put to halt by the rise of National Socialists to power.

In Czechoslovakia the debate on the comprehensive schooling intensified upon the creation of independent republic in 1918. A unified school was viewed as a means to transform multi-ethnic population of the new state into a compact Czechoslovak nation (Veselkova). These motivations are very similar to the motivations of the U.S. Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, which was concerned about the social integration of non-English speaking immigrants. However, educational researchers emphasized also other goals. The most vocal proponent of the unified school in interwar Czechoslovakia was Václav Příhoda, who was concerned about access to education regardless of the social background. Similarly to Petersen, he suggested to adapt the U.S. internally differentiated high school model to the local context. To honor the famous Czech educator Comenius, whose works inspired the progressivist movement, he named the lower secondary school “komenium”. Although Příhoda tested some of his proposals in experimental schools, the nationwide reform during the interwar period was
limited to unification of curricula at the secondary level, mostly as a result of strong opposition of teachers in academic tracks and intellectual elite.

The U.S. high school model influenced also Swedish social democrats, such as Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal, whose visit in the United States inspired their book Kontakt med Amerika (Contact with America) (Peterson 2012). Alva Myrdal was intrigued by the fact that the market-oriented American society had advanced more towards an equal education system than Sweden (Lindesjö and Lundgren 2006: 46). The School Commission established in 1946 to elaborate a plan for the future school system was therefore more prone to learn from the U.S. high school rather than from German Einheitsschule (Peterson 2012: 11).

The inspiration by the U.S. organization of schooling in these three countries suggests that there is international circulation of pedagogical knowledge and models. However, it does not support the neo-institutionalist hypothesis of the worldwide convergence of patterns of educational organization. Quite the contrary, not only was importation of foreign models accompanied by adaptation to the local context, but with a single exception of Sweden none of the countries managed to translate ideas about more equal schooling into concrete policies despite several decades of research dissemination, rise of reformists to decision-making positions or experience with experimental schools. The difficulties of simple transplantation of foreign models into national educational systems are documented also by attempts of occupying forces to democratize the German education system with equality of educational opportunity (Thum 2012). However, as soon as Germany gained independence and the pressure for introduction of a six-year primary school subdued, the reform was abandoned. As we shall discuss below, this failure can be attributed mostly to the high resistance in the streets and the subsequent non-decision of the governments.

In contrast to the progressivist models of the comprehensive school, the spread of the Soviet model of the unified school was simplified by the spread of communism after the World War II and concentration of power in the hands of a few top leaders of the communist party. In Czechoslovakia, the impulse for the importation of the Soviet model existed prior to the 1948 coup d’état. The benefits of the unified school were – in the words of the minister of education - linked to the evaporation of “meaningless segregation of youth” (Mertlík 1947: 13). The tracking was effectively postponed to the age of 15 shortly after the communist takeover. However, concerns for social inequality were not the sole motivation for the later tracking. The education was viewed as a tool to “prepare children and young people to live and work in a developed socialist society and to prepare them for the defense of the socialist homeland” (Švecová 2000: 127). Comprehensive educational system as a means of ideological indoctrination was used also by the communist regime in the East Germany (Thum 2012: 13).

Further wave of calls for increased equality of educational opportunity came in the 1960s with the rise of the civil rights movements that arose in the Western world (Fullan 2000: 7, Zajda 2005: 2). In Germany, the student protest movement 68er called for anti-authoritative education (Neill 1998) and demanded equality of opportunity in gaining university entrance (Thomas 2003: 55). However, the calls for equality during this period were based also on other considerations. The shift towards “human capital” understanding of education (Becker 1962, 1964) shaped views that investment in education of young people was a prerequisite of economic growth. The British Labour party therefore argued that international comparisons
could not be ignored, especially when comprehensive schools are championed by economic super-powers like the United States (Toubeau 2012: 7). Widening access to education and improving equality was therefore framed as a means of resource mobilization (ibid).

Most recently, it was the PISA Programme of the OECD, which has shown an unprecedented impact on the national educational discourses (Grek 2009). In Germany, the PISA shock influenced educational discourse and led to a wide-ranging reform agenda, shifted curriculum development process towards principles such as outcome control, competence orientation or external assessment, and strengthened the role of empirical research in academic discourse (Ertl 2006). Similarly, in the Czech Republic, results of the first PISA testing (OECD 2000) debunked the myth that Czech students were above-average and reinforced the belief that educational policy should address the problem of early tracking (Kotásek 2009; Holub 2007, 2010). The strategic document White Paper published shortly afterwards therefore called for introduction of mechanisms in order that the education system does not further reproduce existing inequalities (Ministry 2001: 18). These developments were mirrored also in Slovakia, where both the right-leaning and the left-leaning Ministers of Education endorsed recommendations of OECD to reduce early stratification in the educational system (MS 2002: 13, Ministry of Education 2007). In response, the centre-left government of Robert Fico decided to limit the number of seats at elite multi-year gymnasia to the 5% of the corresponding age cohort (Ministry of Education 2007, Slovenská televízia 20.9.2008). However, this policy was reversed by the subsequent centre-right government of Iveta Radičová. In contrast, media in the UK paid little attention to the significant gap between the performance of pupils from well-off and deprived backgrounds that was documented by the 2000 and 2003 PISA surveys (Sotiria 2008: 30). Rather, good average performance was emphasized. As a result, no concrete initiatives were undertaken in the UK in response to PISA results (ibid: 31).

Similarly to the progressivist calls for the comprehensive education, the impact of OECD’s PISA Programme on actual policies has been ambiguous. The international comparisons generated much interest among the politicians and media and a number of comparative and single-country studies. Yet, although the underperformance of students in international tests shifted the political consensus in favor of later tracking, the adoption and implementation of such a policy was usually vetoed in the street. In the next section we discuss the social balance of forces and how the problem of later tracking was framed in the public discourse.

2. What is later tracking?

Reform aimed at later tracking is a threat to existing power balance. Therefore, we may expect a fierce resistance from those who face the loss of power or status, namely parents with high socio-economic status and teachers in elite academic tracks. These actors attempted to re-define the comprehensivization of schooling from equity-enhancing to quality-threatening in all cases, with a single exception of Sweden. In interwar Czechoslovakia, the critiques of the proposal to delay tracking argued that the gap in qualifications of teachers in academic tracks and civic schools would reduce the quality of the secondary schooling (Příhoda 1931: 15-16). After the World War II, quality of education was the mantra of the reform opponents. It was argued that the quality of education at the unified school would be even lower than in the civic schools (Mertlík 1947). Although the quality of the highly stratified pre-war educational system was contested, it was viewed as an ideal type of schooling in the post-communist period. Initially,
the Ministry distanced itself from the “equalizing policy” of the communist unified school and called for a segregated education of gifted children (Veselкова 2012: 7). Although official attitudes towards later tracking gradually shifted in response to PISA results (ibid: 10), the position of the public remained constant. Proposals to increase equality of educational opportunity by elimination of academic multi-year gymnasia, which students enter at the age of 10, were dubbed worse than the communist unified school reform of 1948 (Peličán undated). The re-definition of the later tracking as homogenizing, restrictive to elementary liberties and unable to meet the special educational needs of gifted children made it difficult for the policymakers to search for the broader support of the proposal. Indeed, the fathers of the proposal believed that the proposal failed because it was politicized (Online interview with Zeman at blisty.cz 2 September 2001; idnes.cz 13 September 2000; Kotásek 2009). In Slovakia, attempts to limit enrolment to eight-year gymnasia were criticized as “typically socialist” (SME 10.04.2001) and compared to “socialist planned economy” (Humajová 2008). Rights of parents to freely choose the school were emphasized. Gymnasia teachers criticized the Ministry of Education for giving in to the pressure of international organizations (SME 27.5.2008). However, the existence of multi-year gymnasia was criticized by heads of primary schools, who blamed underperformance of primary students in PISA screening on exodus of the best students to gymnasia (SME 27.5.2008).

In Germany, the close proximity to the Soviet occupied zone and the Cold War added to an atmosphere of seeking for security, tradition and “Western values” (Thum 2012: 18). Reform ideas were therefore often seen as “socialist” or “communist” (Robinson and Kuhlmann 1967: 325). Furthermore, the general opposition to the reform may be attributed to in-built conservativism of educationists and society in general (Horn 2007: 21). An important factor for the persistence of the tripartite system can be attributed to the strong position of the traditional Gymnasium, which can be traced back to Humbold’s “humanistic gymnasium” (Ertl and Philipps 2000). This gives support to the hypothesis that convergence towards the international model of education will be problematic in countries with strong national academic traditions (Ramirez 2006).

In Spain, the freedom of education was emphasized especially by the Catholic Church (see Sanchéz de Horcajo 1995: 194-6). When the socialist party came into power, it embarked on profound educational reform as a channel for social change. The minister of education argued that the ideological lines upon which the reform was based were already drawn up in the Extraordinary Congress of the socialist party in 1931: nationalization of education, lay or religiously neutral schools, defense of the single school (unified school system) and the need for a single body of teachers (ibid: 195). Such a reorganization of the schooling system would enable to eliminate social inequality and raise the quality of provision. The Catholic Church, fearful of losing its power in education, advocated its interpretation of the freedom of education, both with respect to the right to set up and to manage private schools and the right to their own ideological identity (ibid: 196).

In the United Kingdom, the failure of the 1944 Act in promoting equality of opportunity was viewed as ‘wastage of talent’ (Ministry of Education 1954; 1959). As already noted above, the Labour Party attempted to link the problem of equality of educational opportunity to the efficiency of the economy. However, despite the fragile partisan consensus on the benefits of later tracking of the 1970s, the elimination of selection was not received well by the public. The grammar school teachers and parents mounted an opposition campaign ‘Save our Schools’ and

In contrast to all above cases, the Swedish education reform was not met with much opposition. Peterson (2012) points out to the remarkable feature of the post-war Swedish education reform, namely the high degree of political and public opinion consensus. The reform was advocated also by the labor movement, which viewed comprehensive school as a means to address inequalities between social classes and between rural and urban areas. After more than a decade in power, the Social Democrats had established strong links to administrative and intellectual elites whose support helped to promote the reform. The 1946 School Committee smartly decided to side-step anti-comprehensive schooling Conservatives when selecting research advisers (Peterson 2012). The primary school teachers were traditionally in favor of comprehensive schooling, as it would help them achieve parity of prestige with the university-trained secondary school teachers. Secondary school teachers were well aware of the possible loss of status and power. The implementation of the proposals by the parliament to refashion elementary school into a comprehensive pattern caused 11 thousand teachers to protest (Rusak 1977: 215). When they protested against the narrowing of the wage scale differential between elementary and secondary teachers in 1966, they lost much public sympathy and the Social Democratic government used its “equalization ideology” to advantage against the teachers in the election campaign of 1970 (ibid). Furthermore, the secondary school teachers were not concerned only about the loss of wealth and status but honestly believed that early tracking was advantageous to both the bright and slow-learning schoolmates. Whereas the former were able to develop to their full capacity, the latter were not discouraged by lagging behind (Husén 1986: 156). Once the research findings from the comprehensive school pilot programs demonstrated benefits of the comprehensive schooling, the secondary teachers shifted attention to the revision of the upper secondary cycle (Heidenheimer 1974: 393, 395). In contrast to other countries, there was no considerable resistance among upper-class families. Peterson attributes it to the experience with 6-year compulsory folkskolan introduced in 1842 as a nation-forming instrument after the loss of Finland (Larsson 2011).

Why did upper-class parents and elite track teachers manage to re-define the issue of later tracking to their advantage in some countries and not in others? The case studies suggest that freedom of educational choice was more anxiously guarded in countries, which had a direct experience with the freedom-oppressing regimes. The Czech case study also suggests that putting the issue of later tracking on the formal agenda prior to seeking broader support will lead to the politicization of the issue and intense contestation of its meaning, as opposing political parties try to gather political points by siding with the reform opponents. Such a strategy is likely to backfire especially in countries with small governments or shaky political coalitions. Furthermore, the case studies of the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom and Germany document that in face of political and electoral pressure, governments are likely to retort to the safest strategy, the non-decision. In case the broad consensus for increased equality in the society is lacking, it may be wiser for the decision-makers to re-define the comprehensivization of the schooling in terms of the language used by the reform opponents. For example, the British Labour Party framed comprehensive schools as efficiency-enhancing.
3. Reforms at ordinary times?

Many comprehensive education reforms remind of textbook examples of institutional change in response to external shock. The most prominent example is a de-construction of the unified school in Czechoslovakia and re-introduction of highly stratified schooling system within months from the Velvet Revolution. The collapse of the Francoist regime and the need of state reconstruction can be seen as an enabling factor for the constitutional consensus on educational reform. Similarly, the rise of communist parties to power in the Eastern Europe enabled introduction of unified schools. In all cases, the educational reform – either towards more comprehensive or more selective schooling – was viewed both as an instrument of the regime legitimation and as an instrument of the mass spread of the new regime’s ideology.

Economic crisis is another textbook example of the change trigger. Oil crisis and the subsequent victory of monetarism opened the window of opportunity in the United Kingdom, Spain and Sweden. However, the effect on educational sectors of these countries was dramatically different. In the United Kingdom, the decline in prosperity and the emphasis on the competitive market conditions in the public sector led to the shift of the partisan consensus to the right and culminated in the 1988 Education Act, which brought competition into the schooling system and this way undermined the comprehensive school (Toubeau 2012). In contrast, the shift from demand-side Keynesian policies in favor of a mix of demand and supply-side policies in Spain did not jeopardize the comprehensive schooling model. Instead, the Socialist majority government elected in 1982 continued increased spending in education, as it was viewed complementary to the neoliberal policies of privatization and reduction of private sector, all with a single goal of country modernization (Pensiero 2012).

The free market ideas began to change Swedish educational discourse a decade later. International reform discourse introduced concepts of “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy” into the Swedish education discourse (Waldow 2008: 251-252). The principles of efficiency, competition and individual choice seemed appealing in the face of the economic crisis, which reached its peak in 1992-1994 and resulted in a radical increase in unemployment. Coupled with aging populations, urbanization and a wave of refugees seeking asylum, it led to a change in social divisions and opened space for deregulation and marketization of the Swedish educational system (Peterson 2012). In case of the United Kingdom and Sweden, it is thus safe to talk about the ideational change as a predecessor of institutional change.

Nevertheless, the evidence in favor of neo-institutionalist thesis of change in response to external shocks is ambiguous. The reforms aimed at later tracking were adopted and implemented also at ordinary times. Apart from the specific Swedish reform, which utilized the broad societal consensus and introduced the comprehensive schooling as a part of the broader social democratic package, reforms were successfully introduced also in other countries. There were a number of reforms that introduced smaller equality-enhancing policies, such as unification of curricula for the first two years of secondary tracks in 1930 Czechoslovakia, introduction of the broad National Curriculum for all pupils age 5-16 in 1988 Great Britain or minor changes to German federal education systems.
The case studies document three cases of comprehensive school reform in ordinary times – United Kingdom, Czech Republic and Sweden. The introduction of the comprehensive schooling in United Kingdom was done by interpretation of Section 8 of the 1944 Education Act as giving LEAs discretion to re-arrange schools (Toubeau 2012: 6). The Labour Party thus by-passed the complicated process of agenda-setting and consensus-building. Instead the Minister of Education distributed a procedural decree, in which the government’s declared its intention to “end selection at eleven plus and eliminate separatism in secondary education” (DES 1965). At that time, there were about 200 comprehensive schools, primarily in Labour-controlled LEAs. Within five years, this number rose to one thousand. Yet, two thirds of students still remained within the tripartite system. Despite that the movement gained momentum and LEAs continued to submit their plans of re-organization even after the return of the Conservatives to the office. Decentralization worked in favor of comprehensive schooling also in case of the Czech Republic. Decentralization, which began in 2000, empowered local governments to establish and govern primary and secondary schools. Facing the population decline and student preference of general over vocational tracks, the governors in industrial regions announced reduction of seats available in academic tracks. However, decentralization can work also the other way round: the resistance to nation-wide reform limited introduction of equity-enhancing policies in Germany to few of the federal states (Thum 2012).

There are two lessons to be learnt here. First, there seems to be a hierarchy of tracking policies based on their difficulty of implementation. Although this may seem obvious, we believe that it is important to note that it is easier to introduce unified curricula or permeability of tracks than to reorganize schooling system into comprehensive, single-track schools. It may therefore make more sense to begin with policies that arouse the least opposition. Although the mobility across tracks is low and biased towards transfer from academic to non-academic tracks in Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the elimination of educational dead-ends may help to increase equality of educational opportunities.

Second, in case of lack of political support for the nation-wide reform, it may make sense to start where possible. The case of Great Britain suggests that there is a potential for the reform to spread from solitary nucleeuses to a large number of regional units. However, one should note that this process may be limited not only by the existence of bastions of opposition but also by other factors, predominantly existence of escape routes from the comprehensive schools.

4. Escape routes from the comprehensive system

The primary escape route from the comprehensive system is directed to the private or independent sector. When the Labour Party abolished 154 direct grant grammar schools in the mid-1970s, two thirds of them promptly became private (Toubeau 2012: 9). As both grammar and private schools had a charter to promote (or sponsor) their students’ attainment of high adult positions (Kerckhoff 1986: 842), the comprehensive reform in the public grammar schools did not truly dismantle the selection process. Rather, the selection was transferred to the private (and church) schools: “the top level students are "creamed" (to use a British term) by the grammar and private schools” (Kerckhoff 1986: 848). The social segregation was further enhanced by the Education Reform Act of 1988, which sought to raise educational standards through the creation of a quasi-market based upon greater parental choice and the transfer of control over resources from local education authorities to schools. As Bradley and Taylor
(2002) suggest, the existence of quasi-markets led to a greater social segregation of pupils between schools during the 1990s. In the meantime, the private-state divide has not grown smaller. Although only 7% of British children go to private schools, they account for more than 40% of intake at Oxford and Cambridge (Economist 2 July 2009). However, one should bear in mind that private schools account for a fifth of the people taking A-levels, which enable students to enroll to a university (ibid). Furthermore, the segregation seems to be driven by the socio-economic status. For example, the enrollment in the private sector in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, an affluent part of London, is more than 50% (Economist 22 June 2011). The private sector consistently outperforms the state schools in PISA tests. Whereas only about half of English pupils achieve a decent path, more than nine in ten pupils achieve it in a private sector (Economist 24 June 2011). Alternative schools to public schools tend to be located in big cities and used by well-educated and otherwise resourceful parents also in Sweden (Peterson 2012). Furthermore, the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia suggests that private and church providers of schooling are more than eager to meet the unmet demand for certain types of education. Once the education reform does not extend beyond the state sector, the elimination of selection is extremely difficult to accomplish.

However, it is not ownership per se that enables the survival of selection. The degree of autonomy and the freedom of choice seem to matter more than ownership. In 2009, 25.9% of Spanish upper secondary students were enrolled in private academic tracks and 17.9% were enrolled in private technical/vocational tracks (Unesco). Significant part of this private education is provided by the Catholic Church. However, the fact that majority of these schools are subsidized, enabled the state to increase its control over the private educational sector. The LODE Act (1985) erected effective controls to compel grant-aided private schools to adapt to the same requirements as the state schools (Pensiero 2012). This included extension of compulsory education to the age of 16, eliminating early selection and enhancing social integration.

Free school choice may undermine efforts to increase equality of educational opportunities as well if “schools and children are free to seek each other out: with some caveats, this leads to perfect segregation by child quality” (Robertson and Symons 2003). In England, sorting by ability and by income is greater, where there is more choice to attend other than the residential school (Burgess et al. 2004). In Sweden the school choice not only raised differences between schools and school areas in ability but also in social and immigrant status (Söderström and Uusitalo 2005). The social segregation may be sought by both upper- and lower-class parents. In Slovakia, objections of many non-Romani parents to their children attending school or classes with Romani children sometimes result in “white-flight”. At the same time, Romani parents enroll their children in special schools because they believe that it is better for their children to obtain worse education in a friendlier environment. The social segregation of students with low socio-economic status is reinforced also by the normative financing (subsidy per head), which motivates school directors to introduce separate classes for Romani children to “save the school” (Tomatová 2004: 7).

Finally, the Spanish case shows that the comprehensive system may undermine educational chance of students. Although the establishment of a basic curriculum for all students up to the age of sixteen was meant to be the guarantee of greater equality of opportunities, it might have triggered the frustration among those students who are neither sufficiently competent nor motivated to cope with it (Marchesi 1992: 597). Furthermore, the dropout rates tend to be the
highest among low-status groups of population. The dropout gap between immigrants and natives opens up in the compulsory level and expands with age and is the highest in holiday resorts, where employment in tourism is a valid alternative to schooling (Pensiero 2012: 18).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

There is a growing body of empirical studies, which suggest that the sooner the students are tracked, the more their family background will have an impact on their student performance (Woessmann 2009). These findings have led OECD to advocate less selective organization of schooling, which would enhance equality of educational opportunities (OECD 2004, 2007, 2010). However, the comprehensive school reforms in the post-World War II period suggest that efforts to postpone the age of tracking and reduce the rigidity of student selection often fail (for example, see Ambler 1987; Apple 2004; Farrell 2000, Meier and Schutz 2007; Merritt and Coombs 1977, Weiler 1988). In this paper we therefore examined why countries adopt or do not adopt reforms that postpone tracking of students into different school types, hierarchically structured by performance. To this end, we relied on a comparative case study of five European countries with varying degrees of success in introduction of less selective educational systems in the period following the World War II.

Ideas about less selective schooling entered educational discourse in European countries in four waves. In the first wave, the ideas of U.S. progressivists about organization of schooling that would not meet "needs of only a few groups" (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education 1918) influenced researchers in interwar Germany, Czechoslovakia and the post-World-War II Sweden. The spread of communism after the World War II and the concentration of power in the hands of a few top leaders of the communist party enabled importation of the Soviet unified school model to the Eastern Bloc countries. The third wave of calls for increased equality of educational opportunity dominated the Western educational discourse in the 1960s. On the one hand, it was inspired by the rise of the civil rights movements (Fullan 2000: 7, Zajda 2005: 2); on the other hand, it drew inspiration from the "human capital" understanding of education (Becker 1962, 1964). Most recently, the public and policy interest in less selective schooling was sparked by introduction of international and longitudinal data sets such as the PISA survey from the OECD and the subsequent empirical studies, which highlight the detrimental effect of early tracking on the equality of educational opportunity. However, our case studies document that the circulation of pedagogical knowledge did not automatically translate into national reforms of educational systems. Contrary to the neo-institutional thesis of worldwide convergence of schooling organization, the foreign models of schooling were either adapted to the local context or faced a strong resistance in the streets.

We observed a rather stable political and social balance of forces (see Tables 1 and 2). In all cases we document a fierce resistance from those who faced the loss of power or status, i.e. teachers in elite academic tracks and parents with high socio-economic status. There has been a widespread belief that early selection of students based on their abilities is beneficial for both the bright and the slow-learning students: academic tracks serve the special needs of gifted pupils, who can develop to their full potential and are not hampered by their slow-learning classmates; at the same time, the slow-learning pupils are not demotivated by daily comparisons with their bright classmates and can advance at an appropriate rate of learning. Both teachers in elite academic schools and parents of high socio-economic status attempted to reframe the issue...
of later tracking as threatening the quality of schooling, homogenizing and harmful to the development of gifted children. In the post-communist countries and the United Kingdom, the less selective schooling was described also as restrictive to elementary liberties and "socialist." This opposition was stable both across countries and over time.

In contrast, teachers at primary and non-academic secondary schools were less vocal - and on average less successful - in their support of more comprehensive schooling. Strong support for comprehensive schooling was present in the post-World War II Sweden, where support for comprehensive citizenship training had been traditional in the Swedish Folk Teachers Association since its founding in the 1880s (Peterson 2012: 13). In Spain, a progressive movement for educational reform known as Alternativa operated as a part of a more general resistance to the Franco Regime in the 1960s and the 1970s (O'Malley 1995). In the post-communist Czech Republic and Slovakia, primary school teachers complained that the departure of students to newly introduced academic tracks decreased the quality students and their motivation. The attitude of teachers towards later tracking in other countries was more ambiguous. Not surprisingly, there was very little mobilization on the side of parents from lowest socio-economic status, whose children could benefit the most from the later tracking. Their interests were therefore advocated by researchers, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and national governments.

Table 1: Social and political balance of forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors/Country</th>
<th>Czechoslovakia</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The left</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>In favor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right</td>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school teachers</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>Ambiguous, prone to be against</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in academic secondary tracks</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Ambiguous, prone to be against</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with high socio-economic status</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>Against</td>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with low socio-economic status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not mobilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational experts</td>
<td>Ambiguous, gradually shifting in favor of later tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organizations</td>
<td>In favor of equality of educational opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors.

Note: Czechoslovakia refers to Czechoslovakia and its successors. Germany refers to West Germany and its successors.
Table 2: Shifting positions towards later tracking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The right-wing parties in the post-communist Czech Republic gradually embraced the notion that later tracking could help to tackle underachievement of Czech students in international comparisons of educational performance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By 1962, the Conservative party accepted the notion that all children should have equal educational opportunities, mostly in response to the growing concerns of middle-class parents, i.e. the party’s electorate, about the principle of selection, which might see their children being displaced from grammar schools by bright working-class pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The position of British teacher unions was ambiguous at best, with the exception of secondary school teachers who vociferously defended the grammar schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The position of the German teachers unions was ambiguous in the reforms of the 1960s. The proposals for a reform were watered down by the more conservative forces within the Union, which were interested in the preservation of the Gymnasium. Today, associations of primary schools of Gesamtschulen advocate more comprehensive schooling. However, the criticisms of the existing schooling system are contested.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors

In general, left-leaning parties tended to be in favor of less selective schooling, whereas right-leaning parties tended to be in favor of more selective schooling. However, there were few notable exceptions. First, the British Conservative party was hostile to the creation of comprehensive schools in the first half of the 1950s. However, its positions shifted with the growing disquiet of middle-class parents - the party’s electoral base - about the principle of selection, which might see their children being displaced from grammar schools by bright working-class pupils (Toubeau 2012). The creation of comprehensive schools thus became electorally rewarding. Second, as a result of PISA shock, the right-leaning politicians in the Czech Republic and Slovakia gradually embraced the idea that later tracking could help to tackle underachievement of students in international comparisons. In some Czech industrial regions, abolishment of elite academic tracks was viewed as beneficial for the needs of local producers.

The stability of political and social balance of forces suggests the following question: under what conditions does the balance of forces play out in favor of less/more selective schooling? We document that extraordinary events, such as economic crises or regime changes, often open the window of opportunity for a reform. The regime changes, such as the communist takeover in Eastern Germany or Czechoslovakia enabled swift importation of the Soviet schooling model. In contrast, the collapse of the communist regime led to the deconstruction or even destruction of the communist unified school, which was viewed as a symbol of the socialist egalitarianism. To establish the legitimacy of the new regime, governments sought to re-introduce pre-communist, highly stratified educational systems. On a similar note, oil crisis in the United Kingdom or the economic crisis in the 1990s Sweden were followed by the decline in prosperity. The search for solutions to the crisis led to introduction of more competition into the public schooling system in both countries. Although these episodes support the neo-institutionalist thesis of change as a result of external shocks, the reforms were more or less successfully implemented also in ordinary times, e.g. the comprehensive school reforms in Sweden, the United Kingdom or the most recent attempts in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
How were the decision-makers able to overcome the resistance and the vetoing of the reform in the streets? The answer lies in the successful re-framing of the issue of later tracking and coalition engineering. As Engeli and Häusermann (2009) argue, each policy is multidimensional, i.e. it serves multiple purposes and goals. In case of strong resistance to the re-organization of the schooling, governments try to emphasize the least divisive function of the new educational policy. Decision-makers therefore link the equality of opportunity to the efficiency of economy or economic growth. For example, in the 1960s, the British Labour Party successfully framed comprehensive schooling as a means for the mobilization of the country's resources and the pathway to wealth creation (Toubeau 2012: 7). The Swedish Social Democrats in the 1960s used a different strategy and successfully delegitimized the opposition of secondary school teachers after they protested against the narrowing of the wage gap between the salaries of elementary and secondary teachers. If the introduction of unified schools is not politically feasible, decision-makers often opt for a politically feasible alternative, such as unification of curricula across tracks, higher mobility across tracks or elimination of dead-end educational pathways, as was the case in Germany.

Success of the comprehensive school reform is often undermined by the existence of routes of escape from comprehensive schools. Dual educational systems provide plenty of opportunities to transfer the selection to the private or church schools. Where there is more school choice, parents with high socio-economic status transfer their children to high quality schools. This was documented in case of the United Kingdom, Sweden or Slovakia, where parents transfer their children to schools with less immigrants or Roma. Where there is less school choice, segregation is often the by-product of residential segregation.

Our final comment is related to the overall shift in the selectiveness of schooling systems. Since the World War II, there has been a general shift towards more comprehensive schooling: schooling systems today are less selective than they used to be 70 years ago. Yet, our case studies document that this shift is not irreversible and there has been plenty of reversals and re-introductions of stratifying elements, often under the label of greater efficiency or pro-growth policies.

References


Kotásek, Jiří (2009) „Bílá kniha po pěti letech.“


Pensiero, Nicola (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study of Spain.”

Peterson, Elin (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study Sweden.”


Toubeau, Simon (2012) “Policy case studies on reforms seeking to lower SEG: Case Study of United Kingdom.”


Thum, Anna-Elisabeth (2012) “Educational tracking in Germany: six decades of hesitant and disaggregated reform?”


