

# **EQUITY IN EDUCATION THEMATIC REVIEW**

**COUNTRY ANALYTICAL REPORT**

**FLANDERS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The revision of 1993 confirmed the new federal structure of the Belgian State. Today, besides the municipalities and the provinces, there are three levels of decision-making with their respective structures of legislative and executive power: the central State, the Communities, and the Regions. Three cultural Communities -the Flemish, the French-language and the German-language -and three economic Regions - Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels -have been recognized. The legislature of Flanders is the Flemish Parliament, which is the parliament of the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region.

Flanders is an extremely densely populated region, and the urbanized zones in Flanders clearly predominate. The Flemish Region had a foreign population of 4.6% in 2002. About a fourth of the foreign population is Dutch, more or less 15% is Moroccan, 13% is Turkish and about 9% is Italian. The migrants (Moroccan and Turkish people) and the intergenerational poor people can be perceived as the groups at most risk in Flanders.

Up until the 1 January 1989, State education was organized in the same way in all three Communities. Education policy was in first instance a Belgian (national) affair. Since 1 January 1989, all responsibilities in relation to the education system were turned over to the three Communities: the Flemish, the French-language and the German-language. Very important is the new text of Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution. The Belgian Constitution guarantees the principle of freedom of education. This principle consists of two pillars: free choice of school and educational freedom, namely the right to establish schools autonomously. The free choice of schools implies that every child has the opportunity to go to school within a reasonable distance. The principle of equality is also explicitly stated in Article 24. All students, parents, staff members and educational institutions are equal for the law or the decree. As regard to the political context about equity in education, following three federal measures can be mentioned: free access to compulsory education, the principle of child allowance and tax reduction.

Flemish education consists of pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Beside these levels, there is also child care and adult education. With a view to secure the right to education to all children, education is compulsory. It starts on 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6 and finishes when the student reaches the age of 18. Pre-school is accessible to children from 2,5 years old; mainstream primary education is aimed at children from the ages 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive forms. Secondary education is aimed at pupils from the age of 12 to 18. In accordance with the Decree of 31 July 1990 the 'unified structure' for secondary education is composed of three stages of two years each. From the second stage, there are four different types of education: general secondary education (ASO), vocational secondary education (BSO), technical secondary education (TSO) and secondary education in the art (KSO). Characteristic for the Flemish education and contrary to many other European countries is the non-existence of publicly central organised examinations at the end of secondary education. Tertiary education is organised according to a binary system: colleges of higher education and universities. In the light of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declaration, this structure will be modified towards a 3 years (bachelor) + 1 year (master) or a 3 years (bachelor) + 2 year (master) structure. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration leads towards a strongly blurring of the binary structure between colleges of higher education and universities. Adult education is organised in different types of education among which social advancement education, second chance education, supervised individual study and adult basic education.

Characteristic for the Flemish educational structure is the fact that besides the mainstream education, a separate structure exists for children who need special education. This education is provided in full-time special schools on the level of pre-school, primary and secondary education. Pupils can attend these schools from the age of 3 year until the age of 21. Two particular evolutions in Flemish special

education are noticed: enrolment in special education has increased over the years, and there exists a clear over representation of deprived children, foreign children and males. Traditionally in Flanders, a distinction is made between three educational networks: community education subsidised publicly run schools and subsidised privately run schools.

According to the Flemish government there are two main obstacles to inequity. In the first place there is the cascade system that leads towards inequity in education. Secondly there is the under evaluation of technical and vocational secondary education. The Education Department of the Ministry of Flemish Community describes the cascade system in such a way: At the beginning of secondary education, students first attempt the 'harder' programs (general secondary education), which later seems to be too difficult for the student. Then they shift to the 'easier' programs in the technical and further on in the vocational secondary education. In general, the cascade system is presented as starting in the general secondary education leading towards technical education, and finally ending up in the vocational secondary education. A certain hierarchy between the different study options is assumed. The cascade structure implies that a particular educational type is more worth than another one. It is built on the misperception that technical training and occupation are inferior and on a distinction in appreciation between manual and intellectual work.

As concerning to the intergenerational transmission of inequality, four longitudinal researches were conducted to investigate the educational participation of children from different social backgrounds over the years. All these researches indicate the same tendency: the educational expansion has not entailed greater equality of educational opportunity among socio-economic strata. One can conclude that the democratization of education in the majority of the rich industrialized countries stagnates. Flanders forms no exception in this. This indicates that the policy that was implemented over the years, aimed at reducing the socio-cultural barriers, has failed to a large extent in the Flemish Community. The educational inequality reflects a progressing social selection in Flemish education. At different moments of the educational career, the attained position seems to influence the further educational possibilities and choices. One of the four longitudinal researches investigated the relation between socio-economic background and the life chances of a person. As a general result of this research, the conclusion is that as well as the effect of the education of the respondent as the effect of the occupational prestige of the father on the occupational prestige of the first job of the respondent has changed over three different periods. More specific, the effect of the educational level of the respondent on his/her first occupational prestige has increased. There is no longer a direct influence from social background on the first occupational prestige of the respondent. This doesn't mean that social background has no longer an influence on the life chances of a person (as indicated for example in the prestige of the first job). It means that this influence passes through education. The influence of the occupation of the father on the occupation of the respondent is totally mediated by the educational level of the respondent. Again the research indicates that education reproduces to an important extent, the social background of the persons. This intergenerational transmission of inequity existed in the past and still exists today. Moreover, there seems to be an effect of socio-economical background on educational achievements even after controlling for intelligence.

Concerning the causes of inequity, the motivational, institutional, social-cultural and economic barriers are discussed. Regarding the motivational barriers, differences are reported between boys and girls. These differences are manifested in school repeating and retardation, and the transition towards special education, boys being at a disadvantage for each of these. Research indicates that it is mainly the behaviours and the school culture that explain the differential performances. Macho behaviours and a negative school culture in which macho behaviours are dominant and in which there is little participated in school life, seems to be unprofitable for the study result of the students. Boys more often display a macho behaviour and end up more in schools with a negative school climate. As for the institutional barriers, some critical remarks can be formulated about the unified structure in secondary education. Although the unified structure aims at delaying the definite study choice, a distinction is already made in the first year of

secondary education between A-and B-stream. Besides the differentiation between the A-and B-stream in the first stage, schools make an additional differentiation based on the free hours that are at their disposition. Furthermore, there exists a differentiation in four types of education in second stage, and transitions are difficult to make after the first stage especially against the cascade structure (ASO – TSO BSO). According to data which compares the educational level of parents with the type of education of their children, there is a distinctive difference between students from ASO, TSO, and BSO with regard to their social background. Disproportional more students whose parents enjoyed tertiary education attend ASO (41,3%) compared to 5,6% whose parents enjoyed only primary education. Opposite, there is an over representation of students in BSO whose parents enjoyed at most primary education (32.2%), compared to children of higher educated parents (11,2%). Within TSO most children originate from parents who studied the same course (35,7%). Furthermore, the bridging function of the B-stream towards the A-stream is only realized by a limited group of students. Transitions in the higher years of secondary education are seldom noticed. A final remark is that, equal to the socio-economic differences, there exists an unequal participation of students with foreign nationality according to the different types of education. Most of them finish secondary education in BSO, they seldom end up in ASO. Research supports the hypothesis that chances in education are determined by social and ethnic background. Educational deprivation for foreign and social deprived children already starts in pre-school manifested by their under representation. This trend goes on in primary education and increases during secondary education. Also participation in tertiary education is strongly social-economic determined. Differentiation in education is not a unique fact in Flanders but appears in other European educational systems as well. Placed on a continuum with on the one extreme Germany (strong differentiation) and on the other extreme the Scandinavian countries (weak differentiation), Flanders can be situated between them, tending more towards Germany.

Looking at the social-cultural barriers, only from secondary education there exist the scholarships from the Flemish Community for children who come out of financial difficult families. In tertiary education, more financial measures are available among which scholarships of the Flemish Community, system of social services, living wages from the OCMW, and educational cheques. Finally, as for the allocation of financial resources across the different educational levels, one can conclude that the financial resources in primary education are low compared to secondary education that receives the largest budget. This can be seen as a critique on our educational system since this situation contributes to inequity. One must not forget that the foundations of learning are laid in primary education. Another remark concerns the financing of social advancement education. Although the government promotes life long learning, it is obvious that this sector receives very limited financial resources.

In chapter five, two mainstream policies bearing on equity are discussed. The new integrated equal opportunities policy (GOK) has been implemented since the school year 2002 -2003. It aims to offer equal development and education opportunities to all children, to prevent exclusion, segregation and discrimination, and to promote social cohesion. The decree on equal opportunities in compulsory education (6 till 18) is based on three principles: the right to enrol in the school of one's choice, the local consultative bodies and the integrated support for schools. The second mainstream measure discusses the role of the Pupil Guidance Center (CLB). The guidance of the pupils by the centers is situated in the following areas: learning and studying, the educational career, preventive health care, and psychological and social functioning. The target group of the CLBs consists of the pupils, parents, teachers and schools of the ordinary and special pre-school, primary and secondary education. Also the role of CLB in the transfer towards special education and the problems that are associated with this are discussed. The CLBs came officially into effect on 1 September 2000. The transformation of the existing "PMS" centers and the Centers for Health Supervision in Schools into integrated Pupil Guidance Centers is spread out over the period up to 2003. As for the specific measures, three (or four: ev. Programmes to support potential school drop-out) initiatives are described. The first one deals with integrated education (GON). Integrated Education institutes a new step toward the integration of special education into ordinary education. Children with a handicap and/or learning difficulties may attend class in ordinary schools on a permanent

or intermittent and a partial or complete basis. Additional teaching periods and/or additional hours and/or additional resources are provided to realize this integration. Integrated education is provided in basic, secondary education and tertiary education. It requires cooperation between ordinary and special education to enable certain children or adolescents who normally have to go to special schools, to participate in ordinary education. Another specific initiative concerns second chance education (TKO). The main objective of TKO is very specific: enabling adults to obtain -without attending secondary schools and courses for youngsters -the certificate of the second stage of secondary education, as well as the diploma of secondary education according to a learning program that has exactly the same civil value to compulsory fully daytime education. Its secondary aims consist of guiding the students towards a satisfactory integration in society, professionally (by increasing their chances on the labour market), as well as socially (by removing their feeling of inferiority) as educationally (by preparing students to transfer towards continuation courses and studies). Only adults (at least 18 years old) who haven't obtained a diploma of secondary education can enrol in second chance education. A final specific initiative is the reception class for foreign newcomers in primary and secondary education. Reception education is aimed at foreign newcomers to stimulate their linguistic skills in Dutch and to support their social integration. This type of education wants to prepare the foreign newcomers in their transition towards general education for the next school year following on the reception period. To obtain additional teaching periods the school has to have enough foreign newcomers who have to meet five conditions.

In the second last chapter, four non-educational policies that affect outcomes in the educational sector are described. First 'Child and Family' is discussed. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, there exists a division in responsibility for education on the one hand (where most children enrol when they are 2,5 or 3 years old) and care (where children below 3 years old form the main target group) on the other. Care is primarily meant for children and their working parents. All childcare arrangements must be reported to 'Child and Family'. Child and Family is a Flemish governmental public agency under the supervision of the Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Health and equal Chances. It supervises the great majority of childcare arrangements and subsidises a significant number of them. Child and Family has the responsibility for planning for childcare -including out-of-school care for children aged 2,5 to 12 years -but it does not directly provide childcare. Secondly, the integration policy for immigrants is described. The objective of the integration policy for immigrants is to help newcomers to participate as a full member in our society. The Flemish government wants to stimulate their ability to cope by implementing a proper integration program. The aim is to stimulate their integration in our society in a quick and durable manner. The policy is meant for people who come to Flanders with the aim of settling down legally for a longer period. Three conditions must be fulfilled: they have to be adults, they are foreign speakers, and they show disadvantaged characteristics which could lead to permanent deprivation. The program itself consists of a primary trajectory and a secondary trajectory of learning, with a transfer phase to support the transition between both courses. A third policy is the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) that provides a platform for job seekers and employers, under the Ministry of Employment. Its most important mission is to exercise an impact on the labour market in keeping with the economic situation and society. It offers an extensive and effective package of services: employment, temporary manpower, training & education, recruitment and selection, career counselling and outplacement. The VDAB needs to find a way to reconcile economic and social goals. Economically, job vacancies need to be filled quickly and correctly. Socially, the VDAB wants to guarantee a smooth integration of job-seekers in the labour market and help anyone who has difficulties finding a job. Finally, a description is given of socio-cultural work which comprises several sectors under the Ministry of Culture. In the text focus is on one sector, namely the socio-cultural adult work that comprises non-formal adult education (situated out of the schools system) as well as informal adult education (activities that are not explicitly oriented towards education, although people learn as well). Since April 4, 2003 the Flemish government adopted a new decree on socio-cultural adult work which regulates the structure, recognition and subsidies of three new work forms for the sector of socio-cultural adult work: associations, educational institutions and movements.

## **SECTION I: CONTEXT**

### **CHAPTER 1: COUNTRY'S CONTEXT AND CURRENT EQUITY SITUATION**

#### **1.1 Economic, social, and cultural background of the Flemish Community**

1. In 1831, the Constituent Assembly created a unitary state. This unitary and centralized state continued for 140 years (1831 to 1970). In order to meet the ever increasing pressure from the public expressed in society, the Constitution has been amended five times since 1970, in 1970-1971, 1980, 1988, 1993, and 2001. The revision of 1993 confirmed the new federal structure of the Belgian State. The former bilingual province of “Brabant” was split into two provinces: Dutch-speaking and French-speaking. “Brussels”, the national capital and also the geographical centre of the former province of “Brabant”, no longer belongs to a province. Its special status as a bilingual Region was reinforced. The last amendment of 2001 is known as the “Lambermont Agreement”. This agreement gives the Regions in Belgium more authority as well as financial resources. For the first time now, the Regions have real fiscal autonomy and are empowered with full authority over twelve regional taxes such as the radio and television license tax, the traffic tax, and the registration and succession taxes. In addition the authority over agriculture, foreign trade, and development cooperation have been transferred to the Regions. Moreover, by the law on municipalities and provinces, the Regions have acquired control over the subordinate governments in their territory.

2. Five stages of the constitutional revision gradually established a federal system, with the central state – the national power – retaining full authority for certain matters (e.g., finance, national defence, and justice) and varying degrees of authority for other matters (e.g., foreign trade, education). The 3rd stage (1988-89) affected education directly with the transfer of education to the control of the Communities, which had been in a transitional stage since 1981 (Art. 127 par. 1, 2) as well as the guarantees provided in an earlier stage by the so-called School Pact Law of 29 May, 1959 (Art. 24). Art. 142 of the amended Constitution gives the right to refer to the Arbitration Court to all citizens who contend that a violation has taken place of the principles and guarantees laid down in Article 24 on education of the Constitution and who have been harmed. The contribution of the fifth constitutional revision to education is mainly the increase of the financial resources for education.

3. Today, besides the municipalities and the provinces, there are three levels of decision-making with their respective structures of legislative and executive power: the central State, the Communities, and the Regions. Three cultural Communities – the Flemish, the French-language and the German-language – and three economic Regions – Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels – have been recognized. The Communities as such do not have any territory but have authority over their respective language area. The Communities are responsible for cultural, linguistic, and “person-related” matters (including education and training). The Regions are responsible for economic, energy, and scientific policy, public works and transport, town and country planning, the environment and control over the municipalities and provinces.

4. The legislature of Flanders is the Flemish Parliament, which is the parliament of the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region. The Flemish Parliament has the three classic functions of a parliament: legislation, formation of governments, and supervision. The Flemish Parliament exercises its

legislative powers by means of decrees, which have the same legal force as a law of the national Parliament. The executive power rests with the Flemish Government (Eurydice, 2003).

5. Flanders is an extremely densely populated region, and the number of inhabitants has doubled over the past 100 years. In 2002, the population count was 5,972,781 or 57.93% of the total Belgian population. The density has in 2002 reached 442 inhabitants per square kilometre. The urbanized zones in Flanders clearly predominate, the densest concentration being in the centre, within the polygon formed by Antwerp, Louvain, Brussels, and Ghent (NIS in Eurydice, 2003). The Flemish Region had a foreign population of 4.6% in 2002 (about 9.5% in the Walloon Region and about 27% in the Brussels Region). About a fourth of the foreign population is Dutch, more or less 15% is Moroccan, 13% is Turkish and about 9% is Italian. The migrants (Moroccan and Turkish people) and the intergenerational poor people can be perceived as the groups at most risk in Flanders. In recent years Flanders, in common with the rest of Europe, has been confronted with the problem of the increased aging of its population. In 2002, 22.3% of the population was older than 65 years of age, and a bit more had not reached the age of 20 years old (22.6%) (Eurydice, 2003).

6. A growing and better performing economy is one of the policy effects the Flemish government wants to reach. The Gross Regional Product (GRP) is an indicator of this trend. The Flemish GRP has grown strongly during the last years. Only in 1998-1999 there was a slight weakening of economy. In 2001, the Flemish GRP has increased with 4 percent. This GRP accounted for 57.0 percent of the Belgian GNP. The backbone of the Flemish economy is the great number of small and medium-sized firms (KMO's), which often operate in the industrial sector and provide at least 40% of the employment in that sector. Only about 1.3% of the Flemish GRP is provided by agriculture. In 1999, the active working population was 2,476,124. The activity rate of the population from 15 until 64 years of age in 2001 was 63.4% (72.1% for men and 54.5% for women).

## **1.2 Distribution of competence between federal state and Communities**

7. Up until the 1 January 1989, State education was organized in the same way in all three Communities. Education policy was in first instance a Belgian (national) affair. The Minister of Education was the organizing body and made most of the decisions for State education. In the past, the definition of the overall curriculum and the development of the concrete content of subjects for basic and secondary education were centralized by means of a formal governmental approval of all the initiatives from the organizing bodies. 'Centralization' was institutionalized when, in 1958 and 1959, the School Pact and the School Pact Law came into force. Since 1 January 1989, all responsibilities in relation to the education system were turned over to the three Communities: the Flemish, the French-language and the German-language. Concerning the 19 municipalities of the Brussels capital region, the Flemish and the French-language community are responsible for education in their own schools. Parents and students can choose to which educational system they want to turn to.

8. De-regulation and autonomy are characteristic for this policy. The authority concerning a whole set of measures in community as well as in subsidized education is given to the organizing bodies, school boards and school groups. The federal policy level is almost non-existing with the exception of three measures:

- 1) fixing the beginning and end of the compulsory education period;
- 2) establishing the minimum conditions for granting diplomas; and
- 3) maintaining the pension system (Heyvaert & Janssens, 2004).

9. Very important is the new text of Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution. The Belgian Constitution guarantees the principle of freedom of education. This principle consists of two pillars: free choice of school and educational freedom, namely the right to establish schools autonomously. The free choice of schools implies that every child has the opportunity to go to school within a reasonable distance. For primary education the reasonable distance is set at four kilometres (Verstegen, 2003). The concept of educational freedom regulates to a very large extent the relations between, and the responsibilities of, the various partners in educational administration (the Department of Education, the organising bodies, the public and private schools). The principle of equality is also explicitly stated in Article 24. All students, parents, staff members and educational institutions are equal for the law or the decree. The law and the decree take into consideration the objective differences among which the characteristics of each organising body (Belgian Constitution). The notion of organising body is, together with pedagogical freedom, another fundamental notion for the organisation of education in Belgium. By organising body is meant the following (Article 2, Par. 3 of the Law of 29 May 1959): The organising body of an educational establishment shall be the authority, that is to say the individual or collective person or persons who accept(s) full responsibility with respect to that establishment (Eurydice, 2003). In many cases the educational networks, as the representative association of the organising bodies, take over some of the responsibilities of the organising bodies. This means that the organising bodies concerned surrender some of their autonomy to the networks. Traditionally, a distinction is made between three educational networks.

10. Community education (GO) is education organized under the authority of the Flemish Community by the public body that is called Flemish Community Education. The constitution provides that community education must be neutral. This means that the religious, philosophical or ideological convictions of parents or pupils must be respected.

11. Subsidized publicly run schools (OGO) comprise municipal education organised by the municipalities, and provincial education organized by the provincial administrations.

12. Subsidized privately run schools (VGO) deliver education organized by a private person or private organization on private initiative. Three categories can be distinguished: Denominational schools, in which Catholic schools are by far the most numerous, although some schools are run by Protestant and Jewish religious authorities. There are also non-denominational schools, including schools based on rationalist/humanist principles. Finally, there are the independent schools applying specific theories and adopting particular educational methods, such as the Freinet, Steiner and Montessori schools (although some of them belong to the Community network as well). In Flanders, most pupils attend the privately run schools (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2001).

13. Thus, the authority of education has become the affairs of the Communities. The Flemish Council (by decree), the Flemish government (executive) and the Flemish Minister of Education decide about the educational affairs in Flanders. The Department of Education is one of the seven Departments of the Ministry of the Flemish Community (Heyvaert & Janssens, 2004). The general framework of educational administration in Flanders, besides the Flemish Parliament and the Minister of Education (and his cabinet of advisor's), consists of three major levels: the Education department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community, the networks, and the local schools. This is somewhat different than what is common in other countries with a hierarchical structure with 'national', 'regional', and 'local' powers. As far as the educational networks are concerned, two of them have a public character: community education and subsidised publicly run schools, and the third one is what is called the non-state (or private) sector. The Education department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community itself works under the authority of a Secretary General. The "Education department" itself is organised into five directorates: the "Logistics and Support Administration", "Elementary Education Administration", "Secondary Education

14. Administration”, “Higher Education and Scientific Research Administration”, and the “Continuing Education Administration” (Eurydice, 2003).

15. As regard to the political context about equity in education, following three federal measures (besides Article 24 that is described earlier) can be mentioned: First there is the fact that **access to compulsory education is free**. Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution explicitly states that *“Education is free; any preventative measure is forbidden; the repression of offences is only governed by law or decree. The community offers free choice to parents. The community organizes neutral education. Neutrality implies notably the respect of the philosophical, ideological or religious conceptions of parents and pupils. The schools organized by the public authorities offer, until the end of obligatory scholarship, the choice between the teaching of one of the recognized religions and non-denominational moral teaching. § 2. If a community, in its capacity as an organizing authority, wishes to delegate competency to one or several autonomous bodies, it can only do so by decree adopted by a two-third majority vote. § 3. Everyone has the right to education with the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms. Access to education is free until the end of obligatory scholarship. All pupils of school age have the right to moral or religious education at the community’s expense.”*

16. Besides free education there also exists the principle of **child allowance**. Child allowance is an important contribution for the parental educational and maintenance cost. It is allowed until the age of 25 and only if the child is regular enrolled within full-time education or attends courses for at least 13 hours a week. Furthermore, the child isn’t allowed to work more than 80 hours a month during the academic year. If the student works more, the family loses the child allowance for that month. The amount the parents earn doesn’t matter. The amount that is paid depends on the number of the children that are fiscally dependent and their age. The total sum is the addition of the child allowance<sup>1</sup> and the age allowance. For children from invalid persons, unemployed persons or pensioners, larger child allowances are granted. Also for orphans and disabled students, the child allowance is significant higher (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

17. A third measure concerns the **tax reduction**. Parents have tax reduction for children who are fiscally dependent. Students remain fiscally dependent as long as they are domiciled at the parental house and their net subsistence is beneath 2490 Euro. In single-parent families, this amount increases to 3590 Euro. If the student earns more, their parents will lose the tax reduction, dependent on the number of fiscally dependent children and the family situation<sup>2</sup>. The student has to start paying taxes from the moment he/she has a gross taxable year income of 7050 Euro (or net taxable income of 5660 Euro) (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

### 1.3 Main structural features of the educational system

18. Flemish education consists of pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Beside these levels, there is also child care and adult education. With a view to secure the right to education to all children, education is compulsory. It starts on 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6 and finishes when the student reaches the age of 18. Compulsory education is full-time up to the age of 15 or 16 years. It consists of primary education and at least the first two years of full-time secondary education. Full-time compulsory attendance never extends beyond the age of 16 (Verhoeven & Elchardus,

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<sup>1</sup> The child allowance for the first child is 74.06 €, for the second child 137.03 €, for the third child and following 204.60 € (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Tax reduction for married and single parents if the number of fiscally dependent children decreases from 1 to 0 is 300 € for married parents and 655.50 € for single parents. If the number of fiscally dependent children decreases from 2 to 1 the tax reduction is 562.50 € for married parents and 573.00 € for single parents (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

2000). Before entering pre-school, children below three years old can attend *child care*. Responsibilities concerning child care belong to 'Child and Family', which is an organisation under the supervision of the Flemish Ministry of Welfare. The care is mainly meant for children and their working parents (OECD, 2000). As opposed to pre-school, developmental objectives are not formulated for children at that age.

19. *Pre-school* is accessible to children from 2.5 years old. Although it is not compulsory, almost all children attend pre-school in Flanders. In most cases, classes are grouped according to age category: children from 2.5/3 years old to 4 years old, children from 4 to 5 years old, and children from 5 to 6 years old. Pre-school deals with every aspect of the children's education and encourages the spontaneous growth of these young children until they are mature enough to go to primary school. Developmental objectives have been formulated for mainstream pre-school. These are skills that a school must aim to achieve, but does not necessarily have to be achieved.

20. Pre-school education and *primary education* are closely connected: attempts are made to create an easy transition from one to the other. Mainstream primary education is aimed at children from the ages 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive forms. For primary education attainment targets are formulated for five learning fields: physical education, expressive arts, language, environmental studies, and mathematics. These attainment targets have to be reached by the pupils at the end of the primary school. Attainment targets are also formulated for two themes going beyond these learning fields: learning how to learn and social skills. At the end of primary education, pupils who have achieved the targets of the curriculum receive a certificate of primary education (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2001). At the primary level, education at home can be organised for children of school age for whom it is temporarily impossible to follow education at their school caused by illness or an accident. This only applies to children who are absent during a period of at least 21 days. The school board of the school where the child is enrolled is obliged to organise temporarily education on demand of the parents. This doesn't count for children of type 5 (see further) who attend education in a hospital. Children, for whom it is permanently impossible to follow primary education because of a handicap, have the right on education at home permanently (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning primary education of 25 February 1997).

21. *Secondary education* is aimed at pupils from the age of 12 to 18. In accordance with the Decree of 31 July 1990 the 'unified structure' for secondary education is composed of three stages of two years each. The first stage has a common curriculum for all pupils. This core curriculum is offered for those who have obtained the certificate of basic education. Already in the first year a distinction is made between year A (aimed at transition towards general, technical or art secondary education) and year B (preparation towards vocational training or bridging function for year A). From the second stage, there are four different types of education:

- 1) **General secondary education (ASO):** The emphasis is on a broad general education, which particularly provides a firm foundation for going into higher education. Within general secondary education, different study areas are organised: for example, Latin-mathematics, modern languages, economy, human sciences;
- 2) **Vocational secondary education (BSO):** In this form, pupils acquire specific skills and simultaneously receive general education. Access to higher education is possible but rare. Specific for vocational secondary education is the existence of a seventh year in addition to the three stages each consisting of two years. Also a fourth stage in vocational secondary education is organised;
- 3) **Technical secondary education (TSO):** Emphasis is particularly on general and technical theoretical subjects. After TSO, pupils can carry out a profession or go into higher education. This education also includes practical lessons. The branches of study of the Technical

Secondary Education and the Vocational Secondary Education are divided into 26 study areas. The number of branches of study is reduced by regrouping those branches of study that overlap in one study area. These study areas are: automobiles, construction, chemistry, decorative techniques, photography, glass techniques, graphic techniques, commerce, wood, jewellery, clothing, refrigeration and heating, agriculture and horticulture, leather working, maritime education, mechanics/electricity, musical-instrument construction, optics, orthopaedic techniques, personal care, cane ware and basketwork, footwear, tooth techniques, textiles, tourism and nutrition; and

- 4) **Secondary education in the art (KSO):** General and broad development is linked with active practice. KSO prepares the youngsters for professional life or higher education. The branches of study of the Art Secondary Education are divided into three study areas: plastic arts, theatrical arts and ballet (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2001).

22. Theoretically, transitions from one form of education to another are authorised throughout secondary education with the approval of the admissions council and if the transfer conditions between the courses of study are respected. In the third stage, the specific education can be further narrowed down with a view to the ultimate choice of profession or possible educational tracks in higher education. In the third stage the transitions are more restricted: in order to obtain the final diploma, pupils have to attend the first two years of the third stage of secondary education in the same section. A pupil gains the certificate of secondary education after successfully completing 6 years of ASO, KSO, or TSO or 7 years of BSO. With this certificate, pupils have access to higher education (except for some disciplines in tertiary education where an entrance examination is required). Characteristic for the Flemish education and contrary to many other European countries is the non-existence of publicly central organised examinations at the end of secondary education. In many other European countries this is required for admission into higher education (Van Damme, Van de Gaer, Van den Broeck, Opendakker, Brusselmans-Dehairs, & Valcke, 2002).

23. From the age of 15 or 16, pupils can decide to continue full-time secondary education or to continue in part-time vocational secondary education. Part-time Vocational Secondary Education (DBSO) has been established especially for pupils who have problems in compulsory education. A formula is offered where pupils work part-time and go to school part-time with adapted curriculum and methods (Eurydice, 2003). One can also meet secondary compulsory education by offering distance learning.

24. *Tertiary education* is organised according to two sorts of institutions: colleges of higher education and universities. Higher education provided by the colleges of higher education is accorded a wide autonomy and accountability (for example, each college receives an 'envelope', a sum of money with which they can work). Because of a merger operation some years ago, there are now 22 colleges of higher education. The courses that the colleges offer are all organised within a framework of eleven disciplinary fields. All students who obtained the diploma of secondary education have free access to higher education.

25. Colleges can organise basic courses, advanced courses and post-graduate continuing courses. Basic courses offer 1-cycle studies (three years of study) and 2-cycle studies (at least 2x2 or 4 years of study). The basic courses of 1 cycle are focused on the acquisition of professional skills supported by scientific knowledge. The two cycle courses have an academic character and are based on scientific knowledge.

26. Advanced courses follow on from the basic courses and are intended to complement or broaden the knowledge gained during a basic course or to deepen it by specialising in a selected study area. A diploma of higher education is required. Post-graduate continuing training consists of in-service training and continuing education courses organised at the colleges.

27. In Flanders there are 6 universities which main tasks are academic education, scientific research, and scientific service provision. All students who obtained the diploma of secondary education have free access to higher education. 'Numerus clausus' requirements are non-existent. However, the intake of students to the programmes of medicine and dentistry in Flanders occurs through an entrance examination that is centrally organised. The universities provide basic academic programmes (organised in 18 disciplines), advanced academic programmes (supplementary and specialised study programmes), academic teacher training, medical training, doctoral programmes and post-graduate continuing education.

28. The basic academic programmes are divided into two cycles. The first cycle concludes with a candidate's degree and lasts 2 or 3 years. The second cycle takes 2, 3 or 4 years ending with a licentiate's degree. In the light of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declaration, this structure will be modified towards a 3 years (bachelor) + 1 year (master) or a 3 years (bachelor) + 2 year (master) structure. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration leads towards a strongly blurring of the separate structure between colleges of higher education and universities.

29. Advanced academic courses consists of complementary courses, designed to broaden the knowledge gained from a basic academic course and following on from such a course; and of specialist courses, oriented towards specialisation in a given area of study and following on from an academic course. The academic teacher training is organised for future teachers of upper secondary education. A doctoral programme is focused on the preparation of a doctoral thesis (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

30. *Adult education* is organised in different types of education. Because of the large number, only a few will be discussed here. Social advancement education (OSP) is organised at the level of secondary education (33 areas of study) and at the level of one cycle higher education (8 categories). Participants must have received full-time compulsory education in the past, and comply with specific entrance conditions depending on the course they have chosen. Three groups can be distinguished: students who want to obtain a higher degree than their current one (=vertical promotion); students aiming at a complementary degree of the same level as their basic diploma (=horizontal promotion); and students who want to participate for their personnel development or social emancipation. For OSP a modular structure is put into practice, which is compatible with the modular structure in full-time secondary education. Also combined learning is on the programme which is a combination of contact education and distance learning. Second chance education (TKO) is organised within the decree of Social advancement education from March 1999. The courses of TKO enable people to obtain, without attending normal secondary schools and courses, the certificate of the second stage of secondary education, as well as the diploma of secondary education. To be admitted, participants must have reached age 18 and a knowledge base at the primary education level is a prerequisite (Eurydice, 2003). Information about TKO will be described in more detail in chapter 5.

31. Supervised individual study (BIS) makes it possible to study as an individual at his own pace. There are no admission requirements for distance education. Enrolment is permitted at all times. It is mainly intended for adults who need to make up deficiencies in their education or are obliged to retrain, or for those preparing for examinations before Examination Board of the Flemish Community, leading to a lower secondary or higher secondary education diploma. The organised courses are very divergent (modern mathematics, prevention and protection at work...). Since the Decree of 2 March 1999, the Law of 5 March 1965 has been nullified and BIS is partly integrated in part-time adult education. After all, in addition to face-to-face education, combined education is now possible, which means that part of the education can be organised through distance education.

32. Since the Decree of 12 July 1990 twenty-nine centres 'Adult basic education' were established in Flanders. It is aimed at adults with a low level of education. The adult basic education centres try to provide a broad and varied range of educational tracks that are linked up in a balanced way. The centres

organise following training programmes: basic language and arithmetic skills, social skills, citizenship, and preparation for another course or work. This type of education is adapted as much as possible to the individual situation of the participants.

### **1.3.1 Educational networks**

33. As already mentioned, traditionally a distinction is made between three educational networks: community education, subsidised publicly run schools and subsidised privately run schools.

34. The organising body of community education are the 'Central Councils' and the 'Local School Councils' (LORGO) of the Independent Council for Community Education (RAGO). The Central Council of the community education receives and manages the financial resources required to provide education. It determines the pedagogical framework and the content of the subjects and concerns itself with staff recruitment for community schools, the management of the annual appropriations for buildings and infrastructure in the official schools, and overall educational planning. Local School Councils are entitled to conduct local material and financial management and educational policy under the supervision of the Central Council.

35. Municipal education and provincial education have separate organising bodies, namely the local council and provincial councils. They are allowed full autonomy in conducting their local policy. The coordinating bodies of the subsidised publicly run schools are the Educational Secretariat for Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG) and the Group for Flemish Provincial Education (CVPO).

36. The organising body of each of the subsidised privately run schools enjoys complete autonomy in applying policies to the school or schools that come under its responsibility. Private schools have or one natural person, a number natural persons, or artificial persons in private law as organising body. As stated earlier, the large majority of the subsidised privately run schools are Catholic schools. Catholic education has been unified in the Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO), a coordinating body founded to represent Catholic education in the national and Community debates. This additional central organisation for Catholic education is not, however, entitled to act in place of the various organising bodies. The VSKO does, nevertheless, exert a great deal of influence over the policies of the organising bodies (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

37. Currently a debate is going on about the unequal financing or subsidising per student by the private and public schools. Within the political context, a discussion concerning this equity issue takes place.

### **1.3.2 Two track approach: regular and special schools**

38. Characteristic for the Flemish educational structure is the fact that besides the mainstream education, a separate structure exists for children who need special education. This education is provided in full-time special schools on the level of pre-school, primary and secondary education. Pupils can attend these schools from the age of 3 year until the age of 21. A detailed description of the structure of special schools will be presented in paragraph four of this section.

39. In this paragraph, the educational structure of special education will be discussed first. Afterwards a few trends in special education in Flanders will be described. The law of 6 July 1970 specifies that special education caters for children and adolescents from the age of 3 to the age of 21 who are capable of receiving education but for whom the mainstream school is not able to provide a suitable education offer (Eurydice, 2003). In general, countries can be grouped into three categories according to their policy on including pupils with special educational needs. The first category (one-track approach) includes countries that develop a policy geared towards the inclusion of almost all pupils within

mainstream education. The countries belonging to the second category (multi-track approach) have a multiplicity of approaches to inclusion, and they offer a variety of services between the two systems. In the last category (two-track approach), there are two distinct education systems. Pupils with a handicap are usually placed in special schools (Meijer, Soriano, & Watkins, 2003). Special education in Flanders belongs clearly to the two-track approach.

40. Children with a handicap may be enrolled in special *pre-school* education at 3 years of age (in practice children of 2.5 years old are allowed). They may continue at that level until the age of 6 or exceptionally until the age of 7 or 8 if they are deriving any benefit from their attendance. Special pre-school education is not available for children of types 1 and 8 (a description of the different types is given later on in this paragraph). Enrolment in an establishment of the special education system in pre-school requires a report that specifies the type of education. The report for enrolment in a special school consists of two parts: a certificate with information concerning the type of education and an explanatory protocol with the results of the multidisciplinary examination that justifies the issuance of the certificate. For types 1, 2, 3 and 4, and 8 it is conducted by the Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB) that is entrusted with this task by the authorities. For types 5, 6, and 7, a specialist doctor approved by the Ministry for Public Health carries out the medical examination. A certificate is issued to the parents that allow them to enrol the child in a school of their choice that offers the specific type of special education required (Eurydice, 2003).

41. Entry to special *primary education* (BLO) is normally at the age of 6. The pupil normally leaves at the age of 13, occasionally at the age of 14 or 15. At the primary level, eight types of special education have been defined in order to meet as much as possible the general and individual educational needs of children and adolescents in special education. These types of special education are described as follows: (1) Type 1 applies to pupils with a slight mental disability; (2) Type 2 applies to pupils with a moderate and/or severe mental disability; (3) Type 3 applies pupils with severe emotional and/or behavioural problems; (4) Type 4 applies to pupils with physical disabilities; (5) Type 5 applies to sick (hospitalised) pupils; (6) Type 6 applies to visually impaired pupils; (7) Type 7 applies to pupils with a hearing impairment and (8) Type 8 applies to pupils with severe learning difficulties.

42. Equal to the enrolment of pre-school, a report is required to enter special primary education. Pupils in special primary education can in certain cases obtain a certificate of primary education if they reach the same attainment targets of the mainstream schools. If so, the certificate is equivalent to a certificate gained in mainstream primary education. However, some pupils will never be able to reach the attainment target. Therefore the government formulated developmental objectives that a school must aim to achieve, but they do not necessarily have to be achieved. In general, pupils do not follow a common programme, in stead they have their 'individual' programme ('action plan') that is adapted to their specific needs and capacities (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

43. After finishing special primary education pupils enter special *secondary education* (BuSO). Studies at secondary level may be continued up to the age of 21. It rarely happens that the years in BuSO coincide with the years in mainstream secondary education. The eight types of education that exists in primary education are the same as those in secondary education, except that type 8 is not organised at the level of secondary education. In special secondary education, four types of education are organised in accordance with the type of disability and the capacities of the student (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2001). Form of education 1 (OV1) applies to pupils for whom social adaptation alone and self-reliant living is not possible. This type of training normally results in attendance at a day centre or an occupational therapy centre. It consists of one single phase of a minimum of four years of study and is attended by children with a certificate of the types 2, 3, 4, 6, or 7. Form of education 2 (OV2) is intended for children who, apart from a certain social adaptation, may receive training to prepare them for a working life in a protected environment. It consists of two phases, each comprising a minimum of two study years. Children with a certificate of the types 2, 3, 4, 6, or 7 attend it. Form of education 3

(OV3) is intended for pupils who are able to attend vocational training to prepare for a job in a normal working environment. Their training consists of activities focused on learning general knowledge and acquiring social and vocational skills. It consists of an observation phase of one year and a training phase of four years. Children with a certificate of the types 1, 3, 4, 6, or 7 attend it. The ultimate objective of this form is to educate adolescents with special needs for self-reliant living and integration in a normal labour environment. Since 1 September 1998 schools that organise OV3 can organise an additional training of one school year. It is aimed to improve the chances of employment of pupils of special secondary education. Form of education 4 (OV4) is intended for pupils whose intellectual capacities are sufficient to enable them to attend ordinary educational programmes provided the teaching methods and facilities are adapted to their particular disability. It is open to pupils with a certificate of types 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. The schedules for this educational form are exactly the same as those of the corresponding mainstream schools because it must conform to the structures of ordinary education. Within every type of special education, the organisation and provision is adapted to the specific educational and training needs of the individual pupil. This is described in the individual action plan for each student (Eurydice, 2003). A report that indicates the specific form of education (as formulated by CLB or a specialist doctor) is sufficient to enter special secondary education. In OV1 and OV2, students cannot obtain a certificate, only an attestation. After five years OV3, students can achieve a qualification certificate. In OV4, the same attainment targets apply as used in mainstream secondary education. Therefore, students obtain an equivalent certificate as mainstream secondary education (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

44. Ruelens and Van Heddegem (2003) notice two particular evolutions in Flemish special education. First, enrolment in special education has increased over the years. Second, there is a clear over representation of deprived children, foreign children and males.

45. The increase in special education is certainly true for pre-school. Whereas 0.53% of children entered special pre-school in 1990-1991, this percentage increased to 0,70% in 2001-2002. This means a rise of 32 in terms of percentage. Also on the level of special primary education, there was an increase from 4.2% in 1990-1991 to 6.2% in 2001-2002 (a rise of 47%). The increase in special primary education is most noticeable in type 3 and type 8 (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Budget and Data Management Department, 2002). The number of students in BuSO fluctuated during the recent years and increased to a lower extent than special pre-school and primary education. According to Meijer et al. (2003), about 2% of all pupils in Europe are educated in special schools. In international perspective, Flanders seem to place pupils more frequently in special settings (>4%).

46. There is also an increase noticeable in the percentage of students in special education according to age. This increase is particularly marked from the age of 6 to 12-13. This rise can mainly be attributed to the fact that type 1 or 8 is not organised in special pre-primary education. At age 12-13 there is a considerable fall in the percentage of pupils in special education. Many children move from primary to secondary education at this age. The drop is mainly caused by the fact that type 8 programmes are not provided in secondary education.

47. As already mentioned, there is an over representation of deprived children in special education. While 25% of the deprived children are enrolled in special primary education, only 5% of the total population enter special primary education. These children end up most of the time in type 1, 3 and 8 (Ruelens & Van Heddegem, 2003). Concerning the over representation of foreign children in special education, throughout the three levels of education there are 7.85% of students in special education who do not have the Belgian nationality (school year 2001-2002). Seven percent of the students in special education had a foreign nationality, compared to only 6.4% of the foreign students that enrolled mainstream education in 2001-2002. In special pre-school education foreign students (mainly non-European foreigners) are mostly found in type 2. In special primary education they end up most of the times in type 1 followed by type 8 (Meensel & Verlot in Ruelens & Van Heddegem, 2003).

48. In all categories it was observed that more boys than girls are enrolled in special education. For special pre-school, the ratio is 68.13% boys against 31.87% girls (2002-2003). Also in primary education, boys are in the majority with 62.60% against 37.40% girls (2002-2003). The same is true for special secondary education: 62.29% boys as opposed to 37.71% girls (2002-2003). It is also worth to notice that most children with special education needs go to special schools organised by the subsidised privately run schools (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Budget and Data Management Department, 2003). Finally, the largest over representation of boys is found in type 3 (emotional and/or behavioural problems) which is the most sensitive for gender differences in attitudes and behaviour (Derks & Vermeersch, 2001).

#### **1.4 Most important obstacles to equity in according to the government**

49. An extract of the coalition agreement will be used to illustrate the government's perception of the most important obstacles to equity in education.

“Flanders cannot permit itself to leave an important part of its youngsters out in the cold, to deprive them their dreams, and to leave their aptitudes and creativity unused. Therefore, a reevaluation of technical and vocational education is an absolute priority.”

The so-called cascade system is being tackled. Only in this way a solution can be provided against the under evaluation of Technical Secondary Education (TSO) and Vocational Secondary Education (BSO). This under evaluation is unacceptable for the student and it is a source of unnecessary frustrations for the parents. Furthermore, this under evaluation causes tension in the business life, which can be illustrated by the existence of the so-called bottleneck jobs. Pilot projects are started to remedy the cascade system (Flemish coalition agreement, Part III, Chapter 1, §F).”

50. From this extract, one can deduce two main obstacles to inequity according to the Flemish government. In the first place there is the cascade system that leads towards inequity in education. Secondly there is the under evaluation of technical and vocational secondary education. Several researchers, for example Verhoeven (2002), Leroy (2002), and Van Dam (2002), also support the statement that the cascade system leads to inequity in education. Their opinion and further information on the cascade system can be retrieved in chapter 4 in paragraph 4.2.

51. The cascade structure implies that a particular educational type is more worth than another one. It is built on the misconception that technical training and occupation are inferior and on a distinction in appreciation between manual and intellectual work. Consequently, the problem is situated in the negative image attached to technical and vocational training. This under evaluation in Flanders originates from the specificity and history of our educational system that traditionally attaches more importance to abstraction than practical skills and attitudes. Nevertheless, this tradition contrasts sharply with the actual trend in the labor market that emphasizes competencies (the total of knowledge, skills and attitudes). This “competence approach” challenges ASO, as well as BSO and TSO to seek the right equilibrium between abstract and theoretical knowledge on the one hand, and skills and attitudes on the other (Tan, 2002).

52. Tan (2002) gives an overview of the current weaknesses in the Flemish technical education. She states that technique is omnipresent in our society where technical modernizations happen in rapid succession. Therefore technical education became an obligatory subject in the common curriculum for all students between six and fourteen years old. Unfortunately, the quality of technical education was substandard as well in primary as secondary education. This weakness is a first factor that contributes to the fact that too little youngsters opt for a technical training starting from a positive attitude. Next, there is the over representation of social deprived and foreign youngsters in TSO and particularly BSO. The

consequences of this 'selection' are negative in two ways: on the one hand youngsters (mostly with a social deprived background) often end up in TSO and BSO after enduring the tiring cascade system; on the other hand youngsters from more privileged background are kept from TSO and BSO, because their standard is ASO. The social under evaluation and the social selection leads in this way to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. Another remarkable issue is the high participation (60%) of students in BSO and TSO. The bottleneck in this matter lies in the fact that within technical education the "hard" technical disciplines are not popular. For example, the number of students attending industrial education (electronics, electricity, mechanics...) has decreased strongly. This tendency has consequences for the labour market where a structural short of technical educated specialists has arisen. A study (VEV-study, 'Lot of wishes, short of people') can illustrate this: 34% from the vacancies concerning the bottleneck jobs (e.g., bricklayer, welder) in 1999 were not filled in. The low status of the technical occupation in the labour market, the work circumstances and the low positive image of technical education strengthen each other in this matter (Tegenbos, 2002). A final weakness of technical education is the large number of unqualified students in this type of education. Many students leave school without any certificate.

53. Tan (2002) further describes some possibilities in improving the valuation of technical education. According to her, an important point of attention is the structural introduction of technical education in the total educational curriculum. Technical education should also become a valuable training aspect in ASO. As for the large number of unqualified 'output' of pupils, a system of modular training courses has been introduced in 2000-2001. This was done in order to deal with the problems of the unqualified 'output' of pupils from vocation-oriented education to the labour market and of the discrepancy between the supply of vocation-oriented training courses and the demand on the labour market. Moreover, the system of modular training courses was set up to orient pupils on the basis of capacities instead of failures. In the modular system, every school program consists, besides the general training, of vocation-oriented modules in which general educational elements are integrated and attention is paid to core skills. In this way the pupil is prepared for certain occupations and also for personal and social functioning. Each module is combined with elements of general training and results in a 'partial' certificate. These certificates accumulate for the 'complete' certificate (Eurydice, 2003). A final point of interest is to break through the traditional partition that exists within the schools (e.g., not longer different playgrounds for students from ASO, TSO and BSO), between the schools and between the school and labour market. Companies also have to take their responsibility in decreasing the gap between education and the labour market. For example, specific for the revaluation of technical and vocational training is the possibility for students to do teaching practice in a company. As Hostens (2002) concludes, solutions have to come in cooperation with several actors originating from the educational field, as well as the labour market.

## SECTION II: OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES

### CHAPTER 2: PROFILE OF EQUITY IN EDUCATION

This chapter will be completed after the collection of the statistical data used in the annex.

#### 2.1 Participation in the different educational levels

##### 2.1.1 Participation rates in early childhood education programs

##### 2.1.2 Participation rates in pre primary education

##### 2.1.3 Participation rates in compulsory education (primary and secondary education)

54. Number of students with foreign nationality: largest proportion in primary education. This number drops in secondary education (number of students with foreign nationality in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3rd and 4th stage of secondary education: largest in vocational secondary education (7%), lowest in general secondary education (2.2%); technical secondary education: 2,8%; artistic secondary education: 3,5%).

##### 2.1.4 Participation in tertiary education (non-university and university)

55. In the European context, a 17-year old in the Flemish Community has a rather average expected duration of enrolment in tertiary education.

#### 2.2 Progression through primary, secondary and tertiary education

56. Repetition: mainly in 1st year of primary school: 5.06%. This percentage decreases during the years. Of the Belgian students, 1.88% repeats in primary school. The percentage of repeaters of students with foreign nationality is much higher: 5.96% (mainly the 1st year).

57. Secondary education: 6.34% repeaters, more male students than female students. Students with foreign nationality repeat more compared to students of Belgian nationality.

58. In connection with different types of schools: repeaters in GO and OGO are more than double compared to VGO.

59. In connection with type of education: ASO<BSO<TSO<KSO

60. Graduation rates non-university tertiary education: one cycle: 53.31% (first year), two cycles: 51,23% (first year) increases during the years

61. Graduation rates university: 48.82% first year (increases during the years).

62. A comparison will be made between the progression through the different levels, as it was decades ago and progression as it is nowadays: is there continuity or discontinuity?

### **2.3 Unqualified and early school leavers**

63. According to type of education, abandon rates are: ASO: 1/18; BSO: 1/12; TSO: 1/13; KSO: 1/8. In European context, the percentage for early school leavers for the Flemish Region in 2000 was 11.6 % (1824 years). EU-average = 19.7%. Good position of Flemish Region compared with European context.

### **2.4 Graduates in education**

#### **2.4.1 Higher Secondary Education (Flanders)**

64. 32% General secondary education (low, compared to the OECD mean of 40%) 54% technical and vocational training 18-19 years: obtain most often a diploma ASO (32%), 2nd TSO (25%), 3rd BSO (18%), and then KSO (1,5%). ASO: more female student have a ASO diploma; TSO: more male students  
Number of graduates: largest in ASO>TSO>BSO>KSO. Students in ASO obtain more often their degree compared with students TSO or BSO.

#### **2.4.2 Tertiary Education**

65. In Flanders: exceptional position as regards the percentage of degrees in non-university tertiary education (far exceeds the international country mean).

66. Flemish university-level graduates: slightly under the OECD country mean.

67. In international perspective, Flemish twenty-year olds are medium to high educated.

68. There is difference by gender: non-university tertiary education (1 cycle): 60% female students; more female students obtain a diploma in human sectors, less in technical and IT-sectors. Number of diploma in non-university tertiary education and secondary education: higher with female students.

### **2.5 Evidence from tests: TIMMS, PISA and IALS**

#### **2.5.1 Evidence from TIMMS -1999**

69. TIMMS99 gives an international overview of the results for mathematics and science from students from the second year of the first stage of secondary education. The global results indicate that Flemish youngsters belong to the top group worldwide as regards for mathematics and score also very well with respect to science. As for the results of mathematics, only five (South-east Asian) countries score better than Flanders. Although Flanders is classified only twelfth for science, there are only five countries scoring significant better than Flanders. Between 1995 and 1999 Flanders shows a positive, yet not significant trend in their results for mathematics and science. The dispersion of the Flemish results are nevertheless favourable: for mathematics 23% of the students belongs to the top 10% of the students worldwide, only 2% of the students obtain results comparable to the 25% of the weakest students in the TIMMS. For science, 11% of the Flemish students achieve the top 10%. Compared to other countries our educational system has succeeded the best in reducing the lowest results to a minimum. As regard to the gender differences, TIMMS reveals neither for mathematics nor for science a significant difference (Van Damme et al., 2002).

70. As already mentioned in the first chapter, officially there are no different disciplines established in the second year of secondary education, although schools often do organise different study options:

classical language, modern science, technical options and the preparatory vocational year. As expected, as well as for mathematics as for science the option classical language is at the top, followed by the modern science, technical options and finally the preparatory vocational year.

71. In Flanders an additional analysis (only for the A-stream) was performed using the data of TIMSS, namely the extent to which students of the same class, classes of the same school and schools between themselves differ in their results regarding mathematics. To answer this question data of 135 Flemish schools were gathered. The results indicate that 57.7% of the differences in mathematical performance are attributed to the differences between students of the same class, 28,1% to the differences between classes of the same school, and 14,2% to differences between schools. Within international perspective this means that in Flanders there are relative large differences between classes of the same school and moderate differences between the schools. Nevertheless, the largest part of the differences is situated between students of the same class. How can the latter be explained? The student features that play a part in this are: the intelligence of the student, the educational level of the parents, the language spoken at home, the life standard at home, attitude towards mathematics and the study option the student belongs to. About a quarter of the differences in performance between students of the same class can be explained using these features. Consequently, approximate three-quarter of the differences between students cannot be explained by the above mentioned characteristics of the students. Almost all differences that are present between classes of the same school and approximate half of the differences that exist between schools can be explained by the type of students that attend those classes and schools. Analysis revealed that this mainly deals with the fact that classes of the same school are actually composed based on the intelligence of the students (strong versus weak classes). As a result the average level of intelligence accounts for almost all the differences in mathematical performance between classes of the same school. In addition to this – but to a lesser extent than the average intelligence of the class – the study orientation of the pupils in the class, the obstacles the teacher experiences from the student during the lessons, the extent to which the group behaves calmly, the degree to which the teacher describes the learning environment as constructive, the educational experience and the age of the teacher are also linked with the differences between classes. As for the differences in performances between schools, they can mainly be explained by the fact that schools attract a socially different public: certain schools attract more students from lower or higher social class than other ones.

### **2.5.2 Evidence from PISA**

72. PISA 2000 assesses skills and competencies in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. In Flanders 3890 15-year-old students from 124 different schools were assessed. In general, Flemish students belong to the top group worldwide as regards reading literacy and mathematical literacy; they are just slightly below that group as regards scientific literacy. The same results (except for reading literacy which was not investigated in TIMMS99) were obtained with TIMMS99. More specific regarding the results on the reading literacy scale, the results indicate that only one country (Finland) performs significantly higher than Flanders. In addition, Flanders belongs to the group of countries in which almost three-quarters of the 15-year-old students (74%) perform at reading proficiency level 3 or higher. This is significantly higher than the OECD mean (60%) and the Belgian results (64%). Within the concept of reading literacy PISA distinguishes three subscales, each of them requiring different skills: retrieving information, interpreting texts and reflection and evaluation. Overall, Flanders features the biggest difference in performance levels between Retrieving Information and the Reflection and Evaluation scales. It shows a gradual decline from Retrieving Information to Interpreting Texts, to Reflection and Evaluation. This effect is in first instance generated by those students who successfully perform the most difficult localisation tasks (retrieving information) but fail to perform the most difficult reflection tasks. The majority of those attend general secondary education programmes (ASO).

73. As for the results of the mathematical literacy scale, no country scored significantly higher than Flanders; and not a single Western European country equalled the Flemish mean score on mathematical literacy, which is slightly different than the results of TIMSS99. The only countries in PISA to attain a higher mean were Korea and Japan. The least impressive results achieved by Flemish 15-year-olds in PISA assessments were those recorded on the scientific literacy scale, although again the Flemish performance was significantly higher than the OECD average and also significantly higher than results achieved by Germany, France, Norway, Denmark, Spain, the United States or Switzerland. The fact that some countries (e.g., Canada, New Zealand) perform very well in the scientific literacy domain is likely to be related to the way science is taught within their respective curriculum. Countries where the curriculum focuses on interpreting scientific content and reflecting on it (PISA having the same focus) have an advantage over countries where the focus is on delivery and understanding. Concerning the gender differences, as in all countries Flemish girls achieve higher scores in reading literacy than their male peers: the mean score is 35 points higher for girls than for boys. Gender differences are less pronounced on the mathematical and scientific literacy scales than on the reading literacy scale. In Flanders, gender differences in the mathematical and scientific literacy domains are rather small and generally not significant, indicating the same results as TIMMS99 (De Meyer, De Vos, & Van de Poele, 2002).

74. PISA investigated also the differences between native and non-native (or first-generation) students. A comparison of the overall performance in reading literacy of first-generation students with that of native students reveals comparatively large and statistically significant differences in favour of native students. In Flanders differences in performance rise above one and a half proficiency level. When also drawing into the comparison the language spoken at home, students who do not speak Dutch at home are obviously at a disadvantage. The Flemish education system is not very successful in making up for that disadvantage.

75. Furthermore, the differences between high versus low achievers were examined. This was done for following reason: although a high average score in school achievement is a positive result for an education system as a whole, a good mean performance overall may conceal large disparities within a student population. The most ideal situation for a country is to obtain a small dispersion, combined with a high mean performance. Concerning the reading literacy, the Flemish variation in performance is not very different from that of other countries. It can be said that, as for as reading literacy is concerned, the good mean performance does not come at the cost of greater inequalities. Differences between high and low achievers are not small, but they are as large as in other countries featuring considerable poorer performances. Flanders recorded a high mean performance in mathematical literacy. Flemish high achievers are among the best students worldwide. Low achievers perform about as well in Flanders as low achievers in the countries that belong to the middle group of participating countries, though the gap between the high and low achievers is rather wide on the mathematical literacy scale for Flanders. As regards scientific literacy, the distribution of scores in Flanders is close to a typical 'normal' curve i.e. with as many students above the median as below the median. The 'low achievers' do relatively well on the scientific literacy scale in comparison with other countries and in comparison with the mathematical scale. The results obtained in TIMMS99 also showed that the dispersion in Flanders is quite favourable.

76. PISA did also research about the impact of family background on student performance. Therefore PISA assigns each participating student a value on International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI), further referred to as socio-economic background index. The relation between students' (reading) performance and their score on the above mentioned socio-economic background can be represented as lines, referred to as socio-economic gradients. Compared to a number of other countries, the Flemish gradient doesn't follow a linear model. For Flanders, the gradient is steeper at the lowest levels of the socio-economic background index than at its highest levels; and the slope weakens and evens out once it reaches higher levels of socio-economic status. This implies that socio-economic factors have a greater impact on the respondents' reading performance if their socio-economic is modest. In other terms, above a

given level of socio-economic background, social differences are less likely to affect the capacity of students to perform PISA tasks; and whether the student comes from a family with a high or a very high socio-economic status is a less critical feature. Furthermore, Flanders sports one of the highest mean performances in reading literacy but also shows one of the steepest gradient lines. This again confirms how much socio-economic factors affect reading performance in Flanders. In addition to highlighting the significant impact of socio-economic factors on Flemish reading performance, PISA showed that the mean reading performance of Flemish students lies for above the international mean. The Flemish gradient begins at proficiency level 3, while many other lines (including the Belgian gradient) begin at proficiency level 2. This means that Flemish students from families with a lower socio-economic status score significant above the international mean. The high level at which the Flemish gradient begins also indicates that, on average, 15-year-olds in Flanders outperform many others and achieve a very high mean performance, which gives a measure of the mean level of performance of the Flemish education system. Based on this information, the Flemish education system can be deemed effective. Data collected by PISA make it possible to rank the countries in several categories determined by their 'overall quality' (in terms of mean reading literacy scores achieved by their students) and their 'degree of equity' (measured in terms of impact of socio-economic background on reading performance i.e. the slope of the gradients). Flanders belongs to the group of countries that combine a high level of performance (i.e. a good quality standard) with a difference in reading performances between students from different socio-economic backgrounds that lies well above the corresponding international mean difference. In Flanders, the mean score on the combined reading literacy scale is significantly higher than the international mean, but the slope of their gradients is also steeper than the 'international' gradient. This indicates that the impact of socio-economic background on reading performance is stronger than the average international impact (De Meyer et al., 2002).

77. Until here, differences were only described at the student level. PISA also gives information (the information being more specified compared to the one provided in TIMMS99) about the differences at the school-level. The position of each school compared with both the Flemish and international gradients for each of the three assessment domains (reading, mathematical and scientific literacy) can be calculated on the basis of the mean performance of students of a school (vertical axes) and the mean score on socio-economic background of the students of a school (horizontal axes). The school can further be classified in eight groups according to the study programmes they provide: General, technical/vocational, technical, general/vocational, general/vocational/technical, general/technical, special education and part-time vocational training. The higher the school is positioned on the graph, the better its students perform in reading. When a school is positioned further right, it means that the average level of social background of its student population is higher. In Flanders, both aspects converge with types of education: at the top right hand-side of the graph, one predominantly encounters schools that exclusively provide general secondary education (ASO) or general and technical secondary education (ASO-TSO). Conversely, schools that also offer special education and part-time vocational training will be positioned at the bottom left hand-side of the graph. These trends generalise to the mathematical and scientific literacy domains, for which the same groups of schools are similarly located on the graph.

78. As for the school-level differences, PISA also looked at the different streams and types of study programmes. For reading literacy, the spread of the education streams is wide while the different types of study programmes are outlined rather clearly, with the exception of Economics/Social Science. The latter performs below certain streams of technical secondary education. For mathematical literacy, there seems to be a large gap between technical education and vocational training programmes on the one hand; and a very gradual progression from technical to general secondary education on the other. Technical education streams with a relatively advanced mathematics curriculum tend to outperform general education streams with a limited mathematics curriculum. The profile for scientific literacy is similar, featuring relatively high scores for some technical education streams (e.g., mechanics), partly because science items assess technical insight (De Meyer et al., 2002).

### 2.5.3 *Evidence from IALS*

79. With IALS the functional literacy of adults (16-64 years old) in several countries is measured. Literacy is conceived as a multidimensional concept, measured on three scales: 'prose literacy', 'document literacy' and 'quantitative literacy'. For the three scales, 5 levels of literacy are established. In general it is considered that level 3 is the minimum to function adequately in the western society. Flanders scores (originating from 1996) for prose literacy almost 50%, and for the two other literacy scales in each case almost 40% below level 3 (Bollens, et al., 2003). As for the distribution of literacy, Flanders doesn't have extremely high or extremely low scores on the three scales (prose, document and quantitative literacy). At the same time, there are gender differences in the scores of Flanders, which are higher compared to other countries. Flemish men achieve much better results on the three scales than women. A possible explanation for this is the high economical inactivity degree of Flemish women, causing more worn in their skills.

80. An analogue conclusion applies for age: older Flemish people (56-65 year) score clearly more bad in IALS compared to elder people in other countries. This also has to do with the exceptional high inactivity degree of this age group in our country. The causal relationship between economic inactivity and low literacy exists in two directions: the lower someone's skills, the higher the chance on unemployment. But in the opposite direction it applies as well that long-lasting inactivity leads to a faster depreciation of skills. This can explain why unemployed persons score very low concerning literacy in IALS. Because the average period of unemployment in our country is higher than elsewhere, one can expect that Flemish job-seekers score lousy within international comparison. IALS points out the groups at risk: (children from) lower socio-economic categories, migrants, economical inactive persons and women (Nicaise, 2003).

## 2.6 **Life chances**

81. The longer-term links between education and earnings and skills of the adult population will be discussed in this section. Within this topic, two trends will be described in more detail: the increasing effect of the educational level on life chances and the problems associated with 'bottleneck' jobs.

### 2.6.1 *Increasing effect of educational level on life chances*

82. Parsons (1971) notices correctly that the current educational proportions are the same as the social class proportions of the nineteenth century. In this sense, the influence of the class in which a person was born in previous century on his or her life chances, is replaced by the influence of the educational level on their life chances. In other words, there has become an increasing importance of the educational level. To prove this statement empirically, one has to prove that the influence of the educational level on the life chances of a person is larger nowadays than it was in the past, controlled for other indicators of social background. A research carried out by Pelleriaux 'TOR'88' (2001) in the Flemish community investigated the changing influence of the educational level on the life chances. In this research the occupational prestige of the first job of the respondent is used as an indicator for his/her life chances. The research is described in more detail in chapter 3. Only the relevant conclusions concerning this paragraph will be described here. For more information about this research the reader is referred to chapter 3. The most relevant result for this paragraph is that the effect of the educational level of the respondent on the occupational prestige of his/her first job has become much more important over the years. Even to such an extent that this influence has become enormous today: the  $\eta^2$  of the educational level of the respondent on the first occupational prestige of the respondent is for the group entering the labour market after 1973: 0,72 (this is the most recent group that was investigated) (compared with a  $\eta^2$  of 0,58 for the group entering the labor market before 1955; and a  $\eta^2$  of 0,64 for the group between 1955 and 1973). This result indicates a tremendous strong effect. The educational level of the respondent explains with this half of the variance of the occupational prestige of the first job (Pelleriaux, 2001).

83. The analysis presented above shows that the importance of the educational level to the extent that a person can hope on a comfortable life, has increased. Considered from an 'equal chance' ideology, such an evolution seems praiseworthy. With this, one must make the comment that educational level in turn is determined by an 'old' ascribed status as social background. The association between the educational level of a person and his/her social background hasn't changed in the postwar period. Although larger groups of students have continually obtained more chances to go to university, the association of that chance with the social background of these youngsters hasn't changed (Pelleriaux, 2001).

84. Besides the effect on occupational prestige of the first job (which was an indicator for life chances in TOR'88), there exists in the literature other data that support the statement that the effect of the educational level on the life chances of an adult has increased over the years. Research showed that low educated persons have more chance to become unemployed or ill, that they have a shorter life expectancy and that they run more the risk of falling beneath the poverty line than high educated persons (Bossuyt, 2000; Deboosere & Page, 1997).

### **2.6.2 Bottleneck jobs**

85. Bottleneck jobs ('hard' jobs as plumber, welder, and builder): although they can earn a lot of money with these jobs, there is a serious shortage in these sectors. This is mainly caused by the under valuation of the technical and vocational education. Even within the vocational training, people make a distinction between the option 'office' (where work opportunities are low, but which is evaluated good in general) and options situated in the metal sector (which is lower evaluated).

## SECTION III: CAUSES AND EXPLANATIONS

### CHAPTER 3: INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF INEQUALITY

86. In this chapter, four longitudinal studies carried out in the Flemish community will be summarised to illustrate the intergenerational transmission of inequality.

87. The postwar period is characterized by a massive expansion in educational participation. In all wealth states each generation seems to be higher educated than its previous one. From the prominent comparative research from Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) about the educational chances in thirteen countries, it appears nevertheless that this uniform trend of increasing educational participation didn't bring about hardly any change concerning social unequal educational chances. With exception of Sweden and the Netherlands the influence of social environment during the different educational transitions stayed stable while the relation between social background and the achieved educational level remained without abatement. The Flemish community however was not included in this study. To investigate the situation for the Flemish community a research was conducted to answer the question how educational participation – and in particular participation to tertiary education – of children from different social background evolved within Flemish tertiary education (Tan, 1998).

88. Data of this study originate from inquiries carried out in 1976, 1985 and 1992 from the Centre of Social Policy. Age level included 18 and 25 year-old persons who either still lived with their parents or lived independently. For the youngsters living at home social background was stipulated by among other things educational level and socio-professional category of the head of the family. For the independently living persons this was determined by the educational level and socio-professional category of the father.

89. As for the evolution of educational participation, the participation in 1976 was for each of the different age category on a much lower level than nowadays. This trend goes together with a reduction in gender inequalities. Educational chances between men and women have become impressive more equal, including the participation to tertiary education. Female students have drawn level with male students and even outrun the male students. Does the gender equality obtained over the years also count for the differences in social background? In 1976 as well as in 1985 as in 1992, it appears that in the Flemish Community there exists an apparent social hierarchy concerning participation in tertiary education: children of employees and children of high educated parents participate each time approximate three to four times more in tertiary education compared to children of blue collar workers or children of low educated parents. These social unequal proportions have hardly changed the past twenty years. Furthermore to the shift during this period, the evolution within the different social categories went parallel with the general evolution. This means that although participation to tertiary education of 18 and 25 year-olds from all the occupational levels and regardless of the educational level of the head of the family improved during the period of 1985-1992, this went not together with the decline in the associations between social origins and educational attainment (Tan, 1998). This result joints the conclusions of Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) who stated that in most cases educational expansion has not entailed greater equality of educational opportunity among socio-economic strata. Furthermore, the study of Tan (1998) also indicated that there exists a significant effect between participation to tertiary education and income of the head of the family.

90. In the preceding text it was shown that there existed a significant relation between participation to tertiary education on the one hand and educational level, socio-professional category and income on the other. By using a Multiple Classification Analysis it was demonstrated which of the three factors has the largest effect on participation to tertiary education. As for 1992, the importance of the educational level of the head of the family appears to be the largest, followed by the income and socio-professional category. There is however a shift noticeable in socio-economic determinants of unequal educational participation if one considers the progress during the years. Although the educational level of the father is the most determined factor in 1976, 1985 and 1992 (more than income and socio-professional category) its importance has increased over the years.

91. According to Tan (1998) the most important causes of this remaining social unequal participation to tertiary education has to be sought before tertiary education, namely in the advancing selection process in primary and secondary education. Selection and allocation mechanisms in secondary education are an important threshold on the way towards tertiary education. It appears that one chooses different educational types (ASO, TSO or BSO) according to socio-economical background. The followed type of education is in turn very determining for the level of the attained secondary diploma and the choice to study after the school age. Because of this early selection process there is only limited space in tertiary education available to reduce the unequal chances. Furthermore it is demonstrated that children of lower educated parents and children of workmen have a significant higher risk on school delay.

92. One can conclude that the democratization of education in the majority of the rich industrialized countries stagnates. Flanders forms no exception in this. This indicates that the policy that was implemented during the period 1976-1992, aimed at reducing the socio-cultural barriers, has failed to a large extent. Despite the major changes within the internal structure and the pedagogical content of the educational system (reform of tertiary education, renewed secondary education...) the risk on school delay remains very high, especially for children of the lower social categories (Tan, 1998).

93. Another research about intergenerational transmission of inequality was carried out by Pelleriaux (2001). He also investigated the relation between socio-economic background and life chances. The data contains a representative sample of the Flemish community: in total, 1267 respondents between 20 and 69 year were inquired face to face. Respondents were asked for the occupation that the father of the respondent practiced during the period the respondent had the age of 12 to 18 (= occupational prestige of the father); the first occupation of the respondent (= first prestige of the respondent); and educational level of the respondent. For the analysis, the sample was divided into three groups. The first group of respondents started their first job before January 1955, entering the labour market before the expansion of higher non-university and university education. The second group entered the labour market during the expansion of these educational levels (January 1955 and January 1973). The last group commenced their first job after January 1973, thus after the educational expansion. The applied model that will be explained later on was in these three periods exactly the same. The dependent variable is the occupational prestige of the first job of the respondent. The two independent variables are the occupational prestige of the father and the educational level of the respondent.

94. This model, containing only three variables, will be assessed for the three different groups. The occupational prestige of the first job of the respondent will be explained based on the occupational prestige of the father of the respondent, and the educational level of the respondent (Pelleriaux, 2001).

95. As a general result of this research, the conclusion is that as well as the effect of the education of the respondent as the effect of the occupational prestige of the father on the occupational prestige of the first job of the respondent has changed over the three different periods. More specific, the effect of the educational level of the respondent on his/her first occupational prestige, has increased. This effect is immense large. For example, it appears that the influence of the educational level explains half of the

variance of the prestige from the first job. There is no longer a direct influence from social background on the first occupational prestige of the respondent: for the group after 1973, the occupational prestige of the father has no effect on the prestige of the first job of the respondent, in contrast with the two other groups. This influence is mediated and masked by education. This doesn't mean that social background has no longer an influence on the life chances of a person (as indicated for example in the prestige of the first job). It means that this influence passes through education. The occupation of the father in the last group also has an effect on educational level of the respondent (Tan, 1998), and in this way on the first occupational prestige of the respondent. The correlation between occupational prestige of the father and the educational level of the respondent is – for the group entering the labour market after 1973 – not less than 0,33! There exists however no longer a direct effect. The influence of the occupation of the father on the occupation of the respondent is totally mediated by the educational level of the respondent. As a result, the association between social background (in this study indicated by the occupational prestige of the father) and the educational level hasn't changed the last 50 years. To formulate this in other words: there exists a persistent social inequality in education.

96. In summary, the direct effect of the occupational prestige of the father on the occupational prestige of the first job of the son/daughter decreases; the effect of the educational level of the son/daughter on his/her occupational prestige of the first job increases. It increases in such a large extent that its effect is nowadays enormous. One can conclude based on the analysis of Tan (1998) and the above reported findings that education reproduces to an important extent, the social background of the persons. This intergenerational transmission of inequity existed in the past and is still existing today (Pelleriaux, 2001).

97. The third longitudinal research in secondary education (LOSO) that will be described gives a more detailed analyse of intergenerational transmission of inequality. This research was carried out by Van Damme et al. (1997). They found a correlation of 0.39 between the educational level of the father and the chosen option in the first year of secondary education. The correlation between the chosen option and the educational level of the mother was 0.37. When the chosen option of the first year of secondary education is established as dependent variable within a discriminant analysis, the characteristics of the family appear to have a significant effect. The most important contribution in this analysis was the result of a mathematical test (Van Damme et al., 1997). After controlling for the school progress in test mathematics (reflecting the intelligence) and the efforts for educational tasks, the characteristics of the family turned out to influence the educational type in which students end up in the second stage as well. In another research investigating the effect of co-education on the curriculum allocation of Flemish students, Brutsaert (1999) found an effect of social background on the educational discipline they find themselves. This effect seemed – in the concerning research – to be resistant for the control on cognitive measures (Brutsaert, 1999).

98. This result, that there is an effect of socio-economical background on educational achievements even after controlling for intelligence, is also found in other countries. In the United States the effect of social background, controlled for school performance of the students, on the 'choices' made during the educational career, was proved several times. Also in the Norwegian educational system Hansen (1997) showed that the social class and the income of the family had an important influence on the educational type students choose. In the Soviet-Union the same results were found (before the fall of the Berlin wall), even after controlling the achieved school performances (Titma & Saar, 1995). Moreover, in our neighbouring countries there also seems to be a rather important effect of social background on the educational type students end up. For example, Duru-Bellat and Mingat (1989) showed in France that there is a direct influence of the occupation of the father (divided into 5 categories) on the educational type of the students, controlled for the school achievements. Summarizing, evidence form international literature indicates that social background of students – after controlling for educational performances – has an influence on the educational type students end up (Pelleriaux, 2001).

99. The last longitudinal research that will be described joins the results of the three previous ones. The scope of this research is however more broad in the sense that it describes the educational course from pre-school until tertiary education. Furthermore, it uses several indicators of inequalities: socio-economic background (diploma, employment situation, and occupational status of the parents), ethnic-cultural background (nationality at birth and spoken language at home of the youngsters), gender and family situation (single parent versus two parent families). This research makes use of only one database, namely the “Panelstudie van Belgische Huishoudens” from school year 1991-1992 until school year 1998-1999 (Groenez, Van den Brande, & Nicaise, 2003).

100. The research gives a general outline of the existing social inequality within Flemish education, and this on the pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary level. The general findings indicate that the educational inequality reflects a progressing social selection. At different moments of the educational career, the attained position seems to influence the further educational possibilities and choices. For example, the inequalities that are developed in primary education in the form of school retardation, influences the orientation at the beginning of secondary education. In turn the differentiation in educational types within secondary education explains to a large extent the unequal participation in tertiary education. It is clear that for every next selection a filter process takes place. As for the following transitions, the student population becomes more homogeneous. From this it is clear that the social inequalities increase across the educational career. Moreover, the unequal progress through education leads to an unequal progress towards the labour market, which in turn results in unequal income, knowledge, health and so on. In the following a description will be made of the social inequalities that arise within each educational level and how they progress across the different levels.

101. A first important conclusion of Groenez et al. (2003) is that participation in **pre-school** increases according to age. The social inequality is already noticeable at this level. The results indicate that participation in preschool is remarkable lower for children from low educated parents, inactive parents, children with a foreign nationality (other than West-European or U.S.), foreign speakers (other than the European language), children from one parent families and boys. The research further shows that these children not only start at a later stage in pre-school, moreover they also seem to have an increased chance on school retardation at the end of pre-school. However, further analysis reveals that the lower participation rate of children with a foreign nationality has more to do with the low occupational status of the parents than with the nationality itself. The social inequality continues in **primary education**. The results of the research indicate that mainly the first year of primary education forms an obstacle for many children. Again clear differences are detected according to the social background of the children. The chance on school retardation at the beginning of primary education is more pronounced for children of low educated mothers, non-active fathers, single mothers and children with a non-western nationality. Towards the end of primary education the social inequality seems to increase. Also in the referral towards special education the social inequality regarding these children is clearly manifested. However, it is remarkable that, in the situation that the different variables are considered into one model, the nationality of the child seems again to loose its influence. This can possibly indicate that the over representation of foreign children in special education has more to do with socio-economic factors (as there is the occupation of the parents) than with the nationality of the child or even the spoken language. This is opposed to what is often suggested in the literature (see for example the findings of Yaman, 2003 in Chapter 5 ‘Role of the Pupil Guidance Centre’). Finally, also boys have a lot more chance to be referred towards special education compared to girls. Regarding the school retardation in primary education, Groenez et al. (2003) did not find a gender difference.

102. In **secondary education** the social inequalities further increase. There are clear differences according to social background as well with respect to the school retardation of the youngsters as with respect to the study orientation. The transition from primary towards secondary education seems to be a key moment. The results show that the inequality that is developed across primary education – in the form

of school retardation – is manifested in the study orientation at the beginning of secondary education. In addition to this, it seems that on top of the (non)-developed school retardation, the social background plays an important role concerning the study orientation. For example, a foreign pupil with no school retardation has more chance to enter a B-stream than a Flemish pupil who falls behind. When the different social indicators are considered, following results reveal: The socio-professional category of the father and mother are crucial predictors. Namely, students from a lower social class develop more educational retardation and end up more in TSO or BSO, but as well in DBSO, apprenticeship and special secondary education. Besides this variable, also the gender seems to have a determining role. Male students develop more often an educational retardation in secondary education compared to female students and end up more often in the ‘weaker’ educational types. Also youngsters from broken families have more chance to fall behind. On the other hand, the fact that the mother lives together or not seems to have only little effect on the study orientation of the youngster. The nationality has an effect as well on the study orientation as on the educational retardation the student develops during secondary education. This retardation remains, even if the other social inequality indicators are considered. This means that foreign students more often fall behind than Flemish youngsters, even after controlling for the influence of socio-economic factors. Finally – comparable with the situation in primary education – the percentage of students falling behind educationally, increases the most during the first two school years. When looking at the further transitions across secondary education, the researchers point out that the differences regarding the study orientations are further crystallised as the school career develops.

103. Following the findings of Tan (1998), this research indicates as well that there still exists a rather large inequality concerning the transition towards **tertiary education**. The unequal participation is strongly determined by the entrance conditions of tertiary education. After all, the diploma of secondary education explains to a very large extent the unequal transition towards tertiary education. It are mainly the youngsters from the lower social class who never obtain a diploma that allows them to enter tertiary education. The results of this study further indicate that besides the occupational category and the diploma of the parents, the ethnic-cultural background of the youngsters has a significant influence, as well on the chance to leave secondary education unqualified, as on the chance to obtain a diploma that gives access to tertiary education, as on the decision to participate in tertiary education. Besides the social background, gender as well has an important influence.

104. Youngsters from the lower social class who move on towards tertiary education, mainly opt for courses organised at the colleges of higher education (1 cycle) and to a much lower extent for university. Finally, there reveals to be a clear form of self-selection regarding to the decision to participate in tertiary education: students from the lower social class who take the chance of participating in tertiary education, are students who went successfully through secondary education. In other words, more than in other strata of the society, it are only the strongest students who remain. Opposed to this, youngsters of the higher strata of society sometimes pass tertiary education with more difficulties, even if they have to repeat or reorient themselves more often.

105. The researchers conclude that the social inequality as shown in the achieved diplomas and as a consequence in the starting opportunities at the labour market, are the results of an ongoing social selection in education. The structure of our educational system plays an important role in this. After all, the successful ending of a certain educational discipline is in principle a condition to start other educational types or other disciplines. In this sense, children who start with less chances has less chance to pass the first selection. In the whole of the educational career a lot of attention must go to the transition points between pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. One must not forget that educational retardation occurs mainly at the beginning of primary and secondary education. Also the majority of the study orientation takes place in the first stage of secondary education. As regard to the transition between secondary and tertiary education, special attention must go to the prevention of unqualified drop-out (Groenez et al., 2003).

## **CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF INEQUITY**

Concerning the causes of inequity, the motivational, institutional, social-cultural and economic barriers are discussed. As for the motivational barriers, first the results of a longitudinal research in secondary education are described followed by a description of the differences that exists between boys and girls (manifested in the school repeating, school arrears and the transition towards special education). In the paragraph about the institutional barriers, a description is given of the unified structure of secondary education and the way in which differentiation takes place in Flemish education. For the social-cultural barriers, an overview is given of the financial measures that exist for each educational level. Finally, the allocation of financial resources across the different educational levels is described.

### **4.1 Motivational barriers**

#### **4.1.1 Results of the longitudinal research 'LOSO'**

106. Mertens and Van Damme (2001) made a longitudinal study concerning the relation between the school well-being and the educational career from regular progressing secondary educational students. Four dimensions of the school well-being were distinguished: the effort concerning educational tasks, the relationship with the teacher, the academic self-concept, and the general school well-being. A general characteristic of the four dimensions was the negative evolution during the educational career. Especially the second stage seems to be a critical period, characterised by a remarkable decline in the effort, relationship with the teacher, self-concept and the general school well-being. The fact that this period coincides with the developmental stage of adolescents, can according to Mertens and Van Damme (2001) only partially explain this. Also the impossibility of the educational system to anticipate on these developmental needs plays a role in this matter.

107. Regarding the main spoken language, foreign students are mainly situated in tracks ending up in vocational training). Parents of students in general tracks often obtained a higher degree, while educational careers ending in vocational training are attended by students whose parents obtained none or a low degree. When the educational effort is considered, the students in general tracks report the most effort. Significant less effort is reported by students in tracks ending in vocational education. Comparable results are found regarding the student-teacher relation, the academic self-concept and the general school well-being. An interesting finding is the fact that students who start in pre-vocational, education score higher on the latter dimensions compared to students who enter vocational training in a later stage of their educational career. These results indicate that students whose educational career is not characterized by a transition towards a 'lower evaluated' educational type, in general score better on the four dimensions of well-being. It seems that the common accepted hierarchy of the educational types is being reflected in the perception of the students.

108. Furthermore, as for the educational careers characterised by a change (decline) of educational type, the researchers came to the conclusion that the period which proceeds the transition was characterised by an apparent negative evolution of the well-being. This indicates that the change in educational career is being preceded by a period of disharmony between the person and his environment: the student does not feel good at school, reports deterioration of his relation with his teachers, has a negative self-concept as student, and does less educational effort. When the educational environment isn't adjusted to the student, the well-being apparently decreases. The repeating failing experiences and the coinciding frustrations undermines the self-concept and the general school well-being. This is revealed in a decreased level of educational effort and influences the relation negatively with the teacher. The downward evolution of the well-being also coincides with a negative tendency of performances (compared with the new pupils in the

class). During the period following on this transition, the performances improve, which is not the case for all of the four dimensions of the well-being. There is no positive evolution as regard to the educational effort and the relation with the teacher after the transition. On the other hand, the academic self-concept and the general scholish well-being improve (because the student is now able to answer the educational demands; as regard to the non-improving effort and the relation with the teacher, the previous history of the student plays a role in this). However, to prevent the described situation, the researchers advocate that socio-emotional and student guidance are necessary. Both the Pupil Guidance Centres (CLB) and the teacher have to take their responsibilities in this.

109. Mertens and Van Damme (2001) investigated the relation between the school performance and the academic self-concept (one of the dimensions of well-being) in more detail. The academic self-concept is the image of the student about his/her own capacities and performances. There exists among researchers a discussion about the direction of the causal influence between both variables. However, more and more researchers advocate a bi-directional modal in which both variables are as well as each other's consequences as each other's causes. LOSO investigated if this reciprocal relation between academic self-concept and school performances could be confirmed. First correlations were calculated before investigating the causal relation. As for the correlation between both variables, a clear relation was found between the school performance and the academic self-concept, even after controlling for other characteristics as intelligence, gender and the spoken language at home. To investigate the causal relation, an a-priori causal modal was used (LISREL-analysis). With a first application of this analysis -comprising the first four years of secondary education -the school performances seemed to have a causal influence on the academic self-concept. The reversed direction of the bi-directional causal modal was however not significant. After extending the modal towards the second year of the third stage, a causal influence of the performance on academic self-concept, as well as a causal influence of the academic self-concept on the school performance was found statistically significant.

110. Based on these analysis, the researchers conclude that the existence of the bi-directional causal relation between the academic self-concept and the school performances cannot always be restrained. Furthermore, also in the extending model were the bi-directional model was supported, two remarks have to be taken into account. First there is the problem of the generalisation. The sample consisted of students who never repeated a year and attended ASO. Also standardised test were used for the research, irrelevant for the concrete educational practice. Notwithstanding, these results plaid indirectly for the importance of a good study-orientation in secondary education. When taking care of good guidance for students and their parents, it can be prevented that they outrun their ambitions and are consequently hurt in their self-concept.

111. Finally, the question was raised – in the case that the academic self-concept influences the school performances – if a high academic self-concept leads to more motivation and by means of this way to better school performances. In this case motivational aspects are ascribed to the academic self-concept. Effort for educational tasks and interest for educational tasks were used both as motivational variable. The results indicate that students who have a low positive image of their own school competences (a low academic self-concept) try to safeguard their self-concept by putting the relevance and the importance of the school into perspective. This however has negative consequences for the effort of the student. Why making efforts for something of which the importance is questioned? In general these results indicate that academic self-concept influences the way students put a meaning on education. These interpretative processes influence in turn the educational effort of the student (Mertens & Van Damme, 2001).

112. Van Damme, De Troy, Mertens, and Meyer (2001) did some research concerning the impact of repetition within a medium long period. An important conclusion is that there seems to be a clear connection between the repetition or not and the further school career. Many repeaters are in a later period again confronted with school retardation, a changeover between different educational types, or they leave secondary education too early. Furthermore, among the students who repeat a year at the beginning of their

school career, there are relative few persons who prove themselves in the long-term, at least in the educational field. On the other hand, there is the group of repeaters who reach the sixth year of secondary education with only one year of delay and who experience at that moment no apparent negative consequences of repeating. For this group (students who succeed in finishing secondary education within seven years) the researchers are inclined to state that the repeating has no effect on school performance or well-being for at least a medium long period. At the end of the sixth year of secondary education they have approximate the same results for mathematics and Dutch compared to the results that the regular progressing students (who obtained the same results at the outset of secondary education) obtained a year earlier. There are some small differences between the different educational types: the performances of the students from ASO are a little bit lower than those of the regular students, in TSO the results are comparable, in BSO they perform slightly better. Concerning the well-being at school and the relations between the other students and the teachers, there seems to be no apparent differences between the students who repeated a year and the regular progressing students (Van Damme, De Troy, Mertens, & Meyer, 2001).

#### **4.1.2 Gender differences regarding motivation**

113. Since recently in Flanders more and more attention is given to the bad school performance of boys. The differences between boys and girls are manifested in school repeating, retardation and the transition towards special education.

114. Staying down a class in primary education occurs in Flanders relatively little. Furthermore, the differences in this matter between boys and girls are small. On the other hand, repeating a year is a frequent phenomenon in secondary education. Also the differences between boys and girls are considerable (7.65% for boys, 4.33% for girls in 1996-1997) (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, in Derks & Vermeersch, 2001). Boys run more the risk of repeating a class in each of the six school years, as well in ASO, TSO, BSO and KSO. The differences are also registered in each of the three educational networks. This gender difference concerning the school repeating, applies for students with a Belgian nationality, as well as for foreign students. However, one must not forget that differences concerning repeating vary more according to nationality than according to gender (10.17% of the foreign students stay down a class, compared to only 5.86% of the Belgian students in school year 1998). As for the foreign students, the gender differences are also more pronounced: 12, 46% of the boys, compared to 7.85% of the girls (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, in Derks & Vermeersch, 2001).

115. Also for the school arrears the gender differentiation is mainly manifested in secondary education, which increases considerable in the higher years of secondary education. In the first year of secondary education in 1996-1997, 22.54% of the boys had a school arrear as opposed to 17.68% of the girls, a difference from only almost 5%. In the sixth year of secondary education, the gender difference mounts to more than 14%. This gender differentiation persists in tertiary education as well as for colleges of higher education as for universities, although to a lesser extent than secondary education. In almost all the study domains male students repeat more often than female students.

116. Another finding is that boys are notably more represented in special education. This overrepresentation of boys occurs in all types of primary and in every type of education in secondary education. The most important overrepresentation is however found in type 3 (emotional and behavioural problems) (Derks & Vermeersch, 2001).

117. Derks and Vermeersch (2001) try to explain these existing gender differences. In their research they found that the differential performance is not the consequence of a differential influence from the socio-economic background, nor from the family situation of boys and girls. They did however found an

influence of the **gender-related attitudes**. As a result of the differential socialisation, boys and girls take on a different gender role in the adolescence as is seen in differential attitudes and behaviours. For example, boys act more tough and aggressive and refuse more to show emotions. Macho attitudes that are associated with the stereotype male gender role don't have to be problematic by definition. Derks and Vermeersch (2001) argue that it is important to look how the macho behaviour is manifested within the school context. The school demands of its students a certain measure of conformity and obedience. Attitudes and behaviours leading to school failure may be described as 'problematic'. In the literature the link between school conform behaviour on the one hand and shortage of manliness on the other is often described. Girls seem to have less authority problems on school than boys, who more often challenge the authority and behave noisier in class. According to the researchers the school demands from the boys a behaviour and attitude that are difficult to reconcile with the attitudes that are linked to the stereotype male gender role. Because of their macho behaviour boys get into difficulties within the school context. The researchers support this statement using a discriminant analysis. They distinguished students who ever repeated a year from students who never repeated a year in secondary education according to a series of attitude-items. Behaviours that are characteristic for repeaters have a strong macho-content. In summary the authors state that an important cause for the differential performance between boys and girls is attributed to the differences in attitudes. The macho behaviours -on which boys score on average higher as a result of the gender stereotype socialising processes -are problematic within the school context. It can be expected that boys with problematic behaviour more often tempt the authority of the teacher, more often consciously violate the regulations, participate less in lesson activities and study less. In turn this behaviour incites a dynamic and reinforces itself.

118. The researcher furthermore investigated the gender context of the school as a possible explanation for the differential performance between the sexes. They found that nor the sex ratio of the students, nor the sex ratio of the teachers have a significant influence on the study results of boys and girls. As a result, the feminization of education is not a direct cause of the differential performance between boys and girls. Also the presence of a male culture among the teachers doesn't influence the results of the students.

119. Also the school culture was investigated. The **school culture** comprises the dominant culture among the students, which can be made operational by the dominant behaviours among the students of a school, and the presence or absence of a participation culture in the school. The behaviours from the students have, as mentioned earlier, a strong influence on the school performances. It is nevertheless possible to expect that not only the individual attitudes but also the school culture has an influence on the performances between boys and girls. The way a person behaves is after all not only a consequence of the own attitudes, but also of the way a person perceives the expectations from his environment. In an anti-school culture, the youngsters conform towards the expectations of their fellow pupils, to belong to the group and to gain status. The research shows that the influence of the school culture in which problematic behaviours are dominant on the performance of students, is large and strongly significant. A partial explanation of the differential performance can be found in the fact that boys more often end up in schools with an anti-school culture, which in turn influences the school performance.

120. Besides the dominant behaviours on school, the presence of a participation culture in the school - social and cultural activities organised by the school -can be seen as an indicator of the school culture. The analyses of the research confirms the importance of the participation culture concerning the school performances. If there is a participation culture in the school, there are considerable fewer people who repeat a year. As a consequence, the participation culture partially explains the differential performances between boys and girls, and contributes in this way to the acknowledgement of the importance of the school culture in explaining the differential performance (Derks & Vermeersch, 2001).

121. Finally, the researchers brought the different variables that each separately offered a partial explanation for the differential performance into one global model. This model shows that it is mainly the behaviours and the school culture that explain the differential performances. Macho behaviours and a negative school culture in which macho behaviours are dominant and in which there is little participation in school life, seems to be unprofitable for the study result of the students. Boys more often display a macho behaviour and end up more in schools with a negative school climate. As a result of this they more often than girls stay down a year (Derks & Vermeersch, 2001).

## 4.2 Institutional barriers

122. In 1970, the structure of the Renewed Secondary Education (VSO) was officially introduced in the Flemish Community. The objective of VSO was to abandon the principles of the traditional school, which was considered as social discriminating and undemocratic. VSO aimed at making the structure of secondary education more comprehensive (Van Petegem, De Wit, & De Maeyer, 2000). Nevertheless, VSO had to deal with several critics. Therefore a new educational structure was introduced since the school year 1989-1990 -the 'unified structure' -, ratified by the decree in 1990. From the first of September 1989 all schools within the three networks in Flanders had to organise the same educational structure. In fact, the unified structure can be perceived as a compromise between VSO on the one hand and traditional education on the other. It was not the failure of the democratic objectives of VSO that led towards the introduction of the unified structure. It were rather the blames from the Catholic network about the governmental policy, the negative image of the community education, and the high cost price of the VSO that appealed for a new educational structure. Increasing the educational equity was not its priority. Although the unified structure comprised some comprehensive elements, these were clearly weakened compared to VSO. Some elements of the traditional schools were maintained as well (Van Petegem et al., 2000).

123. The unified structure consists of three stages with two years per stage. In the first year of the *first stage*, most attention goes to basic education (27 hours a week). Already in the first year, a distinction is made between A-and B-stream. The latter is meant for students who have learning deficits. After succeeding the first year, students from the B-stream can transfer to the A-stream (first year of the first stage) or the preparatory vocational second year leading most of the time towards BSO in the second stage. In this sense, the B-stream can have a bridging function towards the A-stream in the first year. Beside the basic education of 27 hours, schools have the freedom to fill in maximum free five hours a week. Beside the division in A-and B-stream, one must not forget another exception on the common programme in the first year of secondary education, namely special education. This topic is already described in chapter 1, paragraph 1.4.

124. In the second year of the first stage (A-stream), basic education consists of 24 hours. However, schools can differentiate by means of 'basic options' that comprise minimum 5, and maximum 9 hours a week. In the current programme there are 21 basic options available. By introducing these basic options, schools want to meet the differentiation of the four school types in the higher years of secondary education. Finally, schools still have three free hours at their disposition (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000). Pelleriaux (2001) marks correctly that beside the differentiation between the A-and B-stream in the first stage, schools make an additional differentiation based on the free hours that are at their disposition. The original objective of the free hours for schools was to profile themselves. Nevertheless, it seems that schools use these free hours to define different disciplines. Classes are being composed, based on the discipline the students choose.

125. In the second stage a further differentiation is made between four different types of education: ASO, TSO, KSO, and BSO. In the third stage this differentiation is continued and supplemented with some new disciplines.

126. Some comprehensive aspects in the unified structure are the delay in making a definite study choice (which is a subject of discussion given the remark just mentioned), the common basic education, and the heterogeneous class composition according to social background. Aspects of the traditional schools on the other hand are: differentiation in four types of education in second stage, transitions that are difficult to make after the first stage especially against the cascade structure (ASO TSO BSO), and differentiation in A-and B-stream in the first year of secondary education.

127. One can notice that the unified structure is only moderate comprehensive, compared to the comprehensive structure of VSO. However, the moderate comprehensive structure has the guarantee of equal chances for all students. Does the unified system succeed in this? According to data (from 1992) obtained from the Centre of Social Policy (CSB) which compares the educational level of parents with the type of education of their children, there is a distinctive difference between students from ASO, TSO, and BSO with regard to their social background. Disproportional more students whose parents enjoyed tertiary education attend ASO (41.3%) compared to 5.6% whose parents enjoyed only primary education. Opposite, there is an over representation of students in BSO whose parents enjoyed at most primary education (32.2%), compared to children of higher educated parents (11.2%). Within TSO most children originate from parents who studied the same course (35.7%). Furthermore, the bridging function of the B-stream towards the A-stream is only realised by a limited group of students. Transitions in the higher years of secondary education are seldom noticed. A final remark is that, equal to the socio-economic differences, there exists an unequal participation of students with foreign nationality according to the different types of education. Most of them finish secondary education in BSO, they seldom end up in ASO.

128. In the opinion of Van Petegem et al. (2002) the introduction of the comprehensive structure in secondary education has up till now only been moderate. The governmental reforms could not prevent that certain inequities maintained throughout the years (differential participation in the different types of education, delay in the school career...). On the contrary, the inequities that exist at the start of secondary education are being strengthened throughout secondary education. The discipline students choose at the beginning of secondary education determines to a great extent their further school and professional career.

#### **4.2.1 *Differentiation in Flemish education***

129. The Education Department of the Ministry of Flemish Community describes the cascade system in such a way: At the beginning of secondary education, students first attempt the 'harder' programs (general secondary education), which later seems to be too difficult for the student. Then they shift to the 'easier' programs in the technical and further on in the vocational secondary education. In general, the cascade system is presented as starting in the general secondary education leading towards technical education, and finally ending up in the vocational secondary education. A certain hierarchy between the different study options is assumed. Hostens (2002) notices correctly that the cascade system is not limited to mere secondary education. The mechanism is also operative between different schools; between disciplines within the general secondary education, within the technical secondary education, and within the vocational secondary education; between mainstream and special schools; and between tertiary educations. With regard to the latter, Van Damme (2001) indicates how the cascade system operates in tertiary education (keeping in mind the binary structure of tertiary education in Flanders). The different courses university and colleges of higher education organize, are still set in a hierarchical order, leading to different functions and status. Even in disciplines where courses of university and non-university education are very much related to each other they are perceived differently leading to a different social valuation. Foundation for this is the belief that academic courses are scientific oriented, whereas non-university courses are more professional oriented (according to the author, the distinction scientific versus professional orientation is however not legitimate for the existence of the binary structure of tertiary education). A consequence of this is that many students first try a university discipline. The first year of university operates as a selection mechanism: students who fail migrate towards the colleges of higher

education. The other way around (transition from non-university towards university) is much less perceived. In this way, the hierarchical character of the binary structure is reproduced and confirmed. In the opinion of Van Damme (2001), work must be made of the establishment of flexible and easy transitions throughout courses and institutions, and collaboration between universities and colleges for higher education.

130. The cascade system occurs in different manners. In first instance, there are the pupils who stay down a class. Students do not only repeat a class in the same type of education, but they can also migrate towards another type of education, described as 'easier'. Secondly, the cascade mechanism is also applicable for students who transfer to the next year. This can happen voluntary or by means of a B-attest (students have no other option than leaving their original type of education). The latter is particular the case in the transition from ASO towards TSO, and from TSO towards BSO (Verhoeven, 2002).

131. According to Verhoeven (2002) the stream of the cascade is characterized by the old hierarchy that existed between the general, more theoretical education that permits students to transfer toward tertiary education; and the more specialized vocational training that is seen as a final end. Most of the time the flow goes from disciplines that are more cognitive oriented towards disciplines that promote manual work. In the same sense Pelleriaux (2001) notices that the cascade system is problematic by the fact that students only entering technical or vocational secondary education in the first year of the third stage of secondary education, fall behind in technical courses

132. One must not forget that the cascade system is part of a much wider social phenomenon (Tan, 2002). The judgment, which states that workmanship and technical courses and jobs are inferior, is deeply rooted in the dominant middle class. Tegenbos (2002) shares this opinion: Society designates all that has to do with technique as inferior. Furthermore, technical workers generally enjoy an inferior social-judicial statute. As a consequence, changes in education are not sufficient, but have to go together with changes in the socioeconomical field.

133. Leroy (2002) describes some elements that could have an influence on the cascade, organised according to the CIPO-model (Context, Input, Process and Output). The effect of the cascade reveals itself in the data from the *output*. In many cases, schools reorient starting from ASO, but especially from TSO, whereas B-attests are seldom given in BSO. The data from TSO are very particular: remarkable less A-attests and more B-attests are granted compared to ASO and BSO. This reflects the cascade system: students start in ASO and lower their ambitions gradually. TSO can be seen as an intermediary towards BSO. Also the retention (starting as well as ending within the same educational type) in TSO is very low. Finally, the number of repeaters in TSO is high. These data indicate that TSO has to challenge some difficult problems. Data from the *input* reveal that not everybody chooses the best starting position. For example, the way in which schools organize their study program, and the pedagogical view on education they support can influence the starting position of the students, positive or negative. It also often happens that study choices are made without enough self-knowledge of the students. The characteristics of the students entering the different types of education will be described later on in the paragraph. The *process* has however the strongest influence on the cascade, because schools have the freedom in the way they want to realise the attainment targets and their pedagogical projects. The example of the five free hours schools use to define different disciplines in the A-stream of the first year in secondary education, is mentioned earlier. Another example is the amount of lessons schools receive for the next school year according to the type and number of students. However, they are not obliged in spending the obtained amount of lessons for the students they were original meant for. One can assess that most lesson hours are transferred towards ASO; BSO and TSO on the other hand make a large sacrifice (e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> stage secondary education, use of lesson hours in terms of percentage: ASO: 108.8%; BSO: 90,8%; TSO: 89.1%). Also the career and study guidance offered by the schools plays a very important role with regard to the cascade system. A correct and realistic study option leads to high succeeding chances and prevents students from

ending up in the cascade. Unfortunately schools and teachers often lack the knowledge about the different types of education and study options, leading to wrong advice for the student. Leroy (2002) concludes that a complex of factors situated on the micro, meso and macro level causes the cascade structure.

134. Mahieu (2002) supports the hypothesis that chances in education are determined by social and ethnic background. Educational deprivation for foreign and social deprived children already starts in pre-school manifested by their under representation. This trend goes on in primary education: in the first year, 9.33% of Belgian students are one year behind, compared with 26.44% of the students with foreign nationality. This delay increases in larger proportion for the foreign students (in the 6<sup>th</sup> year, 8.89% of the foreign students are 2 years behind, compared to 0.48% of the Belgian students). Also in secondary education, a study from HIVA (based on data from CSB and LOSO-project) showed that there is an apparent difference between the social background of the students from ASO, TSO and BSO (Van Petegem, De Wit, & Deneire, 2002). The study option in the first stage of secondary education seems to be strongly influenced by the educational and occupation level of the parents. Students from the working class or from low educated parents more often opt for TSO and BSO. In addition, pupils from ASO, TSO and BSO have a different profile with respect to their school past, educational orientation, and some income, socio-cultural characteristics of the parents. In the same sense, foreign students are disproportional represented in the different educational types: they are over represented in TSO and particular in BSO. Their chance on an increasing deprivation over the years is also much higher. Finally, participation in tertiary education is also strongly social-economic determined (Mahieu, 2002). Generally speaking, the intake of migrants in tertiary education is ten times less compared to the intake of Flemish students. Also the transition towards the second year is not something obvious for these youngsters. We can conclude that educational deprivation is manifest in the intake, as well as in the transition through pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education for certain sub populations.

135. Beside the moderate comprehensive structure of the unified system that contributes in this matter, Bourdieu explains this by means of the 'social-cultural capital' (learning certain values, attitudes and habits from the parents) children achieve in their family. This social cultural capital differs from family to family, but is determined by the social class to which the child belongs. In itself these differences are not the real problem. The problem is created by the fact that the school is socially as well as culturally determined. The values and habits of schools mainly reflect those of the middle and higher class. Youngsters of the lower class first have to assimilate to the culture of the school. The school seems to reproduce the inequity that exists between the social classes of the students. This can be illustrated by the study option students choose in secondary education. The differentiation between ASO, TSO, BSO and KSO reflects a difference in cultural and social aspects. Parents prefer sending their children to disciplines they are familiar with, in other words, disciplines of which the socio-cultural distance is not too large (Van Petegem et al., 2002). Mahieu (2002) confirms this thesis: it is the ignorance of the specific codes of the school leading to success, and the misjudge of the importance of education that limits the chances of children from the day they are born.

136. Van de Velde and Van Damme (2001) also investigated the characteristics of unqualified dropouts among secondary education students. Unqualified dropouts were described as youngsters, who left education without a diploma/certificate/attest of the sixth year of secondary education, third year of second stage BSO, third stage DBSO, fifth year BuSO-OV3, a tradesman's certificate or certificate second stage TSO/BSO. In first instance, the influence of the **social background** was considered. Dependent on the educational level of the parents, the employment situation of the father and the home language, the chances to leave secondary education qualified vary from 54% to 96%. More specific the educational level of the father and mother seems to be strongly associated with the chance to leave school unqualified. Students of low educated parents (diploma primary education) run to four times more the risk than students of high educated parents (diploma tertiary education). Furthermore, approximate 85% of the students with employed parents leave the school with a diploma of the sixth year of secondary education, while this

applies for not more than 6% of them without any qualification. Especially the unemployment of the father seems to have a negative impact on the unqualified dropout. Also foreign students tend to leave school unqualified much more than Flemish students (20% opposed to 7%). The same differences are found between Dutch speaking and non-Dutch speaking students. The prognoses can even be improved if besides the characteristics of social background the characteristics of the **starting position** of the secondary education students are considered. Especially the starting age and the educational options seem to have a strong predicting value concerning the qualified school leave. Youngsters who start secondary education with one or more years of delay, clearly belong to the group at risk. Furthermore, starters in the B-stream run to four times more the risk to leave education unqualified (28% opposed to 7%). Within the A-stream the group at risk is mainly situated within the options containing technology in the optional part. As for the school type, starters in TSO/BSO schools have the largest risk to drop out without any qualification (14%) as opposed to the ASO-schools (5%) (Van de Velde & Van Damme, 2001). Finally, also the **early changes** during the first two school years of the school career influence to a considerable extent the chance to drop out of school. Almost all changes during this period (change of educational stream, of options, of schools and repeating a class) increase the chance to drop out unqualified. Youngsters who change from school during the first two years, triple their risk (from 8% to 25%). Likewise, changing of educational stream (A- or B-stream) during the starting years implies a significant increase of risk to leave the school unqualified. Changing of option within the A-stream only seems to have a negative influence on the qualified educational leave to that degree that this goes together with repeating. Though, repeating during the first year forms the most important risk factor. Changing of school and/or options mainly lower the chances for non-repeaters. Besides the early changes during the school career, also the number of changes over the whole secondary educational career plays an important role. The number of times repeating influences the chance on qualified school leave the most strongly, followed in decreasing order by the number of times changing options or school. The number of times that a student changes options has mainly a negative influence on the qualified school leave with youngsters who repeated at the most ones. For youngsters who repeated several times, changes in options matter to a lesser degree (Van de Velde & Van Damme, 2001).

### 4.3 Social and cultural barriers

137. In this paragraph an overview is given of the different types of financial measures that exist for each educational level. More specific, the scholarships from the Flemish Community that exist in secondary and tertiary education are described. Also other financial measures in tertiary education among which the system of social services, living wages from the OCMW, educational cheques and social fund of ANPC are discussed.

#### 4.3.1 *Pre-school and primary education*

138. Remarkable for pre and primary school is the fact that -as opposed to secondary and tertiary education there exists no direct financial scholarship from the Flemish community for children who come out of financial difficult families. This possibility only exists in secondary and tertiary education.

#### 4.3.2 *Secondary education*

139. In secondary education the only direct financial educational resource for students from parents who have some financial difficulties, consists of scholarships from the Flemish community. The three conditions to achieve a scholarship in secondary education are for the most part comparable with those of tertiary education. The three conditions are:

- a) Nationality conditions: The general condition is that youngsters must have the Belgian nationality, although exceptions to this are possible.

- b) Educational conditions: As long as the student is of school age and attends full time education, the student can receive a scholarship. The fact that the student isn't any more of school age, doesn't imply automatically he/she cannot obtain a scholarship. In this case the student has to meet a number of additional conditions. Besides the fact that the student has to attend full time education, it is also obliged that he/she: has gained an A or B attest in previous year; hasn't repeated more than one school year during the period the student is out of school age; and attends a higher school year than previous year. If the pupil attends the same school year as the previous one, it has to be on advice of the school board.
- c) Socio-financial conditions: The parents of the student are not allowed to gain more than a certain amount, usually based on the income of two years ago. The maximum amount the parents may earn depends on the number of persons that are fiscally dependent. It ranges from 9172 Euro for families with none fiscally dependent persons to 52,738 Euro for families with 10 fiscally dependent persons. Families with 2 dependent persons can earn 16,000 Euro before they lose the right for a scholarship.

140. Also the school year that the student attends is taken into consideration. If the pupil attends one of the final three school years of secondary education, the parents receive a higher scholarship than the first three years. If the pupil follows the fourth stage, parents receive an even higher scholarship. For the school year 2003-2004 the scholarship ranges from 93 Euro to 1403 Euro. Students who are independent and married students can also apply for a scholarship (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Department Scholarships, 2004a).

#### 4.3.3 *Tertiary education*

141. As opposed to basic and secondary education, an enrolment fee has to be paid in tertiary education. On top of this, an examination fee is asked to take part in the examinations. A distinction is made between the colleges for higher education and universities by decree. For the colleges of higher education the annual enrolment fee comes to at least 62 Euro and at the most to 360 Euro (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the colleges for higher education in the Flemish Community of 13 July 1994.). For enrolment in university, the minimum is 250 Euro and the maximum 360 Euro. These amounts are being yearly adapted to the evolution of the consumption prices. For students on a grant (which will be explained later), the enrolment fees are less high (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the universities in the Flemish Community of 12 June 1991).

142. Within the framework of social measures that exist to stimulate the 'democratization' of Flemish tertiary education, there exist two complementary systems: the system of scholarships of the Flemish community and the system of social services for students organised by the services of student facilities at the tertiary institutions. First the scholarships will be discussed. Several studies showed that the system of scholarships acts as an important contribution for persons who experience some financial problems, as a result of which the extra study cost is a heavily load for the family budget. Moreover, a research of HIVA ('Reducing the material barriers in education') pointed out that financial barriers clearly influence the attitude of youngsters in their choice to start a study after secondary education. Financial forces as scholarships can influence this choice and contribute in this way to the democratization of tertiary education.

143. The objective of scholarships is to create maximum qualification chances and full opportunities to develop in education. The target group consists of persons with little subsistence or development chances. The financial capacity of the family unit remains the decisive condition to obtain a scholarship. The current system of scholarships for tertiary education in the Flemish community is based on the decree of 16 February 2001 (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the study financing and the student facilities

in tertiary education from the Flemish Community of 6 February 2004, Explanatory memorandum). This decree will however be replaced by a new decree starting next school year (2004-2005). With the introduction of the 'structural decree' in 2004-2005, the structure of tertiary education changes profoundly. As a consequence of this new structure, a number of important alterations are being carried out in obtaining a scholarship. Where the decree of 16 February 2001 provided three educational levels, namely colleges of higher education of 1 cycle, colleges of higher education of two cycles and university, the new decree only provides two levels: the bachelor and the masters (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

144. Within this new decree, there are three conditions to achieve a scholarship: (1) Nationality conditions: The general condition is that youngsters must have the Belgian nationality, although exceptions to this are possible. (2) Educational conditions: Students have to be enrolled as regular students (studying with a diploma contract). Full-time as well as part-time education is suitable under the condition that students are enrolled for at least 30 study points. Also for education outside Flanders it is possible to receive a scholarship. One starts with a credit proportional to the number of study points of the educational trajectory at the outset. A student has the right of receiving 2 'bachelor'-credits and 1 'master' credit; a credit for one 'teacher advanced training'; a credit for one 'preparatory and/or linking program and a 'joker credit of 60 study points' (normally the student has to succeed the previous year to obtain a scholarship. If this is not the case, they can appeal on a joker scholarship). A student can receive educational financing for maximum 60 study points by academically year. (3) Socio-financial conditions: The student or his/her parents are not allowed to gain more than a certain amount, usually based on the income of two years ago.

145. For determining the income limit and the educational financing, the financial capacity of the family unit is used. If the income of the family unit crosses a certain limit, it is assumed that they have enough capacity to finance the educational costs completely by themselves. For a family with 2 fiscally dependent persons, this maximum is around 25000 Euro. If the income of the family unit is below a certain limit it is assumed they cannot permit to spend their own income toward the educational costs. This limit was set on 13000 Euro for a family with 2 fiscally dependent persons. To determine the allowed income limit, following aspects are taken into account: the number of persons that are fiscally dependent in the family unit, the number of fiscally handicapped persons and the number of students within the family unit that attend tertiary education outside of the candidate. In addition, there exist different categories of family units which can apply for scholarships: students who are dependent of their parents, students who are dependent of a non-parent, married or legally cohabiting students, independent students and single students. When the income is equal to or lower to the maximum limit, the scholarship comes to an amount of at least 198.31 Euro. When the income is beneath or equal to the minimum limit, the student receives the maximum scholarship. For students living in digs this amount is 3069 Euro and 1842 Euro for students not living in digs. Married or legally cohabiting students, independent and single students are considered as students living in digs.

146. As for the enrolment fee, if the student answers the nationality and the financial condition, only the lowest charge has to be paid. This is also the case if the student doesn't meet the educational conditions (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004; Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the study financing and the student facilities in tertiary education from the Flemish Community of 6 February 2004, Explanatory memorandum).

147. When the conditions for scholarships from secondary education are compared with those from tertiary education, there are some differences noticeable: The conditions and the income limits are more favourable for tertiary education compared to those of secondary education. In secondary education students have to attend full time education to obtain a scholarship, in tertiary education students can also follow part time education. If there are students within the family unit that attend tertiary education outside of the candidate himself, they count for the double. For secondary education, studying persons in the family outside the candidate don't count double. Furthermore, in secondary education missing parents in

single parent families are not counted as persons who are fiscally dependent as opposed to tertiary education (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Department scholarships, 2004b).

148. Moreover, Cantillon, Verbist, Baert, and Van Dam (2004) formulated some remarks concerning the new minimum income limit as proposed for 2004-2005 for tertiary education. In their research they find that even families who are up or under the lowest poverty line do not receive the total scholarships (since families are only entitled to the total scholarship if their taxable income doesn't succeed the minimum income limit). Furthermore, as soon as their income increases a little bit, they quickly receive lower amounts. As a result, also with the new decree only a very few families are eligible for the total scholarship. Therefore the researchers suggest to raise the minimum income limit. Besides this their research also indicates that the scholarships do not cover all the costs for any type of family. Therefore they recommend to increase the sums of the total scholarships to the level of the direct study costs (Cantillon, Verbist, Baert, & Van Dam, 2004).

149. Besides the financial barriers for tertiary education, there are also cultural barriers that hinder the transition towards tertiary education. The creation of equal chances is therefore an assignment as well as for the systems of scholarships as for social services for students. The system of social services – by which students obtain financial help by social services of colleges of higher education or universities – acts supplementary and complementary with regard to the system of scholarships. Student services offer additional facilities as an addition to the system of scholarships that proceeding from the general regulations in force cannot (or insufficiently) answer all the specific financial needs of the students. They are in other words an instrument to improve the preconditions of studying for all the students. Every service acts autonomously as a result of which there are differences between the services, as well as regard to the financial amount as to the procedure.

150. A distinction can be made between social services organised by colleges of higher education on the one hand, and social services organised by university on the other. As for the universities in Flanders, the decree of 21 December 1994 cancels the decree of 1960 and adds at the same time article 140. This article confirms the contribution of the Flemish community towards the services of universities, and determines the calculation method concerning the 'social allowance'. Colleges of higher education had to wait for a longer period to receive these social allowances.

151. The existing social facilities for students are active in the domain of food, accommodation, psycho-medical-social services and support for student organisations (in the academic, social, sportive, and cultural field). It offers selective as well as universal facilities, which are individually or collectively oriented. They are managed together with the students who are at the same time the target group and this within the spirit of participation and involvement. As already mentioned, there are within the current regulation about the social services some important differences between colleges for higher education and universities. Concerning the financing of social services, the financial amount from the government is lower for colleges of higher education than for universities. Moreover, universities in the past had the advantage of cheap loans from the government for restaurants and student residences (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the study financing and the student facilities in tertiary education from the Flemish Community of 6 February 2004, Explanatory Memorandum). Furthermore, the system of social services can be used as follows: as advance on the scholarships of the Flemish community that are not paid at the same moment when the cost of studying is situated; within the spreading of the payment of the enrolment fee; and to obtain a study loan (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

152. Besides scholarships and social services there are also student grants within the framework of student mobility for students who study abroad during a certain period. At present moment this concerns the European Erasmus/Socrates programmes (aimed at stimulating the European dimension within colleges for higher education as well as universities) by which students can receive a student grant that is partially

related to the income of the parents of the student. In principle, equal access towards mobility has to be guaranteed for all social groups. Nevertheless, the study 'Inquiry of the socio-economic situation of Erasmus-students' from the European Commission in 2000 showed that namely youngsters from financial wealthy environments study abroad. 69% of the parents from Flemish Erasmus-students have a management function. Only two percent of the fathers or mothers are unemployed. 75% of the parents have received tertiary education and 50 percent has an income higher than the average income. Consequently, the necessity of a well-considered policy about mobility and the financing of it is urged.

153. (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the study financing and the student facilities in tertiary education from the Flemish Community of 6 February 2004, Explanatory memorandum). The student grant is aimed to partially cover the additional accommodation expenses in the foreign country. The Educational Department (Flemish Erasmus/Socrates agency) allows a monthly amount, dependent on the reference income of the parents (comparable with the Flemish scholarships). As regard to school year 2002/2003, monthly grants are assigned of respectively 200 Euro (category 1), 175 Euro (category 2) and 100 Euro (category 3). If the reference income is over 68129.87 Euro (one child fiscally dependent; this limit increases when more children are fiscally dependent), the student doesn't receive a student grant. On top of this monthly grant, there is a once-only installation cost. Also students who are not receiving an Erasmus grant, receive an installation cost of 100 Euro. Students, who receive a scholarship from the Flemish community, can also receive the student grant from Erasmus on top of it. Next two measures describe the financial support for the students themselves.

154. The objective of the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW) is 'to offer every person the possibility to lead a life that answers the human dignity'. Every Belgian municipality has an OCMW. It is among other things authorised for the implementation of the law on social integration. Every adult person, who doesn't have at his disposal sufficient subsistence has the right on 'social integration'. This implies that the OCMW has to take care of a suitable employment. Although employment is emphasised, the OCMW can also allow that the student -to increase their chances on the labour market -starts a full time study. The student closes then with the OCMW an 'individualised project for societal integration'. In this case the student has right on a living wage, which is a payment to support one self. The amount the student receives depends on the category to which he or she belongs. A single person receives for example almost 600 Euro a month. If the student receives a scholarship from the Flemish community, this will not be deducted from the living wage. The student receives in this case the scholarship on top of it (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

155. The Governmental Department for Employment Policy (RVA) can allow exemption of the control from the social security for educational reasons. This implies that the job seeker, who is entitled to an allowance, has the permission to follow tertiary education while retaining unemployment benefits. A person can obtain this exemption if he is a regular enrolled student and studies full time education; hasn't obtained a certificate of tertiary education; is a job seeker entitled to an allowance at the outset of the studies; has finished his studies since at least two years; and had minimum 312 unemployment or waiting payment days during the two years preceding the outset of the studies. The latter condition doesn't apply for educational courses leading to 'bottleneck jobs'. In this case the condition of being a job seeker entitled to an allowance is sufficient (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

156. Employees living in Flanders or Brussels can make use of the educational cheques from the Flemish government. They can use these cheques to pay a training course at a recognised educational institute. Within the same year cheques with a maximum of 250 Euro can be used. With this money, only the direct costs (enrolment fee, educational material...) are being refund. The employee has to pay half of the value of the cheque, consequently having the advantage of 125 Euro a year (Sociale Voorzieningen Vlaanderen, 2004).

157. The social fund of the Additional National Equal Committee (ANPC) for employees, gives a bonus for students who follow ‘bottleneck jobs’ (among which secretariat management, company management and industrial sciences and technology). Students who succeed the first year receive a bonus of 200 Euro, students who graduate receive again 200 Euro. Who in the future actually practices a bottleneck job receives 350 Euro.

#### 4.4 Economic barriers

158. As for the allocation of financial resources across the different educational levels, next table gives an overview of the cost price per student across the different educational levels.

**Table 1: Cost Price per Student Across the Different Educational Levels (in Euro)<sup>a</sup>**

Educational level	2001	2002	2003
Regular primary education	3.026,83	3.215,85	3.407,74
Regular secondary education	6.412,78	6.640,77	6.901,21
Colleges for higher education	5.796,76	5.952,20	6.139,00
University <sup>b</sup>	10.999,41	13.262,81	13.592,56
Social advancement education <sup>c</sup>	-	624,19	651,17

<sup>a</sup> Source: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Budget and data management department (2002). *Statistisch jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs 2002-2003*. Brussels: Author.

<sup>b</sup> Inclusive the credits for scientific research that are registered in the Education Budget. Since 2002 the measures for special research funds were additional

<sup>c</sup> The credits contain predominantly the labour costs. The functioning of the social advancement education is financed with the enrollment fees. The decree concerning adult education provoked another way of registration. From school year 1999-2000 the number of enrollments in the reference period is count instead of the number of students.

Following table outlines the total Education Budget subdivided into educational level and educational network.

**Table 2: Education Budget Subdivided into Educational Level and Educational Network (in thousand Euro)<sup>a</sup>**

Educational level	Educational network	2003
	GO	339.266
	OGO	471.118
Regular primary education	VGO	1.302.604
	Others <sup>b</sup>	6.637
	Total	2.119.625
	GO	594.787
	OGO	270.479
Regular secondary education	VGO	2.020.313
	Others <sup>b</sup>	13.045
	Total	2.898.624
Colleges for higher education		592.251
University education		735.439
	GO	55.913
	OGO	44.997
Social advancement education	VGO	77.861
	Others	172
	Total	178.943
Total		7.556.177

Some remarks can be given out of these data. The two tables indicate that the financial resources in primary education are low compared to secondary education that receives the largest budget. This can be seen as a critique on our educational system since this situation contributes to inequity. One must not forget that the foundations of learning are laid in primary education.

Another remark concerns the financing of social advancement education. This level of education is situated in the framework of lifelong learning. Although the government promotes lifelong learning, it is obvious that this sector receives very limited financial resources. This situation can also be interpreted in the light of inequity. For example, persons who did not had the chance of obtaining their diploma of secondary education during regular secondary education should be given the chance to achieve this diploma at a later stage in their life. However, regular secondary education receives the largest financing as opposed to social advancement education.

<sup>a</sup> Source: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, Budget and data management department (2002). *Statistisch jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs 2002-2003*. Brussels: Author.

<sup>b</sup> expenditures exceeding the educational networks.

## SECTION IV: POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

### CHAPTER 5: ACTIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES BEARING ON EQUITY

#### 5.1 The new integrated equal opportunities policy (GOK)

159. Up till now Flemish schools have benefited from different temporary systems which supported them in their efforts towards children with special needs. All the existing measures have been discontinued in favour of one integrated system that is been implemented since the school year 2002 -2003. The former policies included:

160. *Educational Priority Policy (OVB)*: The educational priority policy went into effect in Flanders in 1991-1992. This policy is aimed at foreign pupils in regular and special pre-school, primary and secondary education who because of social, economic or cultural reasons have learning and developmental difficulties. More specific, its goal is to prevent these pupils from falling behind educationally and to stimulate a positive interaction between the Flemish and foreign students based on mutual respect (Van Petegem et al., 2000). The target group consists of pupils from a different ethnic background and whose mother did not attend school past the age of 18. Schools are granted additional financing for each target group pupil, provided they have a minimum number of pupils on their rolls. Mainstream schools who have at least 20 target group students and special schools who have 10 such students, can make an application for OVB. Therefore, schools have to make an application plan in which they clearly indicate how they will spend these resources. They need to develop actions within the following fields of activity: language skills training, inter cultural education (ICO), the prevention and remediation of learning and developmental problems, the involvement of parents in the children's school careers, and optionally, education in the pupils own language and culture (Caremans, 2003). Although the extra instruction periods of OVB are generated by the target group children, they are used in favour of all the children. This means OVB uses an integrated approach. Nevertheless, OVB had to deal with several critiques. One of these was the fact that educational deprivation does not only apply for migrants, but as well for many autochthonous students. This has lead to a similar project for autochthonous educational deprived pupils: 'Extending care' (Caremans, 2003).

161. *Extending Care*: Since 1993-1994, the Flemish Government offered the project extending care at the pre-school and primary school level. The project provides extra teaching periods as to provide a wider range of educational care for children who suffer from learning difficulties and for disadvantaged children (Eurydice, 2003). To qualify for these extra teaching periods, a school must have at least 20 target group children. The target group consists of children who live in economically and culturally unfavourable circumstances but who are capable of participating in ordinary education when specific deficits are eliminated. To obtain the extra teaching periods, schools have to formulate an application plan in which attention is given to five action fields: prevention and remediation of developmental and learning disadvantages, Dutch language proficiency, inter cultural education, socio-emotional development and parental involvement (Circular Letter of 29 March 1999). In 2000-2001 there were 36,952 target pupils in pre-school education and 10,254 teaching periods used for extending care. In the same period, there were 71,389 target pupils in primary education and 10,008 teaching periods used for extending care. The extending care can be implemented in different manners: the use of follow-up systems for students, differentiation in the learning process, language skills training for foreign children... But also extension

care was not spared the criticism. For example, there was a lot of critique on the allocation of the additional facilities. One can see extension care as the forerunner of the integrated support for schools (Caremans, 2003).

162. *'School with special needs'-project*: During 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, secondary schools with a large number of educational deprived children received additional teaching periods from the 'school with special needs'-project. As opposed to the two previous projects, schools didn't have to formulate an application plan to apply for extra funding. They obtained the extra facilities if they had target group students. Furthermore, they could choose their own objectives to which they want to work with using the additional resources. For this project, learning delay was the most important criterion (Caremans, 2003).

163. *Non-discrimination policy*: In July 1993 the Independent Council for Community Education (RAGO), the Educational Secretariat for Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG), the Group for Flemish Provincial Education (CVPO), the Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO) and the Minister of Education signed a common declaration concerning a non-discrimination policy in education. They did not consider it opportune to establish the measures against discrimination by decree. Instead, they were all in the opinion that agreements in the form of a common declaration offered more possibilities. In this declaration they agreed on following topics: to cooperate towards a better distribution of all autochthonous students among the schools by means of a local consultation between the schools in a municipality; to elaborate measures in every educational network that prevent discrimination in schools; to continue in every educational network with the inter-culturalisation of the schools' organization and the content of the curricula. Unfortunately, it became clearer that an approach of an important problem as segregation wasn't enough if it was merely based on voluntariness. The government as well as the organizing bodies wanted more guarantees about the right to enrol in the school of one's choice. This was only possible if it was ratified by a decree. In this way, the nondiscrimination policy was the precursor of the right to enrol in the school of one's choice (Caremans, 2003).

164. All previous projects had to deal with some fundamental problems. First the temporariness of the project was being criticised. Schools put a lot of effort in developing the new project, but they were uncertain about the duration of the support from the government. Secondly, schools obtained extra facilities partly based on their application plan. The question was of this plan operated as an efficient selection criterion. Finally, the criteria used in these projects didn't automatically mean that the schools with the most difficulties received the most facilities. The integrated support for schools wants to maintain the positive aspects from the previous projects, but wants to solve its difficult aspects (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning Equal Chances I of 28 June 2002, Design of Decree).

165. The new decree from 2002 about equal chances aims to offer equal development and education opportunities to all children, to prevent exclusion, segregation and discrimination, and to promote social cohesion. The decree on equal opportunities in compulsory education (6 till 18) is based on three principles.

### **5.1.1 *The right to enrol in the school of one's choice***

166. Every child who is entitled to education has the right to be enrolled in the school of his (or his parents') choice. This will guarantee migrant children as well as underprivileged children the right to be admitted to all schools. There are only three conditions which have to be fulfilled:

- Enrolment is subject to the condition that the parents explicitly agree with the pedagogical project of the school and with the school rules and regulations. The school management is not entitled to assess itself whether the pupil can be expected to meet the project requirements and the rules.

This guarantees every pupil a fair chance to be educated within the pedagogical and didactical framework of his (parents') explicit choice.

- School management can only refuse enrolment on two grounds :
  - i. if an additional pupil will endanger the safety of the pupils because of material circumstances (such as lack of space);
  - ii. if the pupil has been expelled from the same school during one of the two preceding school years.
- The school can limit the percentage of pupils who speak another language than Dutch at home, provided it already runs special programs for this group of pupils (e.g. stimulating Dutch language skills must be part of the school practice). This condition is laid down in order to safeguard a reasonable balance between native and non-native speakers. In that situation the school can opt for a temporary enrolment of the pupil and refer him or her to the local consultative body which has to find a suitable school. In this way the government wants to avoid establishing segregated schools.

167. In addition to this right of enrolment in the school of one's choice the degree also formulates the right of parents to choose a particular location. Here again exceptions are only allowed for reasons of safety or in order to avoid segregation. The government also intends within the recent future to give priority to the enrolment of brothers and sisters from a child that is already enrolled in a school.

168. A special commission at ministerial level will monitor refusals and referrals and compliance with the degree by schools and local consultative bodies. Parents can bring their case before this commission if a satisfactory solution is not achieved at the local level.

### **5.1.2 *The local consultative bodies***

169. Throughout Flanders local consultative bodies are being established, separately for primary and secondary education. They started their activities from 1 January 2003. They consist of representatives of the education providers and of the local community: representatives of foreigners, underprivileged communities, the integration sector, socio-economic societies, etc. Schools are compelled to take part in the negotiations since it is of the utmost importance that they are involved in local actions aimed at helping underprivileged groups in education.

170. The local consultative body has several tasks, for example mediating in all situations where a pupil's enrolment is blocked due to refusal or referral to another school; making arrangements about the facilities of the reception classes for non-Dutch speaking newcomers.

### **5.1.3 *Integrated support for schools***

171. To determine if a school has many children who are threatened in their educational chances, the government makes use of indicators. They predict the theoretical chance of students to drop out of school during their educational career, or to develop a school career that is not optimal. There are indicators oriented on the one hand towards primary schools and the first two years of secondary education; and on the other hand towards pupils attending the last four years of secondary school.

172. For primary schools and the first two years of secondary education, the decree formulates five socio-economical indicators to determine whether someone is a target group pupil:

- the family is wholly dependent on income support;
- the pupil is homeless;
- the parents belong to a travelling population group;
- the mother does not have a secondary education qualification, a certificate of the second year of the third stage of secondary professional education or an equivalent certificate;
- the home language is not Dutch.

173. A declaration of the parents on their honour is sufficient to verify if a child meets the necessary conditions. For the last four years of secondary, the socio-economic indicators that predict problems during the school career are not used. Instead, indicators that refer to current problems in the school are used:

- the pupil has an educational backlog of at least two years;
- the pupil is a secondary school entrant. This means a student who is enrolled in TSO or BSO; a student who was enrolled in another school during the preceding school year; or a student who obtained a B or C certificate in previous school year
- the pupil attended reception classes in the previous school year (Caremans, 2003).

174. Each indicator is given a certain value. For primary education and the first two years of secondary education, these values generate extra educational staff or additional teaching periods if ten percent of a school's population consists of target group pupils and the school has been classified positively. For the last four years of secondary education, a school can be eligible for extra educational staff or receive certain scores when its population consists of at least 25% of target group pupils. With these scores, part-time or full-time educators (psychologist, social worker, pedagogue...) can be recruited (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning Equal Chances I of 28 June 2002).

175. Where before measures were acquired year by year, the present decree grants the extra staff for an uninterrupted period of three years. This favours efficient planning and effects over a reasonable space of time.

176. If a school is selected for the integrated support it has to develop an equal opportunity policy plan during the first trimester at the start of the three years. Consequently, the school no longer has to submit an application plan but will be assessed afterwards to see whether it has properly implemented its policy plan.

177. The objective of the additional facilities is essentially the same for all educational levels: to improve the educational career of all students. Therefore, the objectives schools can work on to improve these careers, are quite similar. They follow naturally from the projects educational priority policy, extending care and special needs for secondary education schools.

178. For the development of the equal opportunities policy plan in primary and the first two years of secondary education, the school has to select its objectives within following themes:

- remediation and prevention of developmental and educational disadvantages and realise learning gains;
- stimulation of language skills among pupils;

- intercultural education;
- transition and orientation;
- stimulation of social and emotional competence among pupils;
- participation of students and parents.

179. For the last four years in secondary education these themes are:

- remediation and prevention of educational and behavioural problems;
- promotion of language skills among pupils;
- intercultural education;
- guarantee optimum choice of courses and realise efficient guidance for streaming, work placement and educational career;
- participation of students and parents.

180. Compared to primary schools and the first two years of secondary education, focus in the higher years is more on prevention and remediation of learning disadvantages, guidance of students in problem situations and the stimulation of a qualified school leave.

181. Besides choosing the objectives a school wants to obtain, they also have to formulate in their plan how they want to achieve these aims, and how they want to make a self-evaluation during the second trimester of the second school year (Caremans, 2003). A number of transitional measures from the temporary projects (OVB, extension care and special needs for secondary education schools) towards the new policy were provided for the school year 2002-2003. The assigned extra hours from these former policies are being compared with the extra hours obtained by the new integrated support. If a school loses hours with the implementation of the new policy, it can be adapted by the Flemish government in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning Equal Chances I of 28 June 2002).

182. Halfway through the three year term schools evaluate their own results based on their equal opportunity policy plan. At the end of the three years an independent college of school inspectors measures the achievement of the goals. If the evaluation is positive, a school can again appeal on the facilities from the integrated support for a new period of three years (if all conditions are fulfilled). If a school is negative evaluated, it will lose the additional facilities (Caremans, 2003).

## **5.2 Role of Pupil Guidance Centers ‘CLB’**

183. At present the task of school guidance is carried out by the Pupil Guidance Centre, CLB. These centers function as integrated school guidance services and are a consequence of the integration of the former Psycho-Medical-Social Centers (PMS centers), which were mainly responsible for the guidance of pupils and the Health Supervision in Schools (MSTs) which carried out the health supervision in schools. The new CLBs came into effect on 1 September 2000 as a result of the Decree of 1 December 1998 concerning the Pupil Guidance Centers.

184. Three networks of the pupil guidance centers are in place. First, there are the centers of the community education which are organized by the school groups of the community education and financed

by the Flemish Community. Second, there are the grant-aided official centers, which are organized by public administration, except for the centers of the official education, and supported by the Flemish Community. The grant-aided free centers form the third group. They are organized by free associations or non-profit organizations and also supported by the Flemish Community.

185. The objective of the integration of the functioning of "PMS" centers and the Centers for Health Supervision in Schools, established in the new Decree, is to create a more transparent and coherent supply by one integrated Pupil Guidance Center. These CLBs are charged with contributing to the well-being of the pupils now and in the future. It is their intention to provide the pupils with a foundation for all further studying and to help the pupils in the acquiring and strengthening of competences that will help them to develop and participate socially. Therefore, the guidance of the pupils by the centers is situated in the following areas: learning and studying, the educational career, preventive health care, and psychological and social functioning. The target group of the CLBs consists of the pupils, parents, teachers and schools of the ordinary and special pre-school, primary and secondary education.

186. An important condition for the establishment of a CLB is the range of 12000 'weighted' pupils. A 'weighted' number of pupils means that the real number of pupils is multiplied by a coefficient depending on criteria such as the level of education. The financing and assigning of the staff members is calculated on the basis of this 'weighted' number of pupils. The 'weighted' number of pupils is established every three years.

187. Although the centres are structurally independent, they carry out all these tasks in close collaboration with the parents and the schools. Therefore, the school and the Pupil Guidance Centre jointly draw up a policy plan or a policy contract.

188. The CLBs came officially into effect on 1 September 2000. The transformation of the existing "PMS" centers and the Centers for Health Supervision in Schools into integrated Pupil Guidance Centers is spread out over the period up to 2003. The implementation plan finished recently this year (Eurydice, 2003).

### **5.2.1 *Principles of the working method***

189. The fulfilling of the centres' tasks is guided by the following principles:

- 1) The pupils' interest is the central focus;
- 2) The center works demand driven, except for obligatory guidance;
- 3) The center works subsidiary with regard to the school and the parents;
- 4) The center gives advice and provides, if possible, preventive guidance and, if necessary, remedial guidance;
- 5) The center works multidisciplinary (a somatic, psychological, pedagogical and social perspectives);
- 6) The center works free of charge and discretely;
- 7) The center works together with other services;
- 8) The center gives special attention to certain assignments in certain groups and to pupils whose development and learning are at risk because of their social background;

9) The center develops a deontological code that guarantees the independence of the staff.

190. An important task of the Pupil Guidance Centers is to provide information concerning the structure and organization of the Flemish educational system, the available courses, the relationship between education and the labour market, the welfare facilities, and the health facilities. In the medical field, the centers engage in the pupils' health, growth and development. Therefore, they carry out obligatory medical consults of all pupils at certain moments of their school career and keep records of the pupils' vaccinations. They also trace early disorders and are concerned with the prevention and detection of infectious diseases. From preschool up to the threshold of higher education the CLBs gather, analyze and progressively assess psychological, medical and social data of pupils, which are kept together in a multidisciplinary file for each pupil.

### **5.2.2 Staff of CLB**

191. The number of staff per centre depends on the centre's facilities weight which is set every three years on the basis of the weighted number of pupils and the weight of tasks (influenced by the number of underprivileged pupils).

192. The basic staff formation consists of a multidisciplinary team of experts:

- 1) One physician;
- 2) One director;
- 3) Two social workers;
- 4) Two paramedical workers;
- 5) Two psycho-pedagogical consultants;
- 6) One administrative worker or co-worker (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the Pupil Guidance Centre of 01 December 1998).

### **5.2.3 Problems associated with the integration of PMS and MST towards CLB**

193. PMS (mainly responsible for the guidance of pupil) as well as MST (carried out the health supervision in schools) represented two different cultures that both had their own working methods. Even today their merging experiences sometimes difficulties. For example, the medical aspect (that used to be under the responsibility of the MST) remains dependent of the minister of Welfare, while the globality depends on the minister of Education.

194. Another problem deals with the new tasks of the pupil guidance center that are formulated in the new decree of 2000. The CLBs have obtained with this new decree a total new task responsibility. For example, the decree demands of the CLB to work supportive towards the school and to work subsidiary with regard to them. This working method implies a greater responsibility for the schools as well. The problem consists in the fact that schools weren't well acquainted with their new responsibilities. Consequently, they were still used of the former working method of PMS and kept on demanding the same facilities as in the past. Furthermore, the CLBs have to handle more tasks compared to their preceding guidance centre PMS. Consequently they are being overloaded with work.

195. Finally worthy of mention is that despite the reforms of the guidance centres, this didn't go together with extra attributions. The workload is too large compared with the number of personnel. This

has inevitable an influence on the implementation of the new tasks (L., Willems, interview, January 28, 2004).

#### **5.2.4        *CLB and their role in the transfer towards special education***

196.        Until today, the transfer towards special education is regulated within the legal framework of the seventies. The content of a report that justifies this transfer is regulated by a Decree from the Flemish government from almost thirty years old (19 September 1978). A child can be enrolled in special education (pre-school, primary education and secondary education) at every moment of the year provided he has a report that specifies the type of education he needs. As already mentioned in section one, the report consists of two parts. The certificate contains information about the year and the type of education. For types 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 the CLB is entrusted with this task. This certificate has to be delivered to the head of the family within eight days after the examination. It is intended to the special schools and serves as confirmation of the report. The second part of the report consists of an explanatory protocol that contains the results of the multidisciplinary examination that justifies the issuance of the certificate. This protocol is sent to the special school that enrolls the student and who in turn delivers a copy of this to his own CLB. The multidisciplinary examination contains a medical, psychological, pedagogical and social research.

197.        Unfortunately, there are some problems associated with this approach. First it often happened that schools putted the CLB up against the wall by announcing the problems of a child to the guidance center too late. If at that moment the center ascertains an educational backlog of two years, and there is little hope concerning the support of the current school, a transfer towards special education seems most of the time inevitable. This practice used to happen: schools announcing the problems late to the CLB, as a result of which the guidance center has difficulties to work supportive and preventive towards the child. Another problem deals with the information that is gathered in the report. For example Ruelens, Dehandschutter, and Gesquière (2001) criticizes the fact that too much importance is attached to the child factors and that it makes little of context factors. The presence of the handicap and the intelligence are according to him still the foundation for the classification of the educational type. In this case, transfer towards special education is almost exclusively justified by the characters of the child. The guidance centers acknowledge this problem. Unfortunately, they still have to obey the instructions of the report that are imposed by the decree of 19 September 1978. It lies in the responsibilities of the government to review the demanded information of the protocol.

198.        Because of the problems the guidance centers are dealing with, a pilot project will start in January 2004 on their initiative in which specific attention goes to consultative guidance and action oriented diagnose. The pilot approach makes use of a 'care trajectory': during this trajectory one seeks for harmony between the educational need of the student and the educational supply of the regular school. The school has to make effort in developing a specific care trajectory for the students. In first instance, the school team works independently towards this harmony. In second instance the CLB will offer help to create specific adaptations. Only if this doesn't lead to a solution, the transfer towards special education can be considered. This care trajectory comprises four stages which will be briefly described.

199.        *Orange signal:* If problems arise, the school team informs the parents of the child. The school communicates to the parents and the guidance center how it approaches the current problems and works with an individual action plan for the child. During this stage the situation can stay in control. The CLB doesn't make child oriented interventions, but acts as stand-by support for the schools.

200.        *Alarm phase:* The internal guidance of the school can come to a stand still. The school contacts the parents and the CLB, this time with other expectations. The school asks student oriented help within shared responsibilities. CLB coaches the teacher and the internal care coordinator, works together with the

parents and listens to the child. The guidance center can also call in the help of other external support. Using these child and context oriented interventions, the situation can take a favorable turn.

201. *Transfer*: If the previous help doesn't lead to a harmony between the needs of the student and the supply of the regular school, the limits of the school are being reached. In the interest of the child a solution must be sought. One has to look for a school that can take advantage of the needs of the child. It is important to perceive this procedure as an active choice of the concerned people. Consequently, the report has to be the result of a cooperation between the school, the parents, the student and the CLB. In this report a description is made of relevant characteristics of the child, as well as information about the offered help and the results of it, the specific needs of the child that could be helped, and the expected offer from the new school. CLB integrates this information into a summarized and practical report.

202. *Follow-up*: After the transfer towards the special school, the CLB (the same or a new one) takes further care of the pupil. The new school uses the action plan of the previous school and adds its surplus value.

203. The Minister of Education wants to start with pilot projects to try out the care trajectory just described. This means: starting from the child in his context, support the schools and negotiating intensively with all the concerned people. Starting from January 2004, six CLBs are appointed to join the experiment. During this project the old regulation from 19 September is being discontinued. The experimental phase ends at the end of school year 2004-2005. This experimental project is a first step towards renewal, although a lot still have to be done (L., Willems, interview, January 28, 2004).

#### **5.2.5 Points of interest for the future**

204. As described earlier there are still some points of interests for the guidance centers. First of all, CLB has to work more preventive to avoid that children are being announced late. This is especially the case for social deprived and foreign students. They often start with a learning delay from the beginning of their school career. If there is no preventive intervention, their delay will accumulate over the years. Secondly, the contacts and the relations with the parents must become more intensively. CLB tries to involve the parents in every step of the process, and to listen more to them. This is certainly applicable for parents of social deprived and foreign children where communication is often a problem. Attention must go to narrow the gap between the guidance center and the parents (Ruelens & Van Heddegem, 2003). Finally, more emphasis must come on the process of the transfer. CLB has to play an active role during all the stage of the transfer, which starts at a good prevention (L., Willems, interview, January 28, 2004).

205. In her dissertation Yaman (2003) specifically addresses the problem of the over representation of foreign children in special education. Children with a foreign nationality are faster transferred towards special education compared to Flemish children. The researcher describes several causes of this trend of which the most important will be presented. As already mentioned a lot of importance concerning the referring towards special education currently goes to the results of intelligence tests. However, the use of the traditional intelligence tests can put foreign children at a disadvantage in education. Factors as linguistic skills (verbal skills are often necessary to obtain a good result on these tests) and the familiarity with the Western culture leads to an underestimation of their intellectual competence. Since intelligence tests are socio-culturally distort, they have a discriminating effect on foreign students. Furthermore the language problem in general is often emphasized. Some teachers have a lack of understanding towards pupils with linguistic problems, therefore intending them to equal these children with low gifted students. Yaman (2003) interviewed Turkish parents for her dissertation. It seemed that also these parents perceived the language deficiency of their children as well as their own non-ability of speaking Dutch as one of the causes for the transition towards special education. She also found that the involvement of the foreign parents within the process of referral towards special education is much more limited than those of the

Flemish parents. There exists a large ignorance among the foreign parents about special education. It also happens that they are not informed about the diagnostic research that is used in preparation to the transition. As a consequence, they often have no other alternative than agreeing with the given advice. Finally, also the composition of the school (e.g. the ethnic composition) can affect the transition practice. This revealed out of the interviews with two CLB centers (Yaman, 2003). According to them schools with an average level, small classes and a lot of foreign students are less inclined to refer students towards special education. If children with learning difficulties are enough stimulated at home, they have less chance to be transferred towards special education. Foreign children with low capacities have a higher risk of being transferred compared to Flemish students with the same capacities, because the latter is in most cases more supported by his parents and is competent in the Dutch language. This does not mean that foreign parents are not interested in education. But because they often don't dominate the Dutch language, they are less able to help their children educationally.

206. The foreign parents attributed also the specific characteristics of the school ("concentration schools") and neighborhood, the school immaturity, the Turkish educational habits and the fact of being discriminated as causes of the higher transition towards special education. Nevertheless, it is important that children who drop behind by their social situation can attend regular education. After all, most foreign parents indicated that they are convinced their children were unnecessary referred towards special education and therefore lost some important chances regarding the future (Yaman, 2003).

### **5.3 Integrated education (GON)**

207. The Minister of Education has taken the initiative to anchor in a decree (decree on Education VII of 8 July 1996) the right of every child with special needs to 'integrated education'. Integrated Education (GON) institutes a new step toward the integration of special education into ordinary education. Children with a handicap and/or learning difficulties may attend class in ordinary schools on a permanent or intermittent and a partial or complete basis. Additional teaching periods and/or additional hours and/or additional resources are provided to realize this integration. Integrated education is provided in basic, secondary education and tertiary education. It requires cooperation between ordinary and special education to enable certain children or adolescents who normally have to go to special schools, to participate in ordinary education. (Eurydice, 2003). Since the school year 1994-1995, children from all the different types that exist in special education can enrol in integrated education, except for children from type 5 (sick and hospitalized pupils). Children from type 4 (pupils with physical disabilities) participate the most in integrated education. For children with a mental handicap it is more difficult to participate in GON. Enrolment in tertiary education is also less evident (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

208. As already mentioned, a distinction is made between a complete and partial integration depending on whether the pupil attends all or at least two half days of classes in ordinary education. When the integration is for an entire school year, it is called permanent integration, otherwise it is called a temporary integration. Within the framework of GON, there are three sorts of guidance: guidance of a teacher or the teaching team of the ordinary school, financial compensation for the service-providing special school, and/or the provision of teaching periods to the service-providing special school in order to provide educational or paramedical assistance to the pupil. GON-Guides are staff members of the special schools who have had at least one year of experience in special education. They have to improve the learning situation of the students and offer help with the problems that result from the handicap. More specific, teachers from the special schools offer educational help; speech therapists and physiotherapist are responsible for paramedical assistance.

209. When a child is candidate for GON, following procedure is used: a certificate of integrated education issued by the head of the CLB is required that specifies the nature of the integration and the nature and seriousness of the handicap of the pupil. It also indicates which type of special education the

child used to follow, or the advised type. Furthermore, an integration plan is needed for the preparation and evaluation of the integration of the pupil with a handicap in ordinary education. This plan is formulated by consensus of the pupil and/or his parents, the school heads of the concerned schools for ordinary and special education, a representative of the teaching staff, and the director of the CLB. Every year a new integration plan is formulated, containing following information: identification facts of the student and characteristics of the proposed integration; identification facts of the GON-team; description of the handicap; description of the extra help from the special school (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

### **5.3.1 *Integrated education in pre-school and primary education***

210. In the period 2001-2002, 543 pre-school children and 882 primary school children participated in integrated education. In pre-school, GON is possible for types 2,3,4,6 and 7; in primary school for types 1,3,4,6,7 and 8. To be admitted in the mainstream schools students of type 1.3 or 8 have to have received directly before their integration, at least nine months full-time special education in the concerned type (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2003).

### **5.3.2 *Integrated education in secondary education***

211. In the school year 2001-2002, 538 students were enrolled in integrated education in secondary education. Transition to GON is possible for types 1,3,4,6 and 7 (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2003). In the period 1997-1998, 36.6% of the GON-students in secondary education had a hearing impairment (type 7) and only 4,8% had severe emotional and/or behavioural problems (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

### **5.3.3 *Integrated education in tertiary education***

212. For tertiary education similar requirements and regulations are in force, although there are no schools for special education on this level. Thus, the student participates in ordinary education with the necessary adaptations and guidance that are characteristic for the integrated education. In 2001-2002, there were 44 students of higher education involved in integrated education (Ministry of the Flemish Community, Education Department, 2003).

213. In contrast with primary and secondary education, GON-students from colleges for higher education are regular enrolled students. Consequently, the distinction between permanent or intermittent integration and a partial or complete integration is not applicable. The GON-guide for students from colleges for higher education is a teacher of a secondary school who offers little guidance in subject material, but mainly works as a supporting person and has a bridging function between the lector team and the student.

214. Also in university arrangements are made to stimulate the participation of students with a physical handicap. The coordinator guides the handicapped student and acts as an intermediary towards the academic staff. Materials to help disabled, visual and audile handicapped persons are now available on diverse campus. Adapted guidance at the start, during the study and during the examinations is being developed (Verhoeven & Elchardus, 2000).

### **5.3.4 *Problems associated with GON***

215. The Flemish Minister of Education, Mrs. Vanderpoorten, quotes in her discussion text of January 2002 ("Maatwerk in samenspraak" Made-to-measure in dialogue) some difficult aspects associated with GON:

"Students with a mental disorder are seldom eligible for integrated education;

GON-guidance is not in proportion to the help that a child with the same disability receives in special schools. Furthermore, the choice of the parents for a suitable educational program for their handicapped child, is strongly influenced by the fact that the extra care and support a child receives at the special schools is costless. The actual financing program stimulates unintentional the orientation towards special education;

GON-guidance mainly focuses on the child and is too little team-oriented;

GON-hours should be applied in a more flexible way;

To be admitted in the mainstream schools students of type 1,3 or 8 have to had received at least nine months full-time special education in the concerned type;

The duration of the guidance is often not adapted to the needs of the child;

Because of the large distances GON-guides often have to travel, they cannot guide all the students during the provided lesson hours;

The specificity of studying in tertiary education: the facilities for students with special educational needs are too fragmented. A more systematic approach is advised.”

216. The Minister of Education describes further in her discussion text that a special point of interest is the realization of quality education for each child, regardless of the type of education. Although emphasis is more on the integration of students with special educational needs in regular schools, the necessary care must also stay available for students for whom the regular schools cannot offer the appropriate education. According to the Minister, limitations on the capacity of the school teams in the regular schools require the maintenance of the special schools. Children and youngsters who need special education in a separate structure, still have to be able to appeal on quality education in special schools.

217. Masschelein et al. (1996) performed a research in 1994-1995 about the implementation of GON in preschool, primary and secondary education (type 4, 6 and 7). The results indicated that a lot of attention of the GON-guides went to the handling of the subject material. Nevertheless they still have the feeling to be insufficient expert in the guidance of the specific courses. According to the researchers it would be more meaningful that the subject teacher is responsible for the specific discipline. He can call in the help of the GON-guide in the didactical field. Furthermore, the consultation between the teacher and the GON-guide may not be restricted to the handling of the subject material. Also the social well being of the student must get enough attention in this consultation. In the opinion of the researchers it is also important to inform the teacher in advance if a GON-student will attend his class. Also the school team must be informed at the beginning of the school year. The researchers recorded that the majority of the parents were satisfied about their contacts with the GON-guide and the teacher, as with the counselling of their child. Nevertheless, 18% wants to have more contact with the GON-guide.

#### **5.4 Project Autisme**

#### **5.5 Basic Education:**

#### **5.6 Organization of second chance schools (TKO)**

218. As already mentioned in the first section, second chance education falls under the decree of social advancement education (OSP) from March 1999. Nevertheless, it represents only a small part of OSP. It is important to notice that there are some notable differences between second chance education and social advancement education, although they are both aimed at education for adults. The main objective of TKO

is very specific: enabling adults to obtain -without attending secondary schools and courses for youngsters -the certificate of the second stage of secondary education, as well as the diploma of secondary education according to a learning program that has exactly the same civil value to compulsory fully daytime education. Its secondary aims consist of guiding the students towards a satisfactory integration in society, professionally (by increasing their chances on the labour market), as well as socially (by removing their feeling of inferiority) as educationally (by preparing students to transfer towards continuation courses and studies). Characteristic for second chance education is that it comprises fully daytime education (14 to 32 hours a week for a period of 2/3 years), although participants can also follow courses during 2 or 3 evenings a week for a period of 2 to 5 years. Nowadays there are 10 centers for TKO in the Flemish Community belonging to the Federation of second chance education. Within this Federation the three different educational networks are represented (De Win, 2002).

### **5.6.1 Working method of TKO**

219. The specific objectives of TKO go together with a specific educational approach and educational methods that are distinctive from the teaching methods used in regular secondary education. It is certainly not a reflection of secondary education from mainstream schools. The structures are organised in a flexible way and they anticipate on the beginning situation of each individual. Students are also jointly responsible for their own learning process: they organise their own study plan and activities.

220. Students are being screened at the beginning of their educational career in second chance education. In this orientation period, students are referred towards the most optimal starting position. Once the lessons are started (day-or evening time education), the student can slow down or accelerate his learning trajectory depending on their own usability. Lessons are organized in group with the same content as regular secondary education although adapted to an adult level. The provision of education is limited to 4 courses of study in general academic secondary education, 2 in technical secondary education, and 2 in vocational secondary education. During the educational trajectory students are guided in their learning process. In most TKO-centers a personal guide is appointed to the students at the beginning of the school career. He helps the student in delineating the individual educational career. Because a lot of adult students haven't acquired a good study method, attention also goes to 'learning how to learn'. All TKO centers make use of a modular semestral system instead of a year class system. This implies that the content of each subject is divided into smaller units. Furthermore, they follow a package of subjects they can choose themselves. At the end of each semester the student can obtain a credit for each module he finishes. Finally, the addition of all credits leads to a diploma or certificate of secondary education. Students can also enrol in different modules at the same time. Although most of the students want to obtain a diploma, it is also available for adults who want to refresh certain courses.

221. Until September 1999, TKO only organized courses to prepare the participants for taking part in the examination sessions of the Examination Board of the Flemish Community to obtain their diploma for secondary education. The decree from March 1999 acknowledges the second chance function of the centers for TKO. Consequently, since 2000 examinations can be done in the TKO centers which have since then the possibility to grant diplomas and certificates to the students. According to the Minister of Education Vanderpoorten (2003) this measure breaks down barriers concerning the access to second chance education for adults.

### **5.6.2 Target group**

222. The target group is very heterogeneous, but at the same time very specific. Only adults (at least 18 years old) who haven't obtained a diploma of secondary education can enrol in second chance education. Nevertheless, it has a very specific target group which characteristics are very different from the adults enrolling in social advancement education. De Win (2002) notices an increase in enrolment of social

deprived adults: unemployed persons, migrants, women in difficult divorcing situations, people with a high burden of debt... Second chance education therefore has to be seen within the framework of a trajectory that aims at removing people out of the spiral of deprivation.

223. To be admitted, a prerequisite for the second stage of secondary education is that participants must have a knowledge base at the primary education level (not a primary/elementary education certificate). To be admitted in the third stage of secondary education, the student must either have a diploma of the previous stage or must pass equivalent tests organised by the centre (Eurydice, 2003). A remarkable evolution is the rejuvenation of the target group: the group between 18 and 21 year old students increases (De Win, 2001).

### **5.6.3 Results of TKO**

224. Although only limited data are available, a first indication of the results of TKO is optimistic: more adults find the way to second chance education and more students obtain their diploma in secondary education. In 2000 around 1300 persons enrolled in second chance education, this number increased in 2003 to almost 2005 (De Ro, 2003). According to De Win (2002) the increase in enrolment can be explained by the persuading of lifelong learning within this group, the economical recession that forces them to obtain a basic qualification and the possibility of the center of granting the diplomas themselves. A small research in Antwerp (containing students who obtained their diploma between 1983 and 1999 after passing the examination sessions of the Examination Board of the Flemish Community) shows that almost 3/4 of the certified persons found a job after graduation and that 80% of the persons started further studies.

225. Nevertheless, the Federation of TKO formulates some suggestions for the future of which some will be discussed with the administration and the politically responsible. Because the target group for TKO usually has a lot of expenses compared to their income, the Federation advocates the introduction of scholarships for adults who want to participate in second chance education. The extension of the exemption from enrolment fee is a continuation of this. Furthermore, the Federation would also consider the automatically exemption concerning the control on welfare security for adults who want to obtain a starting qualification after a certain period of unemployment. Besides these financial matters, the centers for TKO also want to make use of the educational initiatives that are in use in other educational levels, for example the decree about the new integrated equal opportunities policy (GOK) that applies to secondary education in mainstream school. The centers for TKO urge the extra educational staff that is available for secondary education in regular schools within the GOK-decree. The necessity of this is shown by a research from

226. HIVA who pointed out that the students from TKO often run the risk of social deprivation. A final remark deals with the fact that the current rules of the decree from March 1999 aren't well adapted to the specific target group of TKO: school psychologists, remedial teachers, trajectory guides, performance of assessment and orientation aren't provided by decree. Each board of directors can choose its own options within this.

## **5.7 Reception class for foreign newcomers**

227. The rules concerning reception education for primary and secondary education are explained in the circular letter of BaO/2001/9 from 02/07/2001, respectively SO/75 from 23/07/2001. Reception education is aimed at foreign newcomers to stimulate their linguistic skills in Dutch and to support their social integration. This type of education wants to prepare the foreign newcomers in their transition towards general education for the next school year following on the reception period. It wants to develop the necessary linguistic skills and other types of skills with the intention that the foreign newcomers are

able to understand the lessons and that they are able to participate in the social intercourse in the class and school. These skills also have to enable them to integrate in our society.

228. Schools that organize reception classes for foreign newcomers are supported by the Pedagogical Guidance services, the Center “Dutch as Second Language” and the Center of “Intercultural Education”. Foreign newcomers are slightly different defined for primary education compared to secondary education. As for primary education, foreign newcomers are students that meet all of the following five conditions:

- 1) They have the age of 5 years or older;
- 2) They do not have Dutch as mother tongue;
- 3) They master the educational language insufficient to attend the lessons with a good result;
- 4) They do not have the Belgian or the Dutch nationality;
- 5) They don't have attended a full school year of education in a school where Dutch is the educational language.

229. As for the last two conditions, a deviation is allowed. Also for secondary education five conditions have to be fulfilled. Only the first condition is different: not later than 31 December following on the outset of the school year, the student has to have reached the age of at least 12 years on the one hand, and hasn't have reached the age of 18 on the other. In some instances a deviation can be made for secondary education as well for the last two conditions and the age condition.

#### **5.7.1 *Organizationally conditions and conditions concerning the content for primary education***

230. To obtain additional teaching periods (financed or subsidized) the school has to have enough foreign newcomers. More concrete, autonomous pre-schools and primary schools with only one domicile can ask extra learning periods if at least four newcomers are enrolled. For other schools at least six foreign newcomers have to be enrolled. The financing or subsidizing is discontinued when this number decreases below two. The number of additional teaching hours that are financed or subsidized comprises two additional hours for each school organizing reception education, and one and a half extra hours for each foreign newcomer. Most of the time the newcomers attend the reception class for a number of hours. The remaining hours are followed in the regular class.

231. The school board also has to develop an individual action plan for each foreign newcomer. Starting from the beginning situation a strategy is developed to realise the objectives of the reception education. Within this action plan attention is also given to the evaluation of the different educational steps and the learning evolution. Finally, the school board is obliged to allow the teachers in participating in-service training comprising the stimulation of linguistic skills education and social integration (Circular letter of BaO/2001/9 from 02/07/2001). In February 2004 1500 foreign newcomers were enrolled in primary education.

#### **5.7.2 *Organizationally conditions and conditions concerning the content for secondary education***

232. The organisation level of reception education in secondary education is connected to the school community with the intention to join the necessary expertise and know how. Schools of the school community qualify for reception education if in total at least 25 foreign newcomers are enrolled. When this minimum number is not reached on the first of October, they are still subsidised or financed for the month September. If they however attain the number of 25 students at a later date, they still can make an application (also in primary education schools can make an application during the school year once enough

foreign newcomers are enrolled). Once the minimum number is reached they are allowed to keep on organising reception education, even if this number decreases below 25 students.

233. If the conditions are fulfilled, the schools have the right on a specific package of hours-teacher: they receive 2.5 hours for each foreign newcomer. Besides this, the school also receives the regular package based on the number of foreign newcomers from the first of February form the preceding school year. The weekly timetable in reception education consists of at least 28 hours-teacher and at the most of 32 hours-teacher. These hours are in principle all – besides religion and non-confessional ethics -used for teaching the Dutch language. Maximum four weekly hours-teacher can be applied for other subjects as mathematics, physical training, individual training... Also religion and/or non-confessional ethics have to be taught in the reception class. After the reception year the student can integrate in regular education. This can occur based on a given equivalence of the students' foreign certificate, a declaration on honour or based on the age. From 16 May 2003 reception education is also organized in part time vocational secondary education.

234. Comparable to primary education, the schools in secondary education as well have to develop a learning trajectory for each foreign newcomer, in cooperation with the CLB. The follow-up of the newcomer is an important issue in this trajectory. The manner in which the student is being evaluated also has to make clear in this trajectory. Crucial is that the schools maintain all possible information of the foreign newcomer and their educational transition (as well for students who left reception education during the school year, as for those who went to regular education, as for those who will stay in reception education during the next school year). Finally, the schools have to give the teachers the opportunity to participate in in-service training about Dutch Linguistic skills education and Inter cultural Education (Circular letter of SO/75 from 23/07/2001). In February 2003 there were 1897 foreign newcomers enrolled in secondary education (Lips 2003).

235. Lips (2003) made for her report of her practical training an evaluation of reception education in secondary education. She found that foreign newcomers had a very diverse background: they can be asylum seekers, caravan dwellers or Belgian people (adoption, family reunion...). Her report indicates that foreign newcomers are most of the time youngsters born between 1983 and 1989, of which a large part originates from countries as Russia, Ghana, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Morocco and Iran. The number of foreign newcomers increases every year. According to Lips (2003) this can be explained by the larger familiarity with this type of education and the increasing know how from the organising schools. On the other hand also the problematic absents of foreign newcomers are increasing. This is mainly the case for people of Yugoslavia, Slovene and Russian people. An explanation for this can be among others the short of motivation to go to school and a distort contact between parents and schools. Furthermore it appears that only a few students stay in the same school after following reception education. When they move on, they mainly move on to full time secondary education, more specific to the first stage, vocational and technical secondary education of the second and third stage where they opt for the more traditional disciplines.

## **5.8 Programs to support potential school dropouts**

Modular training

## CHAPTER 6: NON-EDUCATIONAL POLICIES THAT AFFECT OUTCOMES IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

### 6.1 Child and family

236. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, there exists a division in responsibility for education on the one hand (where most children enroll when they are 2,5 or 3 years old) and care (where children below 3 years old form the main target group) on the other. Care is primarily meant for children and their working parents. All childcare arrangements must be reported to 'Child and Family'. Child and Family – established by Decree in 1984 – is a Flemish governmental public agency under the supervision of the Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Health and equal Chances. It supervises the great majority of childcare arrangements and subsidizes a significant number of them. Child and Family has the responsibility for planning for childcare -including out-of-school care for children aged 2,5 to 12 years -but it does not directly provide childcare (OECD, 2000). Child and Family operates on two levels: at the central organizational level they prepare, execute and coordinate policy. Though the provincial level is in charge of the operational tasks (Laevers, Janssens, & Laurijssen, 2001).

237. Child and Family describes their mission as follows: "together with its partners, Child and Family wants to create as much as possible chances for every child, wherever and how the child is born or grown up" (Child and Family, 2004). This mission can be translated into several main tasks. First there is the preventive care that is organized before, during and after the birth of the child. This includes among other things the information given for new mothers and the visits from district nurses to the new mothers. Then there is the recognition, subsidizing and supervising of the different forms of child care. Finally, they also organize particular care for children living in difficult circumstances, including child abuse and support for multi-problem families. A main policy concern is to make child care accessible to all children who need it, irrespective of their family situation, their socio-economic background or ethnic origin. Special attention is also given to children of parents with low income and children of single-parent families (Laevers et al., 2001). Furthermore, since 2001 a number of daycare centers and out-of-school facilities receive substantial extra funds to receive children with disabilities.

238. As regard to the care, four major types of care for children under three can be distinguished:

- Registered and subsidized day-care centers by Child and Family. They are usually set up by a local authority or non-profit organization.
- Subsidized and registered home based family day-care (DOG). They are affiliated to a local base, subsidized and registered by Child and Family.
- Non-subsidized private day-care centers (POI) who are registered and under the surveillance of Child and Family.
- Non-subsidized private family daycares who are also registered and under the surveillance of Child and Family (POG).

239. Registered out-of-school care (IBO) is organized at the municipal level for children between 2,5 to 12 years old (OECD, 2000). In the subsidiary care sector parents have to pay fees for care, dependent on their income. However, low income families don't make often use of the subsidized care because the extra costs still demand a too great financial effort. Therefore they most often choose to leave their children with their family or friends (Laevers, et al., 2001).

240. In 2002, 77.097 children were enrolled in the recognized child care and 35954 children in the care under the supervision of Child and Family. This is a total of 113051 enrolled children in care. As for the out-of-school care in 2002, 133392 children were enrolled in the recognized care and 4172 in the care under supervision (Year Report Child and Family, 2002).

241. During the last years, the child care has been influenced by some social changes. For example, there was an increase of the number of women working (so also an increase of families where both parents work) and the society became more multicultural. Because of these changes, care policy pays attention to the combination of work and family, to the installation of quality provision for children outside the school hours, and to the development of care for children of deprived families (Laevers et al., 2001).

## **6.2 Integration policy for immigrants**

242. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2003, the Flemish government ratified the decree 'Flemish integration policy for immigrants'. In Flanders, the municipalities are responsible for the execution of this policy, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Equal Chances. Because newcomers are confronted with a foreign language, different values and habits, they run the risk of ending up in a disadvantaged position. To avoid this, the government implemented this preventive policy. Today there are 26 reception offices (subsidized by the Flemish government) in Flanders who receive and guide the newcomers.

### **6.2.1 Objectives**

243. The objective of the integration policy for immigrants is to help newcomers to participate as a full member in our society. The Flemish government wants to stimulate their ability to cope by implementing a proper integration programme. The aim is to stimulate their integration in our society in a quick and durable manner. Society will recognise the newcomers as citizens, which contributes to a righteous multicultural society (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the Flemish Integration policy for immigrants of 28 February 2003).

### **6.2.2 Target group**

244. The policy is meant for people who come to Flanders with the aim of settling down legally for a longer period. Three conditions must be fulfilled: they have to be adults, they are foreign speakers, and they show disadvantaged characteristics which could lead to permanent deprivation.

245. Furthermore, they have to belong to one of the following categories: volgmigranten; declared asylum seekers; recognized refugees, or people without legal residence, but who have gained the right on residence by regularization. People of the target group are obliged to announce themselves at the reception office within a period of three months, after registration at the municipality. They also have to participate in the training courses on a regular base.

### **6.2.3 Program: Integration policy for immigrants**

246. Guidance in trajectory of learning is the leitmotiv during the whole program. Using this method, newcomers are first individually guided to introduce them afterwards to the regular facilities. The objective is to make the newcomers professionally, educationally and socially independent. During the intake, the counselor probes the background, capacities, education level, working experience and future perspectives of the newcomer. In consultation with the newcomer, he formulates an individual plan and supports him during the development of his further life and working career.

247. The program itself consists of a primary trajectory and a secondary trajectory of learning, with a transfer phase to support the transition between both courses (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the Flemish Integration policy for immigrants of 28 February 2003).

248. The reception office is responsible for the **primary trajectory of learning**. This trajectory consists of an intensive Dutch language course, a program social orientation, and a program career orientation. The purpose of the *Dutch language course* is to offer the newcomers the basic linguistic competence during a very short period. The reception office don't organize the Dutch language courses themselves; instead they refer newcomers to Centers for Basic Education or Adult Education which organize language courses in group. For higher educated newcomers, distance learning (self-study) is an alternative option for the group lessons. The objective of the *program social orientation* is to give an overview of the structure, norms and values of the new society they live in, and to impart them a number of skills. For example, the educational structure, the political structure, the rights and duties of the citizens and the use of transport are discussed in this program. The reception office organize these courses themselves. The *program career orientation* learns the newcomer about the development of his life career in different domains of his life, as there are family, work, and study... They are informed about the labour market, educational and socio-cultural trainings. Furthermore, they gain insight into their own competencies, skill and wishes.

249. After finishing the first trajectory of learning (which has to be completed at most one year after the start of the primary trajectory), the newcomer receives a certificate of integration. The reception office, who have the final responsibility of the first trajectory of learning, guides them afterwards towards the secondary trajectory of learning. This trajectory lies in the responsibility of the regular facilities (VDAB, educational institutions, socio-cultural organizations, welfare and health facilities...). Dependent on their interests and capacities, the newcomers can choose between three follow-up courses: (1) Professional follow-up course; (2) Educational follow-up course (aimed at starting a study in the future) and (3) Social follow-up course (aimed at obtaining a fluent social communication).

250. Seven out of ten newcomers choose the professional follow-up course, one out of ten the educational, and one out of ten the social follow-up course. One out of ten newcomers wishes only to participate in the primary trajectory of learning.

### **6.3 Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB)**

251. The Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) provides a platform for job seekers and employers, under the Ministry of Employment (Department Economy, employment and home affairs). Its most important mission is to exercise an impact on the labour market in keeping with the economic situation and society. To perform this task the VDAB provides a relatively accessible and free service to all job-seekers and employers. Since it was set up in 1989 the VDAB has grown into an efficient public service. It offers an extensive and effective package of services: employment, temporary manpower, training and education, recruitment & selection, career counseling and outplacement. Nowadays there are 68 VDAB training centers all over Flanders with about 700 instructors being employed. During the last years more instructors were set at work for traineeships with linguistic support and for trainings 'Dutch for foreign speakers' as part of the integration policy for immigrants.

252. The VDAB needs to find a way to reconcile economic and social goals. Economically, job vacancies need to be filled quickly and correctly. Socially, the VDAB wants to guarantee a smooth integration of job-seekers in the labour market and help anyone who has difficulties finding a job. In this way, the VDAB plays a part in boosting the Flemish employment level to 65% in 2004 and to 70% in 2010, increasing the participation of under-represented sections of the population in the labour market and aspiring to more individual and social development for everyone. To achieve these goals, the VDAB

contributes to improving the balance between demand and offer on the labour market; pays attention to the proportional participation of all sections of the population; takes the necessary measures to counteract every form of direct or indirect discrimination on the labour market; encourages and stimulates life-long learning for job-seekers and employees; makes its range of tools more transparent, efficient and effective. The VDAB provides services as well for job seekers as for employers. Moreover, it does not only restrict its activities to Flanders: they offer employers and job-seekers many cross-border services. No matter whether it concerns employment services or training courses, the VDAB actively takes part in different European Commission projects and offers solutions for international human resources problems. Eures standing for European Employment Services is a unique network of 500 counselors spread over the entire European Economic Area (the European Union plus Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland). The VDAB is a member of Eures (VDAB, 2002).

### 6.3.1 *General description of their services for job seekers*

253. VDAB plays an important role in Flanders in the field of trainings for job seekers. 8.4% of the trainings for job seekers is organized by VDAB. In 2002 their trainings attained largely 60000 employees who all together attended more than 1.3 million training hours. The average duration of a VDAB training for employees is thus 22 hours. The characteristics of the training for employees have remained approximately the same during the recent years, almost all trainings being organized on initiative of the employer. Only 2000 employees (3%) attended a VDAB training at own initiative. Consequently, almost all trainings took place during the working hours (93%). Furthermore, the trainings for job seekers from VDAB are being increasingly organized in cooperation with third parties. In 1999 their contribution was limited to 10%, in 2002 a partner was included in a quarter of the trainings (Bollens et al., 2003).

**Table 3: Number of VDAB trainings for job seekers by sector (1999 – 2002)**

1999	2000	2001	2002
Primary/secondary	11.434	15.381	16.926
services sector	32.533	39.015	49.674
Remaining trainings	406	318	6.354

Source: VDAB

254. As opposed to the global trend, the number of employees within VDAB trainings keeps on rising in primary and secondary sector. Within this group, the building sector is the most important with in 2002 more than 10000 students. Other important industrial sectors are metal industry (2600), industrial automation (1800) and electricity (1600). The number of trainings in the services sector remains the largest one, but it had nevertheless a drawback in 2002. Within this group an important part is not specified (tertiary sector) and further, sectors as social profit (10000), logistics (4100), cleaning (1800) and transport (1400) have a lot of participants in VDAB trainings. An increasing amount of trainings doesn't belong in this conventional sectoral classification. The most important group of 'remaining trainings' consists of the language courses for migrants. In 2001 these trainings had a remarkable success but had an almost equal remarkable drawback in 2002.

### 6.3.2 *Content of the VDAB programs for job seekers*

255. As for the practical services VDAB encourages, starting from the day of registration, job seekers to do things independently by offering them a number of self-management tools: file manager, training guide, WIS (Work-Information-System) vacancy bank, KISS (Candidate Information Selection System)

application bank... These online instruments allow job seekers to get a better idea of their own interests and knowledge of certain occupations. They learn more about themselves and are more confident entering the labour market (empowerment). If job-seekers do not find a job within three months, the VDAB invites them for an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses with regard to the labour market. Job-seekers who require more intensive and personal assistance are referred to the 'pathway-to-work principle'. All job-seekers receive tailor-made guidance through the pathway-to-work principle. Together with the counselor a pathway to find a job is mapped out, taking into account the person's opportunities and requirements. Depending on training and experience, job-seekers complete a number of steps in their search for work:

- **Basic service** (module 1): such as registration as a job-seeker, information about rights and obligations, making and changing the personal file.
- **Pathway definition** (module 2): during one or several interviews, the VDAB counsellor assesses the job-seekers opportunities and expectations. Together, an action plan is drawn up.
- **Application training and assistance** (module 3): together with other job-seekers, course participants are taught how to write a convincing job application letter and how to behave in a job interview.
- **Training in a centre** (module 4): aimed at real work situations.
- **Person-oriented training** (module 5): job-seekers are taught what is expected from them in a specific work situation.
- **Workplace training and assistance** (module 6): courses are combined as much as possible with traineeships.
- **Pathway-to-work guidance and -follow-up** (module 7): follow-up and guidance regarding the steps completed by a job-seeker (VDAB, 2002).

### 6.3.3 Educational reach of VDAB

**Table 4: Number of Reached Job seekers Across All Modules (from module 2 to 7) for 2000, 2001 and 2002<sup>a</sup>**

2000	2001	2002	
Module 2	81.102	98.518	97.724
Module 3	10.205	8.769	9.307
Module 4	28.760	26.375	28.109
Module 5	5.561	10.185	11.299
Module 6	19.683	22.083	23.952
Module 7	122.953	125.256	132.307
Total during the complete pathway to work principle	141.053	161.611	170.976

<sup>a</sup> Source: Calculation by VDAB based on statistics of the pathway to work principle.

256. Table 4 gives a summary of the educational reach (a person is being reached if he has at least participated in one of the seven modules during that year or was attending one during the year transition; job-seekers who participate in more than one module during the same year are only counted one time) for unemployed persons, calculated by VDAB. The statistics about the reached persons refer to all the modules of the pathway to work principle. The table shows that in 2000 approximate 140000 job seekers, in 2001 a little bit more than 160000 and in 2002 more than 170000 unemployed persons were reached within the pathway to work principle. Following table gives an overview of the results per outflow target group to work:

**Table 5: Results per Outflow Target Group who Go to Work<sup>a</sup>**

Outflow target group	Number of routes	Outflow to work	Outflow % to work
<1 year unemployed and not a hard target group	9.294	6.471	69,60%
<1 year unemployed and a hard target group	19.718	12.204	61,90%
Unemployed between 1 and 2 years	12.963	8.324	64,20%
<2 years unemployed	12.293	7.273	59,20%

<sup>a</sup> Source: VDAB, 2002

257. In addition to the services for job-seekers, the VDAB also provides universal and free services to employers. This service comprises: the correct entry of job vacancies; dissemination of the job vacancies via the WIS terminals, the Internet and possibly VRT (national television) teletext; presentation of candidates; finding efficient solutions; informing the employer about employment measures; follow up of job vacancies. Employers can also use a number of self-management tools. Courses for employees can be organized at employers' or employees' request (VDAB, 2002).

#### **6.4 Socio-cultural work**

258. Socio cultural work comprises several sectors. For the most part each sector receives a different regulation of allowances from the Flemish government. The different sectors are: youth work, socio-cultural adult work, amateurish arts, libraries, cultural and community centers, social artistic projects... These sectors are being subsidized by the Ministry of Culture of the Flemish Community. Besides these, there exists also community work (Ministry of Welfare) and basic education (Ministry of Education) (Socius, 2002). Moreover, community work and basic education had their origin in socio-cultural work, but became later independent sectors. All these sectors have an important role concerning lifelong learning (Bollens et al., 2003).

259. Socio-cultural work can thus be seen as a term, which contains many activities, organizations and facilities in which an important part of the Flemish population directly or indirectly is involved. Socio-cultural organizations have a lot of functions: a community oriented function (oriented towards strengthening and renewing the social structure of this society to obtain a democratic and solidarity society); a cultural function (aimed at increasing the participation chances of everyone within the cultural

heritage of our society); a socially activating function (to contribute in the formation of responsible and active citizens who are participants and designers of social commitment and action); and an educational function (to support learning persons with an educational offer).

260. In the subsequent paragraph we will focus only on data about socio-cultural adult work, more specific socio-cultural organization for adults that are recognized and granted by the Flemish Community.

#### **6.4.1 Socio-cultural adult work**

261. Socio-cultural work comprises non-formal adult education as well as informal adult education. Non-formal education means that it is situated out of the school system (e.g. no tests are being organized). Informal education applies for activities that are not explicitly oriented towards education, although people learn as well.

262. Since April 4, 2003 the Flemish government adopted a new decree on socio-cultural adult work. This decree -restricted to socio cultural adult work, the other sectors of social cultural work have their own regulations -replaces the three individual decrees of non-formal adult education of 1995, namely associations, institutions and services for socio-cultural adult work. The new decree of April 2003 regulates the structure, recognition and subsidies of three new work forms for the sector of socio-cultural adult work: associations, educational institutions and movements. Within this new decree the services no longer exist, but movements take their place. Movements have other regulations than services but are not very different from them. Therefore, many older services try to adapt their functioning to become recognized as movements.

263. The Ministry of Culture defines the socio-cultural adult work as those activities intending to enhance the development of adults and to stimulate active participation in a democratic society. The non/in-formal adult education organizations are characterized by the voluntary commitment of people. Moreover, it is not oriented towards obtaining recognized qualifications, certificates or professional training. Non/in-formal adult education is active in the continuing education context; however it is different from formal education in that it occupies a position where four sectors intersect: recreational, educational, welfare and culture. Since the new decree of 2003 following work forms belong to the socio-cultural adult work:

- Socio-cultural institutions, with as sub-types the folk high schools and the specialised socio-cultural institutions with a nationwide reach (the latter comprising the specialised socio-cultural institutions, the institutions for union education and the institutions for special target groups as persons with a handicap or prisoners);
- Socio-cultural associations;
- Socio-cultural movements (Flemish Parliament, Decree concerning the socio-cultural work of 4 April 2003).

264. *Socio-cultural movements* are national organisations specialised in a certain theme or in a cluster of related themes. The movements organise activities in the field of sensitisation, education and social action to obtain social changes. The decree foresees a 4-yearly subsidy for these organisations if the social relevance of the themes, the quality, expertise and methods can be established. A *socio-cultural association* is a network of divisions or groups. The organisational structure consists of a local, a regional and a national level. Their aim is the emancipation of the members, with a view to their personal and social development. Within the policy of lifelong learning, the reform of the *socio-cultural institutions*, more specific the establishment of the folk high schools in 13 regions, has become an important issue. Their

core-business is offering non-formal education: educational programmes that do not lead to diplomas or that do not have professional aims. Their main aim is personality development that strengthens the individual and helps building a community. A folk high school is a pluralistic organisation aimed at organising, structuring and co-ordinating the non-formal educational offer in a defined region. Complementary to the folk high schools is the offer from the socio-cultural institutions with a nationwide reach. They will specialise in educational activities with regard to a specific theme or clusters of related themes (Socius, 2002).

265. In 2001, 42 institutions were recognized as socio-cultural institutions: 27 national institutions, 2 regional institutions, 4 institutions for union education and 9 institutions for the special target groups. In total, these institutions realized 159,424 training courses or 2,606,556 participation hours. The Ministry of Culture granted in 2001 for all the institutions together an amount of 15,312,135 Euro. In 2001 Flanders had 56 associations, of which 4 associations with a special target group and 14 associations for migrants. All together they group 12818 local divisions. It is estimated that all the divisions together have approximate 1,9 to 2 million members. Four out of ten Flemish adults are to a certain extent involved in activities of socio-cultural associations. The recognized associations received in 2001 a subsidized amount of 16,553,336 Euro.

266. Socio-cultural adult work within the framework of lifelong learning is of great importance and can become even larger. It guarantees an extensive offer for lifelong learning. The new decree should lead to a clearer position and profile of non/in-formal adult education within life-long learning. Finally, the new decree also has to become an impulse for a more systematic and complete registration of data concerning non/in-formal adult education, because these data aren't available at the moment (Bollens et al., 2003).

#### **6.4.2 Houses from Dutch:**

## SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS

### CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS

267. There is a decrease in the young population group on the one hand, and an increase of the elder population group on the other. Attention can be made towards lifelong learning. This can be a point of attention in future policy development.

268. The structure of the first stage in secondary education has to be a comprehensive one. If there is no differentiation in study options during the first two years, all children are educated according to the same program. Only at the beginning of the second stage, differentiation must be made possible according to their interests, capacities and skills.

269. Today, the transition from non-university to university tertiary education is difficult for a student. Attempts must be made to create an easy transition from one to the other. In the light of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations, the current structure will be modified (starting next year).

270. Although almost all the children attend pre-school, this is sometimes not the case for children of migrants or underprivileged children. In pre-school, development objectives are formulated. Children already learn different kind of things (name of colours, days of the week, gross motor skills...) under supervision of an educated kindergarten teacher. To give all children the chance to learn these things before entering primary school, it is advised to make pre-school compulsory as well.

271. A pressing equity issue in Flanders concerns the topic of 'inclusive schools'. Besides the separate structure that exists for students with special needs, there are also persons who plead for 'inclusive schools'. According to De Fever (1998) inclusive schools are mainstream schools that are open to all children: highly talented children, as well as children with learning difficulties or a handicap, children with a special character... In an inclusive school all these children are together in the same school and class and receive the same lessons irrespective of their differences. Inclusive education starts from the diversity of the students. This view differs from the 'integrated education' that is described in detail in chapter 5. With integrated education children with a handicap (from all different types that exist in special schools, except for type 5) can attain the mainstream schools by the support of a staff member of the special school. Additional teaching periods and resources are provided to realise this integration. Inclusion however goes according to De Fever further than integration. The reasoning behind integration is still that persons with a handicap have to adapt themselves to the norm of society. Inclusion on the other hand means that it is naturally that people with a handicap belong to society and that it is taken for granted that they can participate in all the different domains (education, work, leisure activities...). Nevertheless, inclusive education still has a long way to go (De Fever, 1998).

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