

3 The School Years



The success of young people in meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities associated with the transition depends, to a large degree, on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they learn in school, at home and in their communities. What young people learn as they grow up is vital not only for their own lives, but for the good of society both as a whole and in all its economic, political and social aspects.

As the Convention on the Rights of the Child makes clear, every child has the right to free primary education and access, on the basis of equal opportunity, to secondary education, including general education and vocational training. The Convention calls for an education that develops the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children to the fullest.

Today “learning” and “education” are understood to encompass much more than the core years of formal schooling. “Lifelong learning”, a concept being embraced around the world, promotes the idea that the learning process starts at the very earliest age and continues throughout the entire life span. It emphasizes that organized learning can take place in a variety of settings, including the workplace or a community centre, and that it involves formal, as well as informal opportunities. Societies that promote and support lifelong learning enable individuals to improve their health, livelihood, personal development, and participation in society; in turn, societies benefit from a healthier population, better social cohesion and greater economic expansion.

This chapter focuses on that part of the lifelong learning process where youth growing up during the transition are located today: upper secondary schools and higher education programmes. This is a pivotal stage. With basic education behind them, young people begin to make important decisions: Should I attend general or vocational-technical secondary school? Should I go on to college or university? Should I drop out of school? The inheritance of early family life and education begins to be played out with differentiating results. Is there the drive, the marks or the money for higher education? Or is it time to get a job? There is also the increasing influence of peer pressure and the exposure and vulnerability to risk-taking behaviours.

The formal education system is only one of several major spheres of influence on learning. However, school is a primary setting in any individual’s life, along with home, work and the community. So, not only does school play an obvious role in learning, it is a key social environment in which personal development takes place. Schools are not just significant for education and its future rewards, they are crucial places for young people in the present. In other words, it is important not only that the curriculum be appropriate and the teachers well trained, but that the environment be stimulating, healthy and pleasant. School days, in more ways than one, last a lifetime, shaping attitudes towards learning that persist into adulthood. School thus has a key function in enabling young people to make a confident transition from adolescence to adulthood, from school to work and from family life to participation in broader civil society.

Many of these aspects of formal schooling are more intense in the transition region. Education has a vital function in preparing the transition generation to become the first to take a chosen place in new and rapidly changing market economies and in more open and democratic societies. The education systems in the region must therefore also change, so that what they teach is relevant to a generation charged with rebuilding an economy and promoting a new civil society. Restructured labour markets have meant high rates of youth unemployment and a more prolonged and complex transition from school to the workplace. The challenges facing the educational system in meeting the new demands are great and range from depleting resources to shifting institutional structures and responsibilities.

In this chapter, Section 3.1 examines trends in young people’s participation in the formal education system at both upper secondary and tertiary levels. It also summarizes various influences on enrolment rates. Section 3.2 looks at access to education and training, in particular the effect of gender, family characteristics and income. Section 3.3 focuses on the content and quality of the educational process. It looks at achievement levels against international standards and the way curricula and broader learning skills match up with the needs of the new market economies and democratic societies.



3.1 Changes in Youth Participation in Education

The expansion of post-compulsory schooling has been one of the major developments in education throughout the industrialized world in recent decades, and the former socialist countries of the transition region are no exception

in this regard. One of the main achievements of the socialist system was the successful establishment of universal basic education and a growing number of educational opportunities following compulsory schooling. For exam-

Box 3.1

Youth aspirations and attitudes: the importance of education

Many of the choices revolving around participation in education reflect the aspirations and attitudes of young people and the influence of parents, peers, teachers, prospective employers, and others. To what extent do youth consider attending school and studying worthwhile?

Figure 3.1 compares the views of people under 30 in six Central and Eastern European countries and nine other industrialized nations as revealed through a survey conducted in 1992-93. Among other questions, respon-

dents were asked if a good education and “knowing the right people” were important for “getting ahead”.

Young people in the six transition countries were typically less likely than young people in the other countries to think that a good education is essential for getting ahead. In the four Central European countries, just one in seven young people rated education “essential”, a level found only in Norway and Sweden in the West. Meanwhile, in every established market economy surveyed, the share of young people who thought that education is essential was greater than the share who favoured knowing the right people. In the transition countries, this was true only in Slovenia.

These views were captured early in the transition period, and they refer mainly to countries at the forefront of reform. How has the situation changed since then? It is clear that “social capital”, in the form of personal connections and mutual trust, is important everywhere. Younger people tend to have less social capital than adults, but may have more education, mobility and flexibility. In this light, market reform might help young people by creating a more competitive environment and raising the significance of the assets they possess.

“Personal connections are important for getting a job,” commented Radek, 18, a young Czech man, during focus-group research for this Report. “Yet, even if you get the job because of your father, if you do not perform well, then these connections will no longer be of any help.”

There are indications, indeed, that young people are assigning a greater value to education than they once did. Surveys in Latvia, for example, show a positive change in youth attitudes towards education, while activities which contribute less directly to personal development are now being considered less important (Figure 3.2).

In 1983, the surveys showed “education” ranked fourth, behind “job”, “family” and “friends”, among the activities young people valued most. By 1997, though the same four items still dominated the list, education had reached first place, followed by job, friends and family.

Figure 3.1

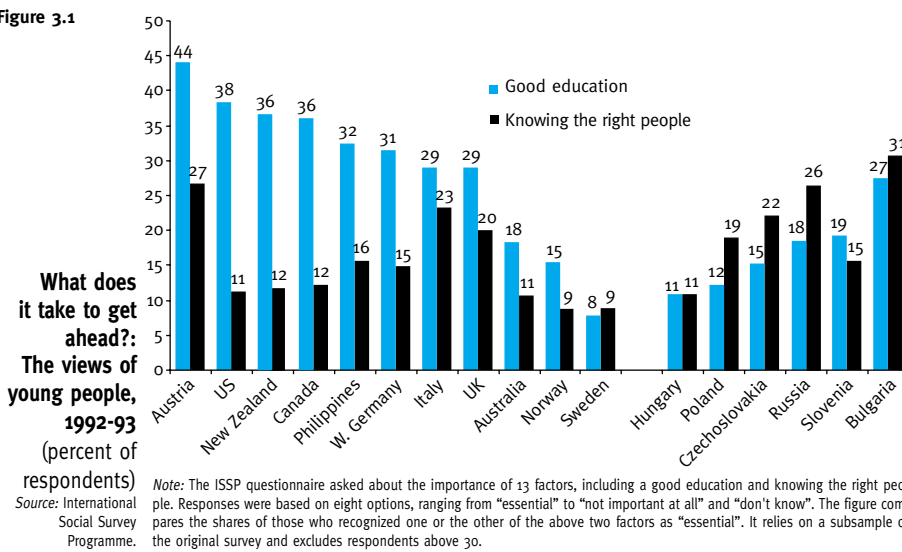
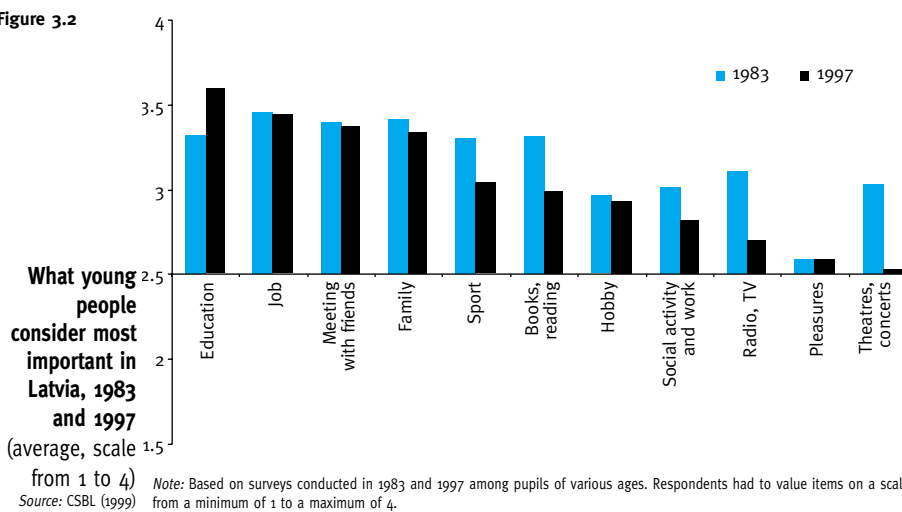


Figure 3.2



ple, in Hungary in 1990, 40 percent of 20-24 year-olds had secondary school certificates at a level higher than vocational, and 13 percent had tertiary level diplomas.

The transition to market economies and democratic societies in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS is having profound implications for education in these countries. How do young people perceive the changes? Box 3.1 and Voices of Youth 9 give some insights into the aspirations, values and attitudes of the transition generation.

Enrolment may be only one measure of young people's participation in education, but it is a fundamental one. The data on enrolment, discussed in the next section, tell a story that is relevant to the other facets of youth development – participation in the labour force, participation in society, conflict with the law, and overall health and well-being – reviewed in this Report.

The overall rate of youth enrolments

The crudest way to measure youth participation in education is to compare enrolments in upper secondary and tertiary institutions with the size of the youth population. In 1998, about 26.5 million people in the region were enrolled in secondary or tertiary educational or training programmes on a part- or full-time basis, almost one million more than in 1989. Set against a youth population of 65 million in 1998, the enrolment rate was 41 percent, about two percentage points less than in 1989, when there were six million fewer 15-24 year-olds in the region.

Meanwhile, the enrolment rate for the same age group in the European Union was significantly higher – 58 percent in 1995. Moreover, the slight decline in the transition countries since 1989 contrasts with the trend in

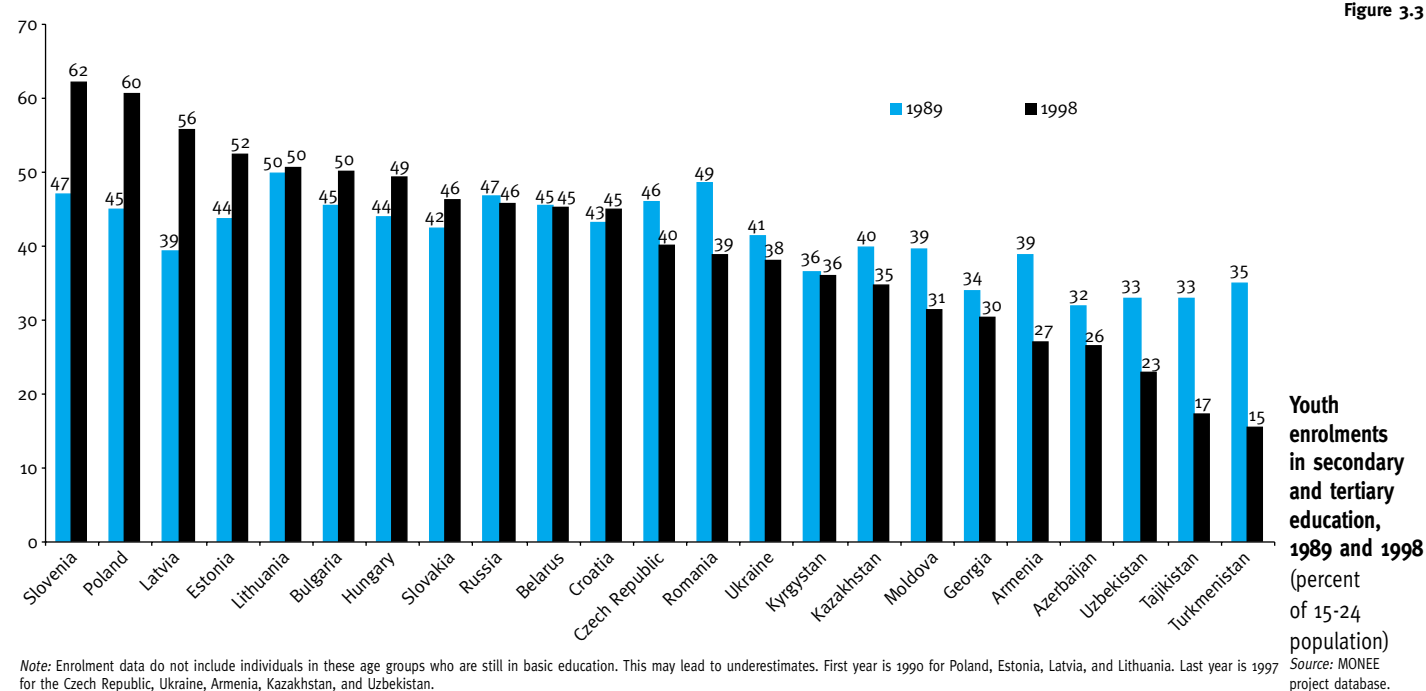
Western Europe: 1987-95 saw a rise of nine percentage points in the enrolment rate in the EU.

Of course, these highly aggregated data may mask large differences among countries both in the levels of enrolment in any one year and in the changes over time. Figure 3.3 shows that this is indeed the case. There were substantial differences in enrolment rates in the transition region in 1989, with a range of 18 percentage points between the countries with the lowest and the highest participation rates. By 1998 this gap had widened to 47 percentage points.

In general, the Central European and Baltic countries recorded significant expansion in participation in post-compulsory education, particularly Poland and Latvia, where enrolment in 1998 approached or exceeded the 1995 EU average. However, sharp falls are found at the other end of the spectrum in the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, where the data show that less than 20 percent of 15-24 year-olds were in formal education in 1998.

Southeastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia present an uneven accounting with both big increases and big decreases. In the ex-Yugoslav states, the considerable migrations of peoples (often forced migrations resulting from ethnic conflict and war) blur the picture. As the diagram shows, Slovenia currently posts the highest enrolment rate in the region, while the rate has risen slightly in Croatia. The absolute number of enrolments has also climbed in FR Yugoslavia, although it is not very clear how the rate has changed relative to population. A part of the upswing in enrolments in these countries may be due to mass influxes of people from war-torn areas nearby.

As in other cases outlined in this section, these data are based on information on enrolments and the size of



Young people talk about the value of education

The attitudes and aspirations of young people differ considerably when it comes to education, and the range of views reveals much about the influence of expectations on school and work decisions. These voices were heard in focus-group research conducted for this Report. They belong to young people enjoying success in their chosen careers and to youth in reform schools in the Czech Republic, early school-leavers in Russia and Ukraine, secondary school students and graduates in Uzbekistan, and vocational school students and young people doing volunteer work in Latvia.

- “A good job is a job with the prospect of access to further education.” (Ivana, 24)
- “In reform school, they offer training and education. I doubt I would attend school if I wasn’t here.” (Jarda, 16)
- “School-leavers often do not know whether the decision they took was the right one. On the one hand, it would be good to finish grade 11 and obtain a high school diploma, but, on the other hand, one just needs a vocation and a job.” (Karina, 15)
- “Having a good time with friends and ‘good education’ are the same thing.” (Trava, 16)
- “The quality of education depends on the teacher.” (Katerina, 18)
- “I will have to finish school one way or another. Without school education, one will never get a decent job.” (Nikita, 16)
- “[Education] is not very important. Today money counts for everything.” (Vasia, 16)
- “Without education a person is a nobody.” (Zhakhongir, 16)
- “The main goal is to get education. But what I mean by education is broader than its classical meaning. It is necessary to continue educating myself all my life and to help people, first of all those closest to you and then others also.” (Maija, 21)
- “I think we should have more practice regarding the world of work. This would give us an opportunity to learn more about our future profession.” (Harijs, 16)

population groups that has been gathered from separate sources. Due to migration or strife, these separate sources may be inconsistent (or inaccessible, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Kosovo). In this context, school enrolments may, in fact, reflect youth immigration more closely and in a more timely fashion than do population registers. Unrecorded out-migration can push calculated enrolment rates below their true values, as is probably the situation in Central Asia. Nonetheless, the general trend of slipping enrolments in most CIS countries as shown in the graph seems to be the true one.

Fewer youth complete basic education

To understand the changes in enrolments among 15-24 year-olds, one should take a step back and look at what has happened in basic schooling, the level of education before

upper secondary. Unless 15 year-olds have successfully completed basic schooling, they will not be able to advance to the next level. The falls in enrolment shown for some countries in Figure 3.3 may be caused not so much by young people (or their families) deciding not to enrol, but by the inability of these young people to carry on at the upper secondary level due to a failure to finish basic schooling. In this case, the problem lies at the early stages of the school career.

Table 3.1 sheds some light on this concern. It compares the number of basic school graduates per 100 youth aged 15 (the age at which most children complete basic schooling) for the 12 CIS countries in 1989 and 1997. As the table shows, before the transition, almost all children in these countries, as elsewhere in the region, were finishing basic education.

However, the transition years have seen a sharp reduction in basic school completion in CIS countries, particularly poorer ones, with falls of 10-20 percentage points. Countries experiencing civil conflict are among those registering the largest declines. In Georgia, the graduation rate from basic school dropped below 70 percent in the mid-1990s before slowly recovering. In Tajikistan, torn by civil war, rates shrank throughout the 1990s.

Parts of Eastern Europe also show some notable deficits in basic school graduation. Rates in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, calculated the same way as those in Table 3.1, were all below 80 percent in 1997, while Latvia was the only Baltic State to reach 90 percent. In contrast, basic school graduation rates were in the 94-99 percent range in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 1996.

Falls in graduation reflect various factors, including dropping out early from school, late entry to school (after the compulsory starting age) and repetition of school years – all of which are causes for concern. These data suggest

Table 3.1

Finishing basic schooling in the CIS, 1989 and 1997 (number of graduates per 100 15 year-olds)

	1989	1997	Change
Belarus	98	88	-10
Moldova	96	77	-19
Russia	94	88	-6
Ukraine	96	89	-7
Armenia	86	73	-13
Azerbaijan	94	84	-10
Georgia	96	73	-24
Kazakhstan	100	89	-11
Kyrgyzstan	98	85	-13
Tajikistan	99	73	-26
Turkmenistan	96	80	-16
Uzbekistan	98	92	-6
CIS average	96	83	-13

Sources: CIS Stat (1999); MONEE project database.

Note: Graduates expressed as a percent of the population at the theoretical age for graduation, in this case 15 years. The CIS average is unweighted. Last year is 1996 for Turkmenistan.

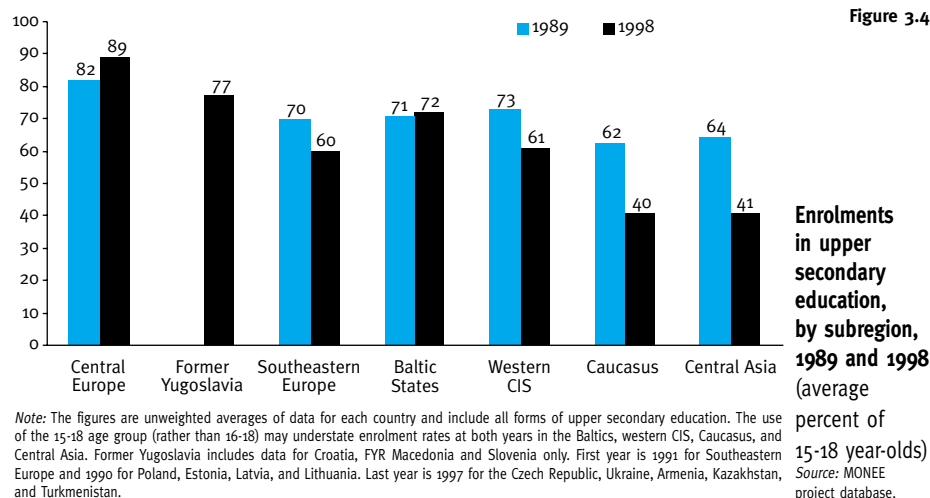
that the eroding enrolment rates among 15-24 year-olds are at least partly caused by changes in schooling at a lower level. They underline that measures aimed at youth education and training need to be embraced within an integrated policy approach towards schooling for children of all ages.

Diverging trends in secondary education

The changes in graduation at the basic level of school provide a good point of departure for distinguishing enrolment rates between upper secondary and tertiary levels of education. Box 3.2 describes the different types of post-compulsory education in the transition countries.

Figure 3.4 shows enrolment rates in 1989 and 1998 for youth aged 15-18 in all forms of upper secondary education. Transition countries in Central Europe average a modest increase, and the Baltic States a very slight rise over the transition period; all other subregions exhibit major falls in enrolment, ranging from eight to 23 percentage points. (There is no 1989 information for former Yugoslavia.) The data clearly imply that post-compulsory schooling has suffered a substantial reversal in these parts of the region.

Does the focus on just two years in Figure 3.4 hide a more complicated story of change during the transition years? This is indeed the case, as Figure 3.5 reveals; it pre-



Note: The figures are unweighted averages of data for each country and include all forms of upper secondary education. The use of the 15-18 age group (rather than 16-18) may understate enrolment rates at both years in the Baltics, western CIS, Caucasus, and Central Asia. Former Yugoslavia includes data for Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Slovenia only. First year is 1991 for Southeastern Europe and 1990 for Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Last year is 1997 for the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

sents upper secondary enrolment rates for eight countries for all years in the period 1989-98. In most of the countries, enrolment rates fell in the early 1990s before rising again. This occurred in Slovakia, for example, where the 1998 rate was 6 percent higher than the rate in 1989, and in Latvia, where rates plunged 10 percentage points before returning to pre-transition levels. Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan saw huge declines of about 25 percentage points up until 1995, but the rates in both countries, though still far below 1989 levels, appear to be recovering strongly. (It is unclear if, or how, these movements reflect changes in the consistency of data collection.)

Box 3.2

Types of post-compulsory education in transition countries

Upon successful completion of the eighth or ninth grade of basic education (primary and lower secondary school), young people in the transition countries typically have three ways to continue schooling.

- General secondary schools (often called gymnasia or lycees) offer four-year programmes of academic study with entry on a selective basis. These schools provide the main route to higher education. (In a number of countries, gymnasia streams begin in lower secondary grades.)
- Technical schools (technical gymnasia/lycees, “tekhnikums”) offer three- to five-year programmes of technical study leading to a diploma and the opportunity to continue studying in areas such as medicine and engineering.
- Vocational schools (known in the former USSR as professional-technical institutions, or PTUs, and in Eastern Europe as apprentice schools) provide vocational courses of one to three years or more. Under central planning, students in vocational schools were most often trained for employment in a very specialized occupation, and the possi-

bility for continuing into tertiary education was usually limited.

Higher or tertiary education beyond upper secondary schooling includes programmes leading to a first university degree or recognized equivalent (ISCED 6, according to the levels of the International Standard Classification System of Education; postgraduate study, ISCED 7, is not covered in this Report.) Non-university higher education programmes (ISCED 5) tend to parallel those for which university degrees are granted, but are shorter and more practical in orientation and do not lead to the award of a degree or its equivalent. The tekhnikums of the former USSR republics are sometimes classified as ISCED 5, but this Report treats these institutions as upper secondary schools on the grounds that the great majority of students are aged 15-19.

Upper secondary and higher education enrolments often encompass three categories of delivery. “Daytime” includes mostly young full-time students who are unlikely to be employed, while “evening” and “distance” courses embrace students of all ages and are targeted at those who are working full or part time.

However, the pattern of an early downswing followed by a rise is not found in all the countries represented. Tajikistan shows a decline year after year. Available data indicate that enrolment is almost collapsing there, from 61 percent in 1989 to 24 percent in 1998, a drop of 37 percentage points. In Turkmenistan, enrolment appears to have shrunk by 38 percentage points, to 30 percent in 1998, the only other case of a continuous decline. However, in several other countries rates have stagnated at greatly reduced levels, with only very small increases in recent years or with an oscillating rate from year to year. This is true of Belarus and Ukraine, with an overall fall of about 10 percentage points, and Armenia and Georgia, with an overall fall of about 20 percentage points.

General versus vocational and technical schooling

The main distinction in the types of upper secondary schooling is between the "general" secondary schools and

the vocational and technical schools. The former, as the name indicates, provide a broader and more academic education and represent the principal route to university study. Vocational and technical schools offer education and training more directly linked to the job market, with vocational schools, in particular, allowing fewer opportunities for study at the tertiary level.

A common view of the secondary school systems inherited from the communist period is that there is "too much" specialized vocational and technical education and "not enough" widely based learning through general secondary schools to meet the needs of new market economies. However, the truth is more complicated.

The emphasis of centrally planned economies on industry at the expense of services did have major implications for the education system. Examples unquestionably exist of narrow vocational training for employment in industries for which demand has now collapsed. Some countries had extreme specialization in schooling, notably Romania.

On the other hand, market economies need many of the skills supplied through technical and vocational schooling, and it is easy to point to school systems in successful Western European economies, like Germany, where technical and vocational education receives great emphasis. As much as the overall amount, it is the types and quality of vocational and technical education which matter, an issue considered further in Section 3.3.

Shifts in enrolments towards general secondary education may well reflect shifting demands as a result of negative attitudes to vocational and technical schools and because of aspirations for higher education. Table 3.2 shows how enrolments in the two types of schooling changed between 1989 and 1998, giving the average enrolment rates in various subregions.

The pattern is clear: there is, indeed, a switch away from vocational and technical education. In Central and Southeastern Europe, former Yugoslavia and the Baltic States, enrolment has increased in general secondary schools and decreased in vocational and technical schools. (The overall drop in Southeastern Europe is driven by a big fall in Romania.) In the western CIS, there is a slight rise in general secondary enrolments and a sharp drop in vocational and technical enrolments. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, enrolments are declining in all types of schools, but more so in vocational and technical schools.

Within the subregions, the pattern is generally the same in every country. Exceptions are Hungary in Central Europe and Estonia in the Baltic States, both of which have expanding vocational and technical enrolments, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia, where general secondary enrolments have climbed a few percentage points, like the case in Russia or Ukraine.

Table 3.2 also reflects what may seem a rather surprising relationship between the levels of enrolment in the two forms of schooling: some of the less industrialized countries

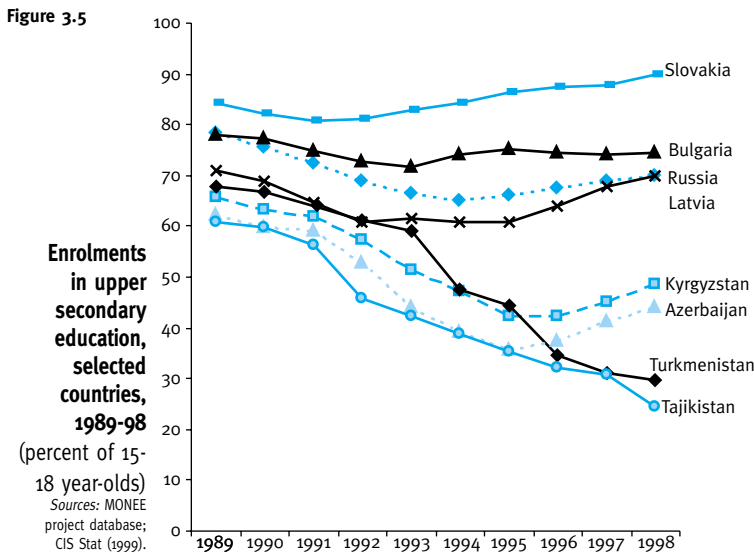


Table 3.2

Enrolments in general and vocational/technical education, by subregion, 1989 and 1998
(average percent of 15-18 year-olds)

	General secondary			Vocational/technical		
	1989	1998	Difference	1989	1997	Difference
Central Europe	17.0	25.0	8	65.2	63.0	-2
Former Yugoslavia	16.9	19.7	3	-	55.6	-
Southeastern Europe	19.7	28.1	8	69.3	31.8	-38
Baltic States	31.7	42.4	11	39.6	29.5	-10
Western CIS	26.4	27.5	1	46.7	33.8	-13
Caucasus	35.9	28.8	-7	26.0	12.0	-14
Central Asia	37.9	28.7	-9	26.2	12.8	-13

Source: MONEE project database.

Note: The figures are unweighted averages of data for each country. They correspond to the data presented in Figure 3.4 with some rounding error and differences in subregional composition between years. General secondary: First year is 1994 for former Yugoslavia (excluding Bosnia-Herzegovina.), 1991 for Southeastern Europe and 1990 for Poland. Last year is 1997 for the Czech Republic and Uzbekistan. Vocational/technical: Former Yugoslavia excludes Bosnia-Herzegovina and FR Yugoslavia. First year is 1990 for the Baltic States. Last year is 1997 for Bulgaria, Ukraine, Armenia, and Kazakhstan.

have higher shares of upper secondary enrolment in general schooling than do more developed countries at the forefront of the transition process. For example, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia have little more than a quarter of total upper secondary enrolment in general schools, while Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have around two-thirds.

Differences in classification may be a factor, but the main reason is probably that the more industrialized economies of Central Europe require a greater degree of vocational and technical schooling to support them. The share of vocational and technical schooling in Central Europe – around three-quarters – is, in fact, very similar to that in Germany. The Baltic States, by contrast, have a much lower share of enrolments at the upper secondary level in vocational and technical education and a correspondingly higher share in general secondary schools – with values similar to those in Finland. (In the EU, an average 48 points out of the secondary enrolment rate of 83 percent in 1996 were vocational.)

Again, it is interesting to see how this pattern has changed throughout the years of transition. Figure 3.6 presents enrolment rates in the two types of schools for Hungary and Russia for each year in the period 1989-98. The experiences of the two countries provide a sharp contrast.

In 1989, enrolment rates in both general and vocational/technical schooling were quite similar in Hungary and Russia. The rates for general secondary schools changed over time in a similar way, too, both rising; although Hungary closed the gap from over six percentage points in 1989 to only two in 1998. However, the vocational/technical rates diverge. In Hungary, the rate stagnates in the early 1990s as the economy shrinks, but rises by 12 percentage points after 1993 when economic growth

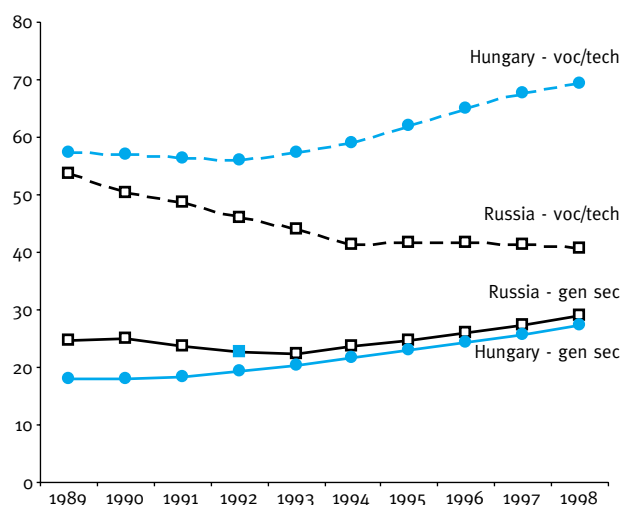


Figure 3.6

Enrolments in general and vocational/technical education, Hungary and Russia, 1989-98
(percent of 15-18 year-olds)
Source: MONEE project database.

Note: The definition of upper secondary schooling for Hungary includes all of general secondary, but only some of vocational/technical. Education in *tekhnikums* in Russia is classified as non-university (ISCED 5).

begins. The rate in Russia, however, has fallen by 13 percentage points, with no sign of a turnaround yet in sight. This large drop in vocational and technical enrolment accounts for much of the decline and hinders recovery in overall secondary enrolment in Russia (see Figure 3.5).

Higher education

Higher or tertiary education has a long tradition in much of the region, and there was a considerable expansion of education at this level under state socialism. However, the planned economies of the past exerted an influence on tertiary education similar to the one they exerted on upper secondary schooling. They emphasized the development of

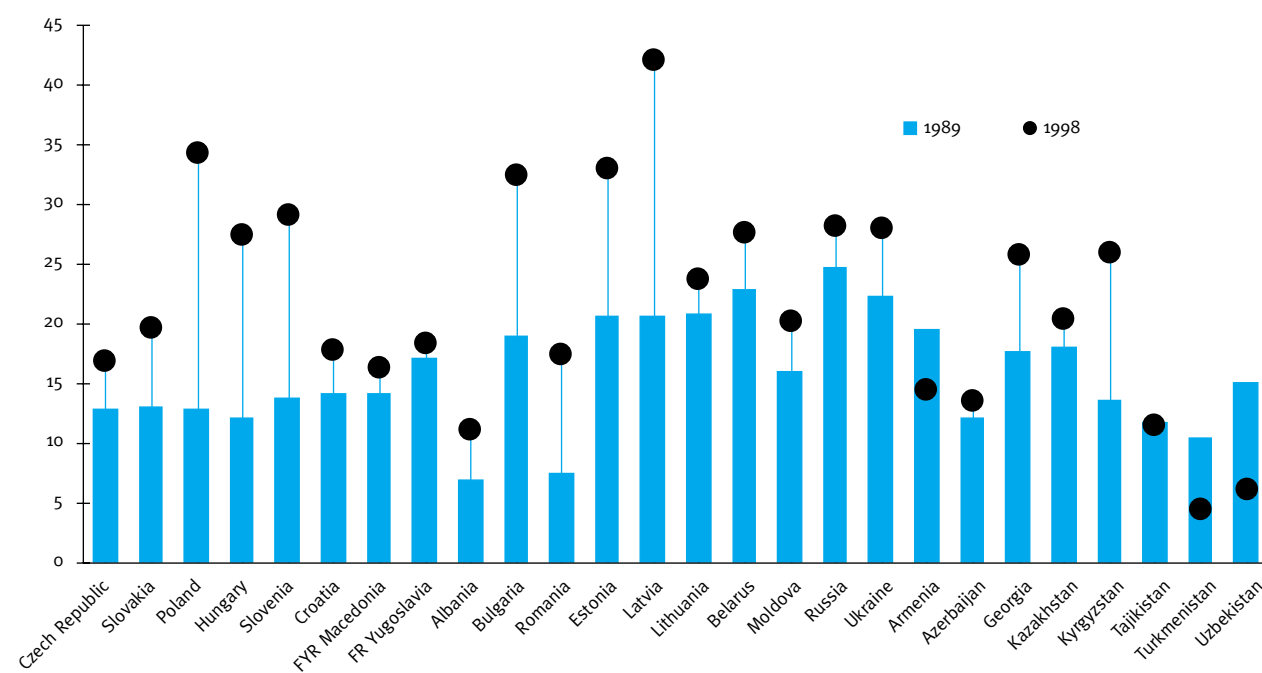


Figure 3.7

Enrolments in university education, 1989 and 1998
(percent of 19-24 year-olds)
Source: Statistical Annex, Table 6.4.

Note: Gross enrolment rates. The data relate to tertiary degree (or equivalent) study (ISCED 6). Hungary also includes non-degree programmes (ISCED 5). Slovenia 1998 includes candidates for graduation. Only full-time programmes are included in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and FYR Macedonia. First year in Croatia and FYR Macedonia is 1991.

qualified industrial labour, while neglecting the service sectors. (For example, there was little need for the courses in the law or in business studies that so many young people pursue in Western colleges and universities.) Moreover, wage policies lowered the financial returns on higher education. The transition to a market economy would therefore be expected to stimulate tertiary education.

Figure 3.7 presents changes in enrolment rates in degree-level study in the region between 1989 and 1998. (The data refer to ISCED 6 education provided by universities or their equivalents, except where indicated.) It is clear that there has been significant growth in degree-level education in almost all countries, and, in some cases, the increases are very large.

The average enrolment rate for the 26 countries presented rose from 16 percent in 1989 to 22 percent in 1998. Only three countries, Armenia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, registered declines, and quite large ones, with enrolment shrinking well below 10 percent in the two Central Asian countries. Elsewhere, however, the trend is unequivocal, as the changes in tertiary enrolment, in many cases, are driving the upswing in overall enrolment rates among young people in about half the region. Upper secondary school enrolments, by contrast, have often been dropping.

The growth in tertiary-level enrolment was steady throughout Central and Southeastern Europe. In all parts of the former Soviet Union, enrolments fell in the early 1990s before generally recovering. The recovery was strongest in the Baltic States and weakest in Central Asia.

(The rates in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan show continuous decline.)

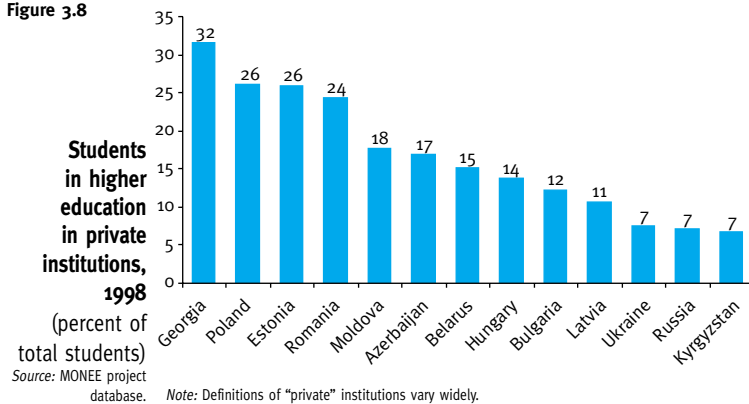
As a result of this pattern of change, there has been an enormous increase in the polarization among enrolment rates in the region. There were already some notable differences in 1989 (in part due to variations in the definition of tertiary education). By 1998, the differences had become much greater. Central Europe, Southeastern Europe and the Baltic States experienced the biggest growth in tertiary enrolment, which climbed by an average 10 to 12 percentage points. The average in the western CIS rose by five points, while the picture in the Caucasus and Central Asia was very mixed, with only Kyrgyzstan and Georgia registering substantial expansion.

Degree-level education has also become more varied during the transition, an important factor in accounting for and understanding the changes in enrolment rates. There has been growth both in non-university degree programmes and in programmes provided outside the public sector.

Figure 3.8 shows the share of students in private higher education for 13 transition countries in 1998. In Poland, Romania, Estonia, and Georgia, one-quarter or more of all enrolments were in the private sector. There has been a proliferation of new small colleges offering courses in business administration, accounting and computing; others are former state institutions which have altered status, and some still receive substantial public funding.

The development of part-time distance learning and non-university degree programmes has also been responsible for part of the boost in demand for higher education. These have largely attracted young people who are unable to undertake full-time university study because of the cost or because of their inadequate qualifications. Many students engaged in part-time study are also employed. In Slovenia, for example, more than 60 percent of part-time students in 1998-99 had jobs, compared with less than 1 percent of the full-time students. Part-time students in that country are also less likely to have had parents with higher education (Table 3.3). The expansion of part-time study at the tertiary level may well have resulted in greater equity of access to education opportunities in transition countries.

Figure 3.8



Factors in the changes in enrolments

Some obvious factors help explain the enrolment trends described above. The change in the structure of the economies of the region, from planned to market, has affected enrolments among the various types of upper secondary schools, as well as the overall level of tertiary enrolments.

Sustained economic growth, such as in the economies of Central Europe, fuels the demand for skilled workers and allows more resources, in real terms, to go into education. It is not surprising then that, alongside higher enrolments in general education, enrolments in technical and vocational secondary schools have also increased or stayed high, as in the case of Hungary and Poland.

In other parts of the region, notably the less industri-

Table 3.3

Family background of students enrolled in tertiary education in Slovenia, 1990/91 and 1994/95 (percent of students having parents with tertiary education)

School year	Full-time students		Part-time students	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
1990/91	33.0	23.4	16.9	9.0
1994/95	31.9	25.7	19.3	13.3

Sources: SORS (1991, 1995).

alized and less urbanized parts of the former Soviet Union, substantial economic recovery still lies in the future, and the transition years have seen a much larger shrinkage in national income. The same countries have experienced sharp falls in enrolments at the upper secondary level in both general and vocational/technical schools. The relationship between economic recovery and upper secondary enrolments is summarized in Figure 3.9.

The decisions young people eventually make about participation in education depend in large measure on how school and higher education are perceived by young people and their parents, including the advantages to be gained from continuing in education.

A key factor in the decision of young persons to enrol in education is the value in terms of employment prospects and the likely effect on earnings. There is insufficient evidence on whether education now has a greater impact on earnings than it did during the planned economy period, although this is typically presumed. Research in the Czech Republic and Slovakia has shown that education in 1995-97 had a substantially larger effect on earnings than it had exerted either under communism, or in the early transition years and that this effect was greater than the effect typical in OECD countries. More research of this type is needed, especially because the Czech Republic is unlikely to be representative of most of the region in this respect.

Education can also have an impact on employment probabilities. High levels of youth unemployment characterize much of the region (Chapters 1 and 4). Unemployment is a factor that is often thought to increase enrolment in full-time education. Higher youth unemployment obviously reduces the chances of young people getting a job on leaving school, thereby also reducing the expectations of incomes in the near future. Continuing with education may appear to be a more attractive option in this situation. If more education helps an individual find employment in the future, this is a further incentive to study.

3.2 Equity in Access to Education Opportunities

Equity in access to education remains a live issue in the established market economies. The entrenchment of long-term unemployment, the shifts in the demand for jobs requiring special skills and the emergence in some countries of higher income inequality are all trends which raise concern about the distribution of education opportunities.

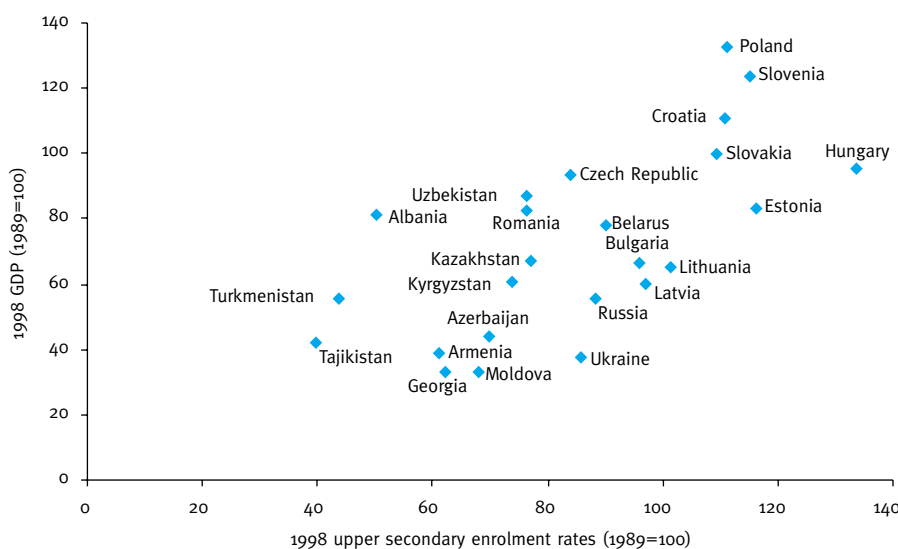
The transition economies face these same challenges,

On the other hand, a general expansion in unemployment modifies everyone's labour market prospects, so that the potential financial gain linked to further schooling is, on average, diminished, and this should tend to push enrolments down.

Last but not least, higher unemployment cuts into family incomes, an important resource for the support needed by a young person to get through schooling and higher education. Low real wages, wage arrears – both persistent problems throughout the CIS – and anything else that decreases family incomes may have the same consequence.

The stress which many families have experienced during the transition and which has exposed more young people to disadvantage is described by Irina, the 38-year-old mother of a school dropout in Russia, who was interviewed for this Report.

"We live in difficult times," she said. "Our kids are left behind in this life. Nobody cares that they get an education. Nobody cares for them at all: their parents are either too busy earning money, or are alcoholics and do not care about anything. Society does not bother either That is why I am concerned whether my son will be able to find a rewarding job which could satisfy him. If he will not manage to find one, his life will not progress properly."



Note: First year is 1990 for Poland, Romania and Estonia, 1992 for Croatia and 1993 for Slovenia. Last year is 1994 for Kazakhstan, 1995 for Albania, 1996 for Croatia, and 1997 for Ukraine, Armenia and Uzbekistan.

Changes in upper secondary enrolments and in GDP, 1989-98 (percent)
Source: MONEE project database.

Increasing diversity: increasing disparity

The transition has led to such a substantial alteration in the education picture that one is hardpressed to give straightforward answers to the above questions. The positive changes in education include growing diversity and, therefore, much greater choice in what is being offered in educational institutions. However, evidence from many transition countries suggests that a greater divide has emerged in educational attainments and opportunities.

To illustrate this greater divide, Figure 3.10 shows how the shifts in secondary and tertiary enrolments in 24 transition countries intersect. (The horizontal axis indicates the percentage point change in secondary enrolments among 15-18 year-olds, while the vertical axis indicates the corresponding change in tertiary enrolments among 19-24 year-olds.)

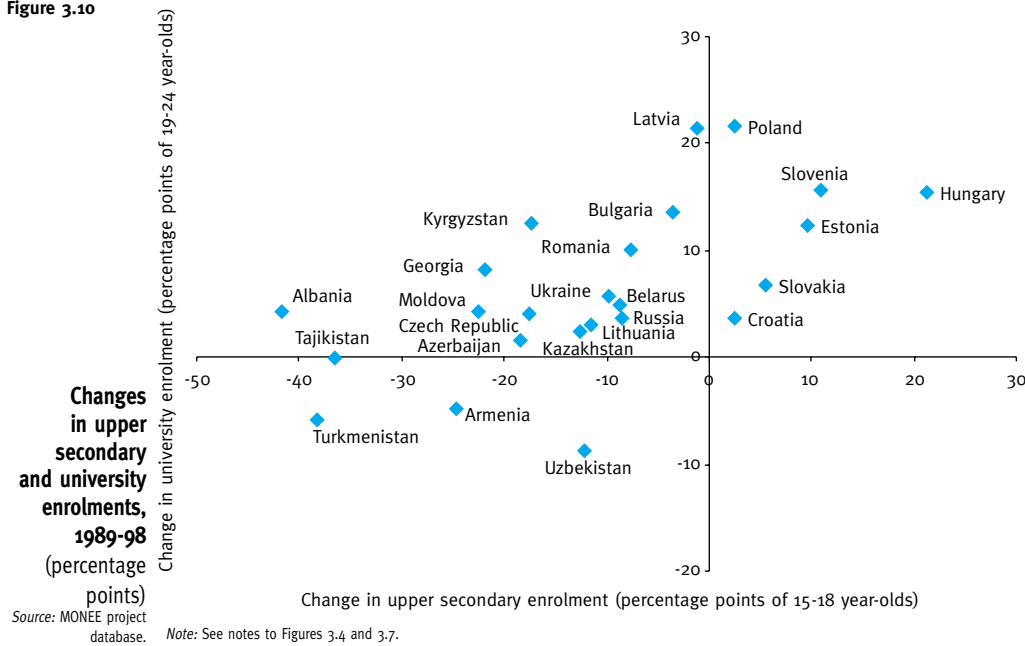
Enrolments have expanded both at secondary and at tertiary levels in six CEE countries, several of which are regarded as frontrunners in reform. At the other end of the spectrum, enrolments have narrowed at both levels in three countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the majority of countries, enrolments among 15-18 year-olds shrank, while they expanded among 19-24 year-olds. This suggests that there are fewer opportunities for many adolescents to graduate from upper secondary school, but, for those who do, there are greater opportunities to go on to tertiary education.

This situation entails more selection among adolescents for entry into upper secondary education. Is this process fair? And do the expanding tertiary enrolments mean that there is greater equity in access, as one would expect? Unfortunately, the answers to these questions appear to be negative in many cases.

This is the conclusion, for example, of a detailed OECD review of education in Russia, the largest transition country. Having listed a range of concerns about preferential access to better education opportunities, the OECD review argues that:

“Under the banner of ‘increased choice’, all these concerns point paradoxically to diminished educational opportunities for many children, especially those who are rural, less affluent, or less well connected – regardless of their individual merit. . . . As Russian society becomes increasingly

Figure 3.10



The data reviewed earlier point to a weakening in education at the basic school level and in certain areas of upper secondary education, especially in vocational and technical schools in many countries. Meanwhile, participation in the academic tracks of secondary schooling and in tertiary education has generally expanded. Accordingly, the youth population is becoming more divided according to educational attainment: many will have more education, and many will have less than was the case before the transition.

Unequal access to education in Russia: an OECD review

Box 3.3

In 1998, the OECD published a detailed review of education in Russia. The problems of unequal access identified by the review team included:

- Special links between the better schools and institutes of higher education reduce the open competition for admission to the latter.
- Fee-paying students lower the number of places normally available for allocation without fee.
- The access of the children of the new elites is privileged.

- “Desirable” schools charge for entry by requiring parents to make a donation.
- Teachers tutor their own students outside the classroom for pay.

What the OECD team described as an “elitist ethic” in Russia added to their concerns. This, the team concluded, was leading to a lack of interest – repeated in society at large – in the opportunities for children from dysfunctional families and from families with low incomes, as well as for children of low or even average abilities.

stratified in terms of wealth, Russian education is increasingly stratified in terms of opportunity.”

Certainly, under state socialism, the region was not free from stratification of opportunity in post-compulsory education. Much evidence indicates the contrary, as the 1998 Regional Monitoring Report, “Education for All?”, established. However, the OECD review calls attention to the sharp rise in inequality of opportunity during the transition years (Box 3.3).

What is the situation in other transition countries? Not all the problems identified in the

OECD review are prevalent throughout the region, but similar issues are frequently mentioned in reports and research studies from various organizations both within and outside the countries and are often recognized by the governments themselves. Some of these are discussed hereafter.

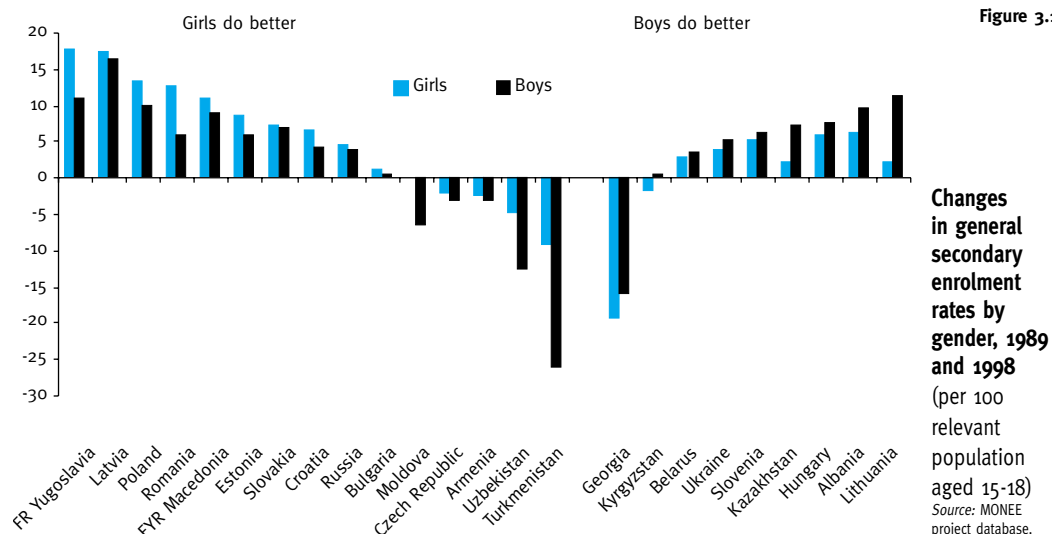
It is worth emphasizing that a portion of the inequities in opportunity in upper secondary and tertiary education originate in schooling at the compulsory level. The failure to complete basic schooling successfully (or to complete it with good grades) is more common among certain groups of children, for example children in lower income families and children belonging to ethnic minorities, especially Roma populations. The establishment of fair systems of post-compulsory education that expand opportunities to as many young people as possible depends a great deal on what happens at earlier stages of schooling.

Several factors are associated with differences in education opportunities, including ethnicity, disability and locality: issues analysed in the 1998 Regional Monitoring Report. Locality, for example, raises important policy questions about decentralization in educational provision and funding and, as the earlier Report found, is a key issue in education policy in the region. Here below the attention is restricted to inequities according to gender and family income.

Gender and access

One of the achievements of state socialism was to advance education opportunities for girls and young women to a much greater extent than other countries at comparable levels of economic development. In some respects, the education situation inherited from communism left young women in a better position than young men to weather the transition because girls were typically overrepresented in general upper secondary schools, being less likely than boys to pursue the vocational or technical path.

Much of the decline in vocational and technical enrolments has involved young males, many of whom have thereby been pushed into general secondary education. So,



what has happened to enrolments among boys and girls in general secondary schools?

Figure 3.11 highlights changes in general secondary enrolment rates by gender between 1989 and 1998 for 24 transition countries. It shows that, where enrolments have increased, they have generally increased among both boys and girls, and in five of the seven countries where rates have fallen they have fallen among both boys and girls. In 15 of the 24 countries, enrolments among boys have either risen less, or dropped more than enrolments among girls. Among the countries experiencing enrolment rate declines, in five countries (Czech Republic, Moldova, Armenia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), enrolments contracted only among boys or more quickly among boys than among girls, while in two countries (Georgia and Kyrgyzstan), the decreases were bigger among girls or occurred only among them.

As highlighted in the 1999 Regional Monitoring Report, “Women in Transition”, the majority of university students in the region are females. Since 1989, young women have generally improved their share in tertiary enrolments, although in some disciplines men have often been quick to seize the new opportunities. Exceptions are the Caucasus, where young women’s average share remained at 46 percent, and Central Asia, where this average share went down from 45 to 40 percent. However, these averages hide large differences between countries. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan there has been little change in the gender ratio during the transition, and in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan the young women’s share dropped continuously between 1989 and 1998, from 39 to 25 percent and from 42 to 32 percent, respectively. In these countries, women’s participation in tertiary education seems to have taken a huge step backwards.

Family income and access

Family income has now become a more important determinant of access to post-compulsory education in the region than it was before the transition. What are the direct costs of education to families and how have they changed? The list of

costs includes formal fees, informal tuition charges, various “entrance fees”, textbooks and other school materials, and allowances for young people studying away from home. All these costs serve to foster differences in access to education and learning achievement according to household income.

Formal fees have become a more prominent fixture in the region’s education systems. The emergence of private education is the most obvious reason for this, but fees have also become common at the tertiary level in public systems. Private tertiary institutions in Latvia were charging from \$500 to \$1,000 per year in 1998, the sort of high costs which often prove insurmountable even for bright, motivated youth. In some countries, formal fees are now required even for upper secondary education in public schools. In Georgia, for example, a fee for grades 10 and 11 was introduced in 1996, and, though it was waived for 30 percent of children, the exceptions were made on the basis of assessed ability rather than on financial need.

Table 3.4 reports the answers of Russians aged 18-29

Money to pay tuition fees	42
Encouragement by parents	35
Good grades in secondary school	32
Bribes to institute staff	24
Personal ties with institute staff	22
Private tutoring	19
Helping the institute or staff get equipment	10

Source: Dobson (1998).

Note: More than one answer could be given. Results based on a VCIOM survey carried out in May-June 1998 among 1,248 young adults aged 18-29.

to a question in a 1998 survey on the importance of various factors for admission to institutes of higher education. Money to pay tuition fees was mentioned most frequently. The support of parents, ranked second, is clearly related to this, since parents are a key source of the money for fees and for bribes, the fourth item on the list. The large number of young people who believed personal ties are an important factor in admissions – more than one-fifth – is also troubling.

Tutoring charges are informal fees which, especially in poorer countries, teachers require for additional tutoring, often for their own pupils in public schools. They are a result of the marked fall in the real wages of teachers. Another result of lower wages may be the bribes for better exam grades that are reported as a common feature of school and university life in some countries. The lack of externally validated exam systems in much of the region contributes to this situation. In the same countries, informal entrance fees may have to be paid to get a child into a public kindergarten, school or university.

A 1996 World Bank survey in Armenia detailed the payments reported by parents to secure a place for their children in academic secondary schools and the amount per child requested by teachers for improved exam grades. In Moldova, many parents in a similar survey in 1998 reported that they hired tutors to ensure their children’s success in university entrance exams, paying hundreds of dollars for tutoring in languages, mathematics and science during the last year of secondary school. Guaranteeing a place in university frequently means bribes. A place in the most prestigious faculties such as economics, law and medicine can cost \$5,000 to \$7,000.

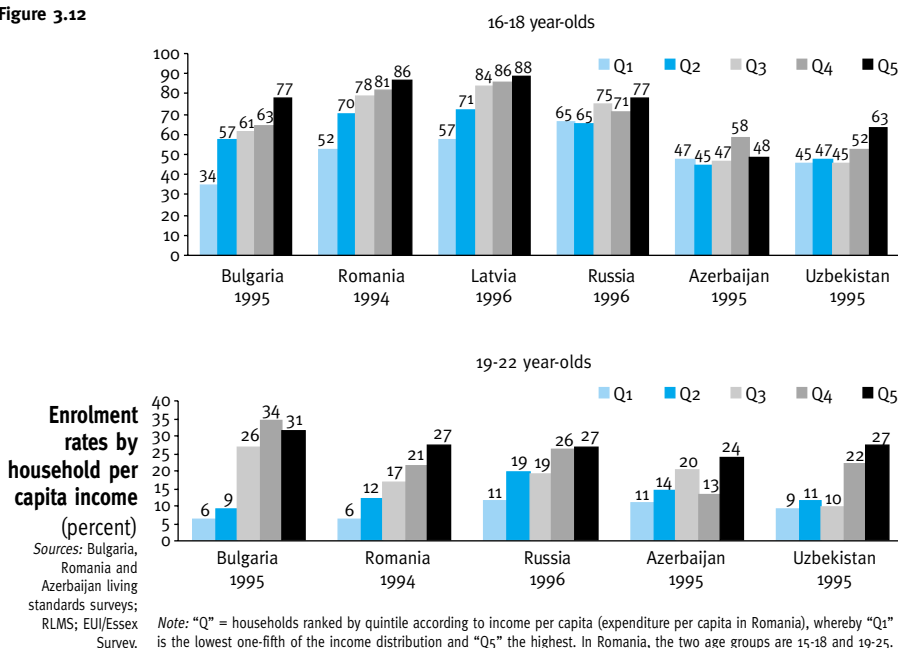
A number of countries have abandoned the policy of supplying textbooks free of charge, especially for post-compulsory schooling. In many countries, the cost of textbooks and other school materials appears to be a serious barrier to learning and even to enrolments among children from

poorer households, with textbook prices far higher relative to household incomes than they are in Western industrialized countries.

Households also have to meet indirect costs for schooling, especially for tertiary education. These include allowances for young people studying away from home. This is of particular concern for low-income rural households, because of the virtual elimination in some countries of state stipends for students. In the late Soviet period, the average student stipend paid by the state was 100 roubles per month, when the unofficial per-capita poverty line was 75 roubles. In 1995, the monthly student stipend in Azerbaijan was apparently sufficient to buy only one kilogram of poor quality meat.

Quantifying the impact of all these costs in terms of the differences in education access and learning is difficult. For enrolment – only one part of the picture – the possible effects

Figure 3.12



are illustrated in Figure 3.12, which relies on household survey data on six countries in the mid-1990s. The diagram shows enrolment rates among young people in households in each one-fifth, or quintile, of the income distribution.

Enrolments among secondary school-aged adolescents in Bulgaria, Romania and Latvia differ by 30-40 percentage points between households in the poorest one-fifth and those in the richest one-fifth of the income distribution. The data for Azerbaijan indicate no systematic variation according to income, while in Uzbekistan young people in the poorest households exhibit the same enrolment rates as those in the middle of the distribution. In Russia, the difference between the poorest two-fifths and the rest is around 10 percentage points.

Enrolments among 19-22 year-olds also rise notably with family income. The difference in the rates between young people in the poorest one-fifth of households and those in the richest one-fifth ranges from 13 percentage points in Azerbaijan to 25 points in Bulgaria. (Among these countries, Bulgaria shows the largest differences between rich and poor for both age groups.) A study conducted in Latvia in 1998 for the World Bank confirms the impact of income on tertiary enrolment rates. Thus, 23-year-old Guntis left his course at a Riga trade school because he was unable to combine work with study and his parents could not afford to help him buy the necessary tools and equipment.

Of course, differences in enrolments according to income levels do not necessarily reflect only these differences in income. Low-income households may suffer from other disadvantages which, correlated with income, contribute to reduced enrolment, for example living in a remote rural location. Nonetheless, the data illustrate clearly how enrolments are strongly associated with family economic well-being.

Adolescents left behind: early school-leavers

The changes in enrolment rates show that the number of adolescents who are of secondary school age, but who are not attending school has risen during the transition period. How many young people are not in school? Who are they?

In much of the region, compulsory education has an upper age limit which coincides with the age pupils normally graduate from basic education (though young people have to extend their studies a year or two longer, for instance in several Central and Southeastern European countries, where the upper age limit of compulsory education is 16 rather than 15). Accordingly, before the transition, a substantial share of adolescents aged 15-18, the secondary school ages, were not in school in the region. In 1989, almost six million – one-quarter – of the 25 million young people aged 15-18 were not enrolled in upper secondary education.

Since then there has been a significant rise in this figure. By 1998, the number of adolescents not in school had climbed above nine million, or about 1.5 times the corresponding figure in 1989. This is more than one-third of the 27 million young people aged 15-18.

This large and growing number of young people out of school is certainly worrisome. Research in the West has revealed a correlation between leaving school early and risky health outcomes such as early pregnancy and unhealthy behaviours. Moreover, the danger of social exclusion is high among youth who do not attend school. The fact that these young people are concentrated in some countries raises concerns about the prospects for human development in these countries. They are also numerous in other countries, however. There is evidence that certain socially vulnerable groups are overrepresented among these youth, reflecting, among other problems, the growing inequality in access to education – a most disturbing outcome.

“Dropout” is often used to describe younger adolescents who do not finish compulsory basic education at the primary and lower secondary levels. According to official data, annual dropout rates are relatively low in the region: no more than 1-2 percent per year and often less. However, by the time an age-cohort finishes basic education, these annual rates build up. As discussed earlier, a significant pool of young people – 1-5 percent in Central Europe and 5-25 percent in the CIS, the Baltic States and Southeastern Europe – either do not finish basic education, or graduate only after a delay, and this is a major contributing factor in the poor access to upper secondary education.

Ethnic minority children, particularly the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, form a group vulnerable to non-attendance in school or to dropping out. In Bulgaria, for example, a 1999 UNICEF study on out-of-school children found that about half of the Roma children aged 7-16 interviewed did not go to school, though education is compulsory at these ages. A representative survey in 1993 on the Roma population in Hungary found that 2 percent of youth aged 14-29 and 5 percent of people aged 30-39 had never attended school, and more than half of the Roma in these age groups had not completed basic education. The cumulative effects of disadvantage are highlighted by the fact that less than 2 percent of the Roma youth aged 20-29 who were surveyed had completed secondary school qualifications at a level higher than vocational, and almost none had tertiary level qualifications.

Another particularly vulnerable group consists of the children in areas of conflict in the Caucasus, in Central Asia and in the former Yugoslavia. In Tajikistan, for example, schools in most of the country were closed for almost a year in 1992 due to civil war. Poor school attendance can be a prelude to dropping out. In Kyrgyzstan, a UNICEF study found that 5-10 percent of the children interviewed had missed 40 or more days of school per year and that 25 percent had missed 20 or more days.

Language is also an issue for ethnic minority children. For instance, a World Bank study in Georgia found that children in minority groups (Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russians) who had been reallocated to Tbilisi as a result of conflict in Abkhazia could not keep up with their classes because their Georgian was very poor. Studies have

revealed that language is also a factor in the poor education achievement among Roma children.

Some of the reasons behind non-attendance in school are difficult to offset: armed conflict, political and social instability, the poor state of the economy. For some children, these factors are played out close to home through poverty, alcoholism, abuse, or family breakup. Many of these children will never attend upper secondary school; they form a very vulnerable portion of the youth population. In addition, there is evidence that a significant share of those young people who start upper secondary education leave it early.

Table 3.5 presents data on dropout rates at the upper secondary level for 10 transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. It shows that rates range from 1.5 percent in Romania to 17 percent in Albania for gen-

Table 3.5

Dropout rates at upper secondary level, 1996 (percent of relevant population)

	General education			Vocational and training		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Czech Republic	1.8	1.1	2.3	3.1	3.5	2.8
Poland	3.1	–	–	3.7	–	–
Hungary	6.4	6.8	6.1	13.6	12.8	14.5
Slovenia	5.4	2.3	7.4	13.7	15.8	11.4
Albania	17.4	22.4	12.9	16.9	21.2	7.2
Bulgaria	3.4	5.4	2.4	4.3	3.7	5.3
Romania	1.4	3.2	0.5	4.8	6.0	3.3
Estonia	6.3	7.8	5.3	10.9	11.5	9.9
Latvia	5.4	–	–	12.8	–	–
Lithuania	2.7	2.7	2.7	8.4	8.5	8.4

Source: ETF (1998), Annex 1, Tables 5a, 5b.

Note: Year is 1995 for the Czech Republic, Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Voices of Youth 10

Leaving school early: a complex decision

The decision to leave school early and the reasons behind it involve a complex interplay of factors – ability, school environment, parental support, attitudes, and aspirations. These early school-leavers took part in focus groups organized for this Report in Russia, Ukraine and Latvia.

- “For some people even a university degree is not sufficient education, and for others nine grades are more than enough.” (Lesha, 16)
- “On the whole I felt as if I was doing time when I had to go to school every day. I didn’t feel comfortable there. . . . I’ve discussed it with my mother, and she said she does not want me to go on with school after nine grades.” (Karina, 15)
- “I work at the petrol station. I help people who are getting petrol, and if they find me useful they give me some money. I also help my mother about the house.” (Nikita, 16)
- “I would like to work with my brother to start a family business.” (Slava, 16)
- “It’s possible to get a diploma for money. . . . A diploma is one thing, and education is another.” (Egor, 18)
- “I wish I could have some support, but I don’t know what exactly. I think any type of support would do.” (Nikita, 16)
- “It is not our parents who should support us; we should support them.” (Gennady, 17)
- “Studying was too difficult for me. I felt that I could not follow the subjects. . . . It’s better for me to start working.” (Ksenia, 16)
- “Teachers often say that they are too busy, that they do not have time for extra classes, that they have a miserable salary.” (Irina, 16)
- “I think that everything in my life will turn out OK. I want to find a job and have my own family, my own house, and live separately from my parents.” (Ksenia, 16)
- “One needs harmony. If you are supported by the family, by the state and by the school and if you believe in your abilities, you will achieve everything.” (Vasia, 16)
- “I have had to study in a very cold classroom in winter before, where we had to study wearing jackets. The room was very cold, dark and unfriendly: we were in no mood to study there.” (Karene, 17)

eral secondary education and from 3 percent in the Czech Republic to 17 percent in Albania for vocational secondary. Except in Albania, dropout rates are higher for vocational secondary than they are for general secondary. This may reflect lower quality in vocational programmes or greater predisposition among adolescents in vocational schools to drop out. It is also interesting to note that, in most CEE countries, the dropout rates are higher for young men than for young women.

Nonetheless, some adolescent girls face particular pressures. Early pregnancy could be a determinant in decisions not to enrol in upper secondary education or to drop out, while poor education is often a factor in these pregnancies. Adolescents who have little education or who belong to ethnic groups among which having children at a very young age is the norm appear to be overrepresented among these young women. Studies carried out in the 1990s, for example, found that in Hungary Roma women aged 15-19 have fertility rates that are four times higher than the average and that in Bulgaria early sexual activity, extramarital birth and low educational attainment are frequently transferred from one generation to the next among certain minority groups. Prior to the transition, teen fertility was high in the region relative to other industrial regions, and, although births to young women have generally declined, they have increased among very young adolescents in Russia, Slovakia and several other countries.

Greater poverty during the transition and the associated financial need for young family members to work appear to have contributed substantially in parts of the region to non-attendance at schools. Children are often obliged to help their parents at home, and they may work outside the home for extra money. In cities, youth from poor families may leave school to work in street trades or even illegal activities. Where agriculture is the main employer, children and adolescents commonly miss school during the busiest agricultural season. Sadly, the lack of adequate clothing can also be a cause of poor attendance at

school. A 1998-99 study in Kyrgyzstan by the Asian Development Bank revealed that the lack of shoes and clothes accounted for 12 percent of school non-attendance.

Igor, a secondary school headmaster in Ukraine who was interviewed for this Report, offered this bald assessment:

"[School-leavers consist of] teenagers from low-income families solely motivated to earn money, lazy teenagers who do not want to do anything, and children from families with one or two alcoholic parents."

As Voices of Youth 10 illustrates, the reality is certainly more complex, and the school environment itself, including the quality of teaching, is a factor in young people's decisions whether to continue their education or not.

Children with disabilities and ethnic minority children also receive less education because of discriminatory practices in schools. Again, this happens already at the basic level. In several countries in the region it has become routine to refer healthy Roma children to special classes or schools for children with special education needs. In Hungary, for example, a 1995 study found that one of six or seven schools surveyed operated "gypsy classes" with infe-

rior educational standards. Contrary to local expectations, dropout rates among Roma students were worse in these schools than in those offering integrated education.

In poorer countries, cuts in financing have meant the elimination of posts among teachers who tutor children and youth with disabilities at home, leaving these vulnerable youngsters to the resources of their families. Similarly, lack of adequate transport, particularly in rural areas, can affect decisions to attend school. According to a UNICEF case study in Lithuania, for instance, the disintegration of collective and state farms has led to the disappearance of collective farm transportation, and, as a result, rural children have little choice but to stop attending if they live far from a school.

One of the saddest comments to come out of the focus groups and individual interviews organized for this Report was the lament of Lesi, a Ukrainian social worker who deals with school dropouts.

"Now I will tell you the truth," she said after the microphone had been switched off. "Nobody cares about these children at all. This is the truth." ■

3.3 Schools as Enabling Environments

Of course, it is not enough to look at access to education for young people. What goes on inside the classroom is also of immense importance. The experiences of young people in school help prepare them successfully to enter the labour market and participate more broadly in society. They impart particular knowledge, as well as core capacities and life skills. Most young people spend a large portion of their waking lives in school, and on this basis alone schools should be pleasant and stimulating places where youth are happy to spend time.

Unfortunately, there is much less information available on these qualitative aspects of education. Here, the analysis is reduced to sporadic snapshots rather than systematic reviews of the inheritance of the past and the changes during the transition in the 27 countries of the region.

Declining enrolment rates in certain types of schools and among certain youth populations may reflect a disaffection with school systems both as an immediate environment and as a preparation for adult life. How do schools in the transition countries fare on measures of formal learning achievement? Are students getting what they want and need from schools in the region? How smooth is the important transition from school to work?

The quality of education

In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, or TIMSS, a 1995 international comparative study of learning achievement, the participating transition countries performed very well. The average scores among eighth graders (typically aged 13-14) in the Czech Republic, Slovakia,

Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia were above international averages in both mathematics and science and above the average scores for England, Germany and the US. Of the 41 countries under study, the Czech Republic ranked second in the world in science and sixth in maths.

The results among students in the final year of upper secondary school (typically aged 17-19) suggest that the early advantage enjoyed by young people in the transition countries has been worn away by the time they leave school. Table 3.6 shows the differences in the average scores achieved in mathematics and science by children in

Table 3.6

Performance in maths and science, 1995 (point differences relative to international average scores)

	Mathematics		Science	
	Eighth graders	Final year, secondary	Eighth graders	Final year, secondary
Czech Republic	53*	-34	59*	-13
Slovenia	30*	12	45*	17
Hungary	27*	-17*	39*	-29*
Russia	25*	-29*	23*	-19*
Lithuania	-33*	-31*	-38*	-39*
US	-11	-39*	20*	-20*
International average score	511	500	515	500

Source: Mullis et al. (1998).

Note: Eighth graders were generally 13-14 years old. The age for the final year of secondary school ranged from 17 to 19. International averages were based on the country means of the 20 countries that took part at both the eighth grade and the final year levels. The scales are not directly comparable for the two age groups. An asterisk indicates that the country score was significantly different from the international average.

the eighth grade and by youth in the final year of secondary education. Eighth graders in four of the five transition countries where both age groups were tested scored significantly higher than the international average in both maths and science. Only Lithuania scored lower. In contrast, students in the final year of secondary school scored below the international average in four of the five transition countries. This time, the only exception was Slovenia (although the results there were still below the scores in basic education in that country).

It is difficult to determine how applicable these results are to other transition countries, since there are few cross-country studies of learning outcomes. The only other recent survey, an OECD study of “functional literacy” – the ability to understand and interpret written information – has found that young people aged 16-25 in Poland lagged significantly behind their peers in 11 countries in the West (younger children were not included). A more complete picture awaits further surveys and additional research.

Why might schools in the transition countries appear to fall short in serving older teenagers? A selection effect, whereby the weaker performers fall out of the mix by the time cohorts reach higher grades in some education systems, but not in others, does not appear to be the cause. Country rankings are very similar when only the scores of the top 25 percent of students in each country are considered.

Perhaps the different skills tested among the eighth graders and the students in the final year affected the outcome? The younger students answered straightforward knowledge-based questions. The older students took math and science “literacy” tests aimed at measuring how well they could use their knowledge to address real-world problems. The varying results are consistent with the widespread impression that education systems under state socialism were much more effective at imparting knowledge than in showing students how to apply what they had learned, particularly in new situations. Naturally, this raises questions about how well young people in the region are being prepared for a new labour market which places a high premium on flexibility, innovation and sound decision-making.

Another explanation of the decline in performance among older students may be that these students have become alienated by teaching content and teaching meth-

ods, especially rote learning, and this affects their scores. Figure 3.13 shows the share of students in the 1995 international survey who said they liked physics and biology. In every country in which the questionnaires were completed there is a decline in enthusiasm for physics as students get older. With the exception of Russia, this drop in the preference for physics is more pronounced in the transition countries than in the West. Interest in biology changes much less as students move from eighth grade to the final year of secondary, but in all five transition countries the interest wanes, while in the West it increases in all but one of the five nations surveyed.

The school environment

The school environment affects not only the academic performance of students, but also their capacity to enjoy and participate in daily living. Western research has convincingly shown that the school has an important role in shaping youth health and overall well-being. For example, a large study of adolescent health in the US found that a sense of connectedness to school was a key factor in safeguarding young people from risk behaviours, including drug and alcohol use, violence and unprotected sex. It isolated the presence in school of a concerned adult as one of the key elements in establishing this sense of connectedness.

Questions designed to gauge youth perceptions of the school environment have been included in the international Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children survey (see Chapter 2). In 1993-94, the question, “Do you agree that school is a nice place to be?”, elicited more positive responses in Western Europe and North America than it did in the transition region. Among 15 year-olds, an average 56 percent of girls and 51 percent of boys in the West agreed, compared to 43 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys in the transition countries. In St. Petersburg, the only part of Russia included, the responses were the most negative: only 15 percent of girls and 20 percent of boys agreed with the statement.

However, a second survey, carried out in 1997-98, gives the impression that the problem of motivating students is not limited to the transition region. Here, 15 year-olds were asked whether they agreed with the statement, “I like school a lot”. Only about 17 percent of girls and 14 per-

Figure 3.13

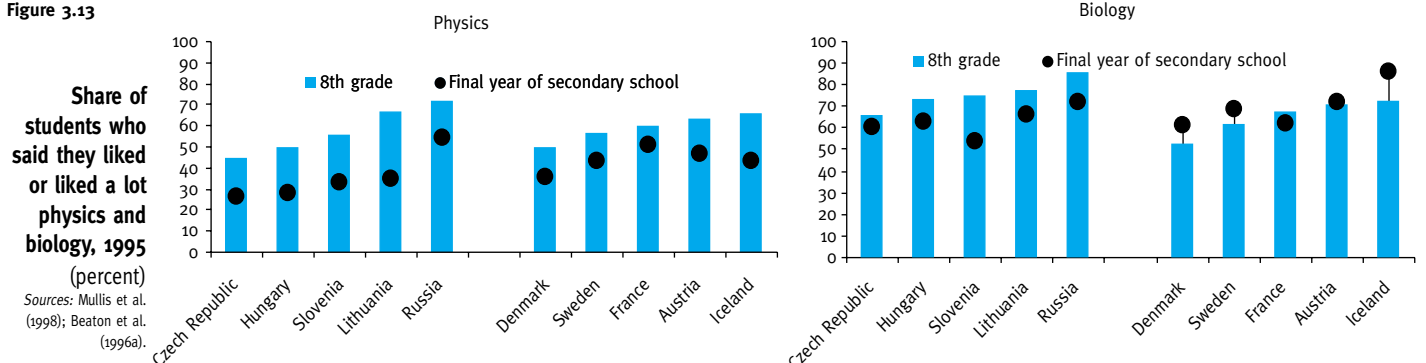


Table 3.7
Views of 15 year-olds about their teachers, 1993/94
and 1997/98
 (percent)

	"Teachers encourage me to express my views in class" (1993/94)		"My teachers are interested in me as a person" (1997/98)	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Latvia	52	48	34	30
Lithuania	39	37	27	35
Estonia	46	43	12	13
Russia	24	31	42	45
Poland	50	45	42	40
Czech Republic	26	28	46	42
Slovakia	25	32	46	53
Hungary	50	49	24	34
Average	39	39	34	37
Finland	32	30	15	19
Austria	39	35	29	32
Sweden	46	38	38	31
Norway	55	53	39	43
Canada	58	60	48	40
US	–	–	45	39
France	41	41	41	43
Denmark	52	44	55	52
Germany	52	50	48	44
England	–	–	39	39
Average	47	44	40	38

Sources: King et al. (1996); Currie et al. (2000).

Note: Averages are unweighted averages of national results. France, Germany and Russia are represented only by regions.

cent of boys in both the transition countries and the West answered that they did.

The sense of connectedness and self-realization is further illustrated by the survey's question on teachers, described in Table 3.7. The range of responses among individual countries is large, but students in the transition countries seem generally somewhat less likely than their peers in the West to believe that teachers are interested in them and their views.

As with health care, it appears that the prevailing approaches to teaching are narrow and formal in the region. The traditional emphasis is on imparting particular information and knowledge, usually with the teacher in front of the class. There is also evidence that teachers – mostly females – are relatively older. Teacher morale can be low due to inferior pay, wage arrears and inadequate classroom resources. Teacher salaries, insubstantial under communism, have declined further in a number of countries. A 1995 study in seven transition countries found that teachers often perceive their social status to be relatively low and do not consider teaching a desirable profession. All these factors raise questions about how well teachers can relate to and motivate young students, especially boys.

Schools also have a function in ensuring that young people are able to protect their present and future health.

Students speak out about being heard in school

That they are not being listened to is a common complaint of young people in school, as well as in other settings. Today, the growing emphasis on youth participation in matters that affect them demands a greater emphasis on hearing what they have to say. These young people spoke up about teachers during focus-group research conducted for this Report.

- "I would like to change teachers' attitudes towards the students. Nowadays, teachers are too arrogant; they do not want to listen to a student's opinion. If the student is quiet and silent, he is good. If a student stands up for himself and has a personal opinion, they are very much against it." (Martins, 16)
- "There are some teachers who respect the opinion of students, but they are in the minority. Others do not care at all." (Inga, 18)
- "[Teachers] just need to complete the curriculum. . . . they don't care about anything else." (Dmitry, 17)
- "There are some good teachers who understand us and will help if you have problems. Others, the bad ones, don't care. Even if you turn to them for some extra assistance on a difficult topic, they'll send you away, saying you should have worried about that earlier." (Gennady, 17)
- "Teachers did not pay any attention to weaker students, they never tried to do anything to make these kids study. They were giving them '3' for their intermediate leaving certificate and then threw them out." (Maxim, 18)
- "We have the opportunity to spend time with our teachers. We can talk to them both during and after class. We can even go for a coffee with some teachers, but this of course depends very much on the personality of the teacher and the student." (Karene, 17)
- "Sometimes I look at my teacher and I feel sorry for her. I see that she can't concentrate, is thinking about other things. And I wish that she didn't have to worry about all these everyday cares, that she had enough money to concentrate on doing her job and teaching us well." (Gairat, 15)

This role involves creating safe and healthy environments for students and imparting knowledge and skills that promote healthy life styles.

Health education is in one sense a body of knowledge, but it can also be thought of as a life skill that empowers young persons, helping them to avoid violence, unwanted pregnancy, or sexually transmitted disease, for example, and giving them the confidence and the facts to make reasoned decisions about drug and alcohol use.

"Our system of teaching is different," says Katia, a 48-year-old teacher in Russia. "We do not intend to teach people about life; we are here to provide knowledge."

Various evidence suggests that many teachers in the region see no role for themselves in imparting instruction about "life skills". Some teachers do view this as one of their functions, however. As in other parts of the world, educators appear particularly divided on issues related to sexual and reproductive health.

Some countries in the region make no provision for sex education in schools. In Latvia and Lithuania, students

can participate in an optional programme on health education, but it does not cover family planning. In Armenia and Georgia, little or no health education of any kind is available in or out of school, though in Georgia informative articles on relevant health topics are published in newspapers through a government-supported project. In Armenia, sex and reproductive health are still considered “inconvenient” subjects for school.

Elsewhere, sex education is offered in schools, but is either optional, as in FR Yugoslavia, or fails to cover the topic adequately. In Romania, a 1996 survey indicated that 88 percent of young women and 77 percent of young men aged 15-24 had received some sex education in school, but only 36 percent had learned about sexually transmitted diseases, while only 25 percent had learned about birth control

methods. In Slovenia, sex education is supposed to be part of the core curriculum, but is sometimes simply not taught due to a lack of qualified teachers and teacher attitudes towards the material. In some countries, religious influences preclude the teaching of sex education in schools.

A health-friendly school system is one that understands the purposes of education in much broader terms than the provision only of “facts for life”. Research has shown that improving general capacities like critical thinking, analysis, conflict resolution, teamwork, and effective communication has a beneficial effect on young people’s health behaviours and their ability to resist negative pressures. Certainly, these pressures and risks are greater among youth today than they were before the transition. In the market economies and the democratic societies in which

Box 3.4

Health-promoting schools: making health part of the daily school routine

Education systems have an important function in fostering the health of young people not only through instruction in health care, but through the school environment. The European Network of Health-Promoting Schools is an innovative WHO initiative with 40 full members, including 17 transition countries.

The schools commit themselves to championing better health by transforming themselves into safe and health-enhancing environments in which young people can work, learn and thrive. Participating schools adopt an integrated approach to health promotion, making it a priority in the curriculum, in school management practices and in the physical and social environment of the school. The aim is make health consciousness an essential element in every aspect of the daily routine in education.

Partnership is a key operating principle, whereby teachers, pupils, parents, and the wider community are encouraged to work together to improve health.

“It has become a tradition with us to start every day at school with a motivational pep talk,” says the coordinator of a health-promoting school in Ukraine. “It helps a great deal to cheer up both the teachers and pupils, establishing the right attitude for the school process.” Debating clubs conduct competitions which motivate students to research, think about and debate their views on health issues.

The first European conference of health-promoting schools, “An Investment in Education, Health and Democracy”, was held in 1997. The conference resolution outlined the 10 principles of a health-promoting school:

- *Democracy.* The school is founded on democratic principles conducive to the promotion of learning, personal and social development, and health.
- *Equity.* The principle of equity is enshrined within the educational experience; this guarantees that schools are free from oppression, fear and ridicule and fos-

ters the individual’s ability to attain his or her full potential free of discrimination.

- *Empowerment and action competence.* The school improves young people’s ability to take action and generate change; empowering young people enables them to influence their lives and living conditions.
- *School environment.* The school environment, both physical and social, is emphasized as a crucial factor in promoting and sustaining health.
- *Curriculum.* The curriculum provides opportunities for young people to gain knowledge and insight and to acquire essential life skills; it must be relevant to the needs of young people and inspirational for teachers and other school staff.
- *Teacher training.* The training of teachers is an investment in health, as well as in education; legislation and appropriate incentives must guide teacher training, using the conceptual framework of the health-promoting school.
- *Measuring success.* The school assesses the effectiveness of its actions upon the school and the community; measuring success is viewed as a means of support and empowerment.
- *Collaboration.* Shared responsibility and close collaboration among government ministries at the national, regional and local levels are central requirements in strategic planning; roles, responsibilities and accountability must be established and clarified.
- *Communities.* Parents and the school community have a vital role to play in leading, supporting and reinforcing the concept of school health promotion; working in partnership, schools, parents, NGOs, and the local community represent a force for positive change.
- *Sustainability.* All levels of government must commit resources to health promotion in schools; this contributes to the long-term, sustainable development of the wider community, and, in return, communities will increasingly become a resource for their schools.

young people in the region are living today, broader skills are also much more in demand and much more relevant than is the narrow set of skills that was the legacy of the education systems before the transition.

Box 3.4 describes WHO's innovative initiative for health-promoting schools that aims to integrate health care into all aspects of school life, including the curriculum and the physical and social environment.

The transition to the labour market

Though educators everywhere may argue about how and to what degree schools should prepare students for the labour market, there is no question that schools are critical for young people in their transition to the workplace. The collapse of central planning has been accompanied by the collapse of the often strong, if rigid, link between vocational and technical schools and the workplace. Changes in the structure of economic production, the appearance of new

forms of work organization and the globalization of the economy have rendered certain skills and specializations obsolete and have caused others, such as language skills and computer literacy, to become more in demand.

Graduates are no longer being recruited solely on the basis of the possession of formal diplomas and certificates. Hiring practices are changing rapidly, especially in economic growth sectors. Basic work competencies are no longer sufficient, and formal assessments of attitudes, individual potential and life skills are gaining ground. This is especially true in countries where the market reforms are well advanced, as Box 3.5 shows in the case of employer needs in the Czech Republic. This profound shift obviously poses considerable challenges for education systems.

What are the needs of young people in their preparation for employment in the current context of rapid social and economic change? First, young people must secure broader competencies that will help them adapt in a rapidly transforming economy. Second, schools must offer a place

Box 3.5

What employers want in young employees: a Czech survey

In 1998, the Institute for Information on Education asked employers about their needs and opinions concerning the hiring of young people fresh out of school. The survey involved a random sample of 820 businesses which had employed school-leavers during the preceding two years.

The survey questionnaire embraced a number of issues, such as important skills, the difficulty of finding people with these skills, the responsibilities of education systems and employers in the development of these skills, and cooperation between schools and employers in education initiatives.

The survey results revealed that employers gave top priority to company loyalty. University graduates were expected to be able to make decisions, work within a team, demonstrate initiative, be self-starters, and learn. They were to possess proficiency in communication, be computer literate and show command of languages. The willingness to learn demonstrated by young people leaving secondary schools (vocational and general) was more highly appreciated than advanced technical knowledge. Teamwork, basic abilities like reading and the capacity to understand instructions and work with figures were also prized.

Employers had the most difficulty finding university graduates who knew foreign languages, showed initiative and produced high-quality work. Employers said that the most difficult qualities to find among youth leaving secondary schools were cost-consciousness, ability to produce quality work, good technical know-how, initiative, and the capacity to make sound decisions.

The survey found that most employers thought schools and universities should impart basic and gen-

eral knowledge and that personal qualities should be developed both in school and in the workplace. Employers complained that they had to provide training to employees in areas which should have been taught in schools, particularly foreign languages and computer and communication literacy.

Finally, employers gave themselves high marks for contributing to the education process. Two in every three permitted cooperative placements or offered extra opportunities for students, mostly from secondary schools. The vast majority of the cooperative efforts involved the presence of students at company facilities (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8

Cooperation of employers with schools and universities in the Czech Republic, 1998 (percent of participating employers)

On-the-job training for students	60
Visits to companies	37
Students viewing work processes in companies	34
Participation in the evaluation of students	30
Various types of lending to schools/universities	18
On-the-job training for teachers in companies	17
Sponsorship of schools/universities	17
Sponsorship of individual students	13
Organizing lectures, interviews in schools/universities	12
Company staff viewing teachers in class	8
Teaching specialized subjects in schools/universities	8
Membership on school/university boards	6

Source: Novák (1999).

to learn skills which are suited to the emerging requirements of the labour market. Third, schools can improve the integration between learning and work through the development of new types of partnerships between schools and enterprises.

How have education systems changed so as to respond to the fresh needs of the economy? Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe have started to reform vocational and technical curricula. In these countries, there has been a shift away from narrow specializations towards skills which can be adapted to various work settings and are therefore more appropriate for a market economy. The goal is a better balance among general education subjects,

instruction in the theoretical foundations of specific occupations and practical skills training.

Along with new areas of economic activity, such as business, commerce, banking, and insurance, new occupations have also appeared for which curricula have been designed. In many countries, efforts have been undertaken to increase training in languages and information technology throughout the education system. Box 3.6 examines the enabling potential of information technology for the benefit of young people both at school and in the transition to work.

The current reform of curricula does not seem to have progressed very far, as a large mismatch remains between labour market needs and the skills of new labour market

Box 3.6

Tools for change: information and communications technology

Enabled by information and communications technology, the knowledge-based society is making literacy in information and communications technology a required skill for work and learning. In many countries, children have access to computers as early as primary school. However, a “digital divide” has appeared within and among countries between those who have access to computers and the Internet and those who do not.

Greater contact with computers and the Internet offers a number of advantages. It can complement and reinforce classroom learning, help build self-esteem and academic skills and make learning more fun, thereby leading to less absenteeism and fewer dropouts. Outside the classroom, the Internet can be used as a tool for gathering information, improving foreign language comprehension and technology and information skills, and networking with peers nearby or far away.

Governments in some transition countries have made substantial commitments to furnishing schools with computers and Internet links. In Hungary, for example, the Schoolnet programme has supplied secondary schools with computers and Internet access, although the original plans calling for access at the primary level had to be cut back. A 1998 survey revealed that nearly two-thirds of 15-24 year-olds possess some computer literacy.

In Slovenia, almost all schools are “wired”. In 1997, 20 percent of all primary pupils were attending computer courses. In upper secondary schools, at least one year of computer education is compulsory. Thus, 68 percent of the students in upper secondary schools in 1997 had some computer knowledge. According to a survey in 1997, the Internet was being used by more than half of upper secondary school pupils and one-third of seventh and eighth graders. Schools account for almost half of all Internet users in Slovenia.

A 1999 survey in Estonia found that computer use was significant even among the very young. More than half of all 6-7 year-olds and 91 percent of 12-14 year-olds had used a computer, and 58 percent of 15-19 year-

olds had surfed the Internet at least once during the previous six months.

Meanwhile, the level of computer literacy is much lower among young people in a number of countries. Equipping schools with computers is sometimes a serious problem, especially because of the rapid pace of technological change. Although enormous efforts have been undertaken in recent years, the situation in schools in some countries is quite unsatisfactory.

In Moldova, only half of secondary schools, gymnasias and lycees offer computer classes and possess computer equipment. In Azerbaijan in 1997, only one-fourth of secondary schools had computer facilities, and the distribution ranged from 15 percent in rural schools to 49 percent in urban schools. In Georgia, computer classes have been attracting substantial interest, but computers remain unavailable in many schools. The number of secondary schools equipped with computers is even declining: only 245 secondary schools had computer facilities in 1998 compared to 438 in 1990.

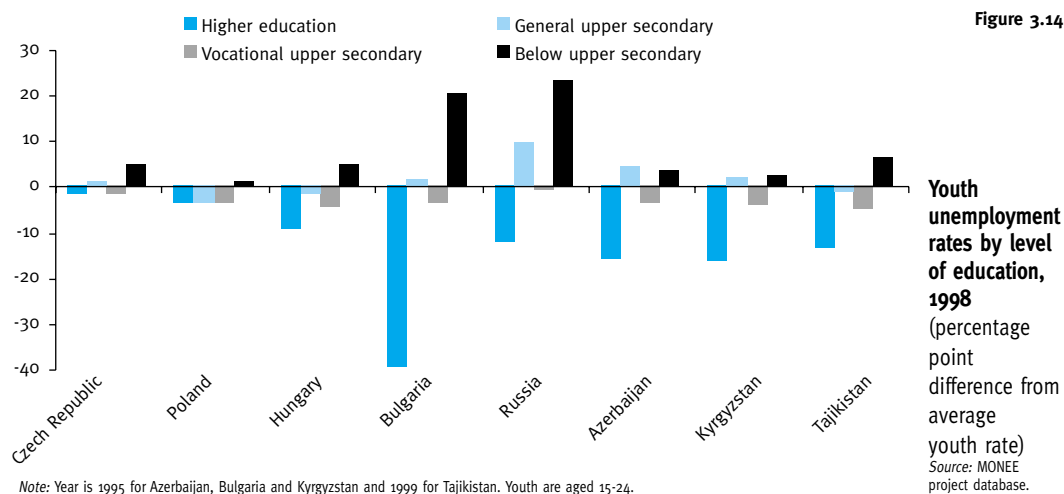
Finding trained teachers is also a challenge. For example, in FR Yugoslavia, many schools own computers, but there are few adequately trained staff to make the most of them. People with computer skills tend to prefer higher-paying jobs or to work abroad rather than teaching. In Croatia, only 212 of the 346 schools, or roughly two-thirds, have trained computer teachers.

Even in the more well off parts of the region, there is a digital divide within countries. In Hungary, while 81 percent of young people in education and 54 percent of young workers possess computer skills, only 35 percent of the unemployed and 25 percent of young people who are neither studying, nor working have any computer literacy, thus potentially limiting their opportunities.

In general, relatively few households in the region have computers, and those which do tend to have higher incomes and fewer children. Schools can perform a very important function in reducing the inequality in computer access. In particular, targeted interventions could help reach disadvantaged youth.

entrants. The results are often negative in terms of high unemployment or the limited ability of young people to become effective quickly in new jobs. Evidence for this is offered in Figure 3.14, which shows the differences between unemployment rates among youth according to level of education and average youth unemployment rates in eight transition countries in 1998.

In all the countries represented in the figure, the labour market is flooded with young school-leavers with less than upper secondary education, while young people with higher education enjoy a competitive advantage, though this advantage differs markedly from country to country. It appears that general upper secondary education still does not meet the needs of the labour market, since, in most of the countries, young people who have completed this level of education face a relatively more serious risk of unemployment. This outcome may also show the limitations of the attempts to shift emphasis away from technical and vocational education and towards general secondary schooling.



A recent review by the European Training Foundation concludes that vocational education in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe suffers because of poorly qualified teachers and trainers, as well as outdated curricula and equipment. Most of these countries also face a lack of funds. These limitations hamper efforts to develop flexible secondary school systems which are responsive to the needs of youth, including the professional aspirations of young people.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter examines youth participation in upper secondary and higher education in terms of enrolment, equitable access and the quality of education. Learning may be a lifelong process, but the formal schooling years are a pivotal stage in this process, one where the legacy of family environments begins to be played out and one where young people begin to make major life decisions on their own.

The rise in tertiary enrolments in much of the transition region is good news. However, in many countries this runs counter to falls in upper secondary enrolments among adolescents and the growing numbers of youth who are unable to make the transition from basic to subsequent levels of education. In 1998, over three million more adolescents aged 15-18 had either not enrolled, or had dropped out of schools. The upheavals which have accompanied the transition appear to have had a major negative impact on secondary education, especially on vocational and technical education.

It is promising for the future that, in several countries at the forefront of the transition process, both secondary and tertiary enrolments have risen, and, in several countries, enrolments are now approaching the levels in the European Union. However, against a backdrop of increased opportunities for youth to attend university, participation in secondary schooling has fallen and is low by EU standards even in some of the countries, like the Czech Republic, which are regarded as transition leaders.

The countries which exhibit lower participation rates in education also tend to lag behind in economic recovery and reform. The shifts in secondary enrolments show a striking correlation with the changes in GDP in the region. This parallel de-investment in the future in many countries raises uneasy questions about how and whether the large pools of poorly qualified young people will eventually be able to participate in and contribute to rebuilding the economies and societies of these countries.

The transition process presents huge challenges for youth education in terms not only of how many youth are being educated, but also of how they are being educated. The quality of education young people receive is important for the future, as well as for the current well-being of these people. In learning achievement, several transition countries that excel in basic education in international comparisons show less convincing outcomes in secondary education. It appears that youth feel less well in schools and profit less from their studies than they ought to. Overly specialized training curricula and rigid teaching styles are being questioned not only by many young people, but also by new economic and social demands that require new professional skills and broader competencies in areas such as critical thinking, participation, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Public- and private-sector efforts are being undertaken in many countries to enhance education opportunities and

adapt schools to the needs of youth. Thus, for instance, many countries are striving to put computers into classrooms, though there is a “digital divide” within and among countries. And, despite signs of the emergence of more youth-friendly schools in many countries, equal education opportunities remain a huge challenge across the entire region.

The constellation of factors that is impeding access to education is most evident among students who leave school early. Young people from low-income households or broken families, rural residents, migrants, and ethnic or other minorities appear vastly overrepresented in this group. The regular advancement of the education of young people, in schools and outside the classrooms, is important in reducing the various risks to youth development, which tend to

have a cumulative effect on the most vulnerable youth.

There are nevertheless many promising signs of a greater awareness among youth of the importance of education. This is particularly relevant for fresh approaches and policies which see young people as a resource and which are grounded on youth participation. Throughout the region, the creation of education systems that prepare students for the future even as that future is rapidly changing remains an immense challenge. There is a need and ample room for education policies and programmes which promote human development, social cohesion and economic growth by investing more efficiently and more broadly in adolescents and youth. ■