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Inequal opportunities in educational pathways. Social, ethnic and institutional effects.

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Summary

Attaining a secondary school qualification is an important aspect in order to gain access to advantageous employment positions or higher income. To attain this qualification pupils have the choice of directly entering high school after elementary school or upgrade on alternative paths of secondary education. Successfully completing secondary school and attaining a-level grades largely depends on the social and ethnic background of the students. These inequalities can be examined from the conditional (transitional inequalities) or the unconditional perspective (total inequalities). However, varying aspects of education are not exclusively depending on origin but also in different varieties of education systems in comparison within the States of the Federal Republic. At this point, there are still gaps in research regarding this subject.

Based on findings of Boudon (1974), Esser (1999), Mare (1980) Schindler (2015) and others, it can be expected, that social and ethnic transitional inequalities and total inequalities change during the educational trajectory and alternative paths of secondary education contribute to a general reduction of these inequality gaps. Further studies regard federal state specific educational contexts in turn as possible causes for social or ethnic inequalities (e.g. Hillmert 2008; Schuchart/Maaz 2007; Helbig/Nikolai 2015).

This study explore,

- *whether social and ethnic inequalities increase or decrease throughout the course of education,*
- *whether alternative routes of secondary education lead to a reduction or increase of social as well as ethnic inequalities in terms of educational participation and*
- *what influence state specific variations of the federal education systems have depending on a person's origin and single administrative regulations on the chance to upgrade to a grammar school or to visit such a school.*

To clear these questions educational trajectories were examined on the basis of the “BIBB-Übergangsstudien“ from 2006 and 2011. The survey group encloses the cohorts born between the years 1982 and 1993 (N = 11890). Logistic regression analysis and event data analysis were used. The school visit of the respondents was observed after joining secondary school I, during secondary school I and after the transition in secondary school II (unconditional) and particularly the corresponding (conditional) crossings.

To answer the research questions a typology was created first, by which the huge number of school-legal regulations could be associated in connection with the educational behavior of students within the German education system. Further, the difference between the analysis of transitional inequalities and total inequalities became apparent in an excursion. On basis of these fundamental works, the research questions were answered. Therefor in the **first part of the analysis**, transitional inequalities and afterwards total inequalities were considered in dependence of the different types of education systems. Because with this analysis the influence of selected, from the expectation-theoretical view relevant school-regulations on the chance to upgrade to a school which leads to high school graduation or to visit such a school

could not be determined, a **second part of the analysis** followed. In addition, only by this approach the changing of administrative settings over the years could be considered, which is to be remembered in view of the steady reforms of the German education systems during the last years.

The results of the **first part of analysis** show significant increases of the social inequalities as well as tendencial reductions of ethnic inequalities in terms of educational trajectory. According to these findings, educational inequalities based on origin are still apparent even after making alternative routes of gaining higher education available. Furthermore, it appears that transitional and total inequalities and their development vary as expected during the time of education within the variations of federal education systems. Nevertheless, they follow no clear pattern in respect to the value expectation theory.

The **second part of the analysis** shows that, e. g. achievement-based accesses and allocation of school qualifications to school forms, strict structures and restrictive-strict arrangements of selected administrative regulations, have rather negative effects in regard to educational success and maybe the relevance of a high school graduation differs in view of the complete configuration of the educational context.

By providing these findings, this research contributes to close the existing research gap, by not only taking into consideration the traditional as well as the alternative routes of education but also exploring for the first time in detail the influences of various educational systems and selected administrative regulations over the course of education with focus on explicit differences of conditional and unconditional inequality.