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THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

The different Belgian Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) programmes are widely diverse and have their own respective history. Intended at the outset to train and integrate the children of craftsmen, workers and farmers in society, these programmes had their heyday in a society of economic growth and industrial development. Following their major economic changes of the 20th century, with the increase of the population and the appearance of unemployment, they gradually lost their aura and became courses, which did provide training to integrate into the world of work young people who often stemmed from underprivileged background, with compounded difficulties, for whom the authorities have not always managed to find an appropriate response.

With the exception of certain types of training provided at the higher level, these programmes have had a less attractive image than general education, which is still held as the natural and best path, and suffer from the domino relegation effects that afflict a large number of students involved in it. The current IVET programmes are accordingly trying to find a new identity and place in society. It therefore seems crucial to delve deeper into the matter of representation and image of those programmes in order to understand the mechanisms that are at stake.

Cedefop conducted an opinion survey in 2016 among 35,646 European citizens in 28 Member States on their representation in IVET at the upper secondary school level. The data from the study cover various subjects: awareness and knowledge, attractiveness and access, experience and satisfaction, outcomes and effectiveness. Under the 2017 action plan, Cedefop asked ReferNet Belgium to write an article on the Belgian outcomes and compare them with the actual situation of the education and training system. Conducted by Kantar at the request of Cedefop, the opinion survey concerned 1 229 Belgian citizens interviewed from 1 to 30 June 2016. According to the information submitted, the persons were selected at random and the interviews were conducted face to face in the native language of the respondents ([1]). Kantar indicated that it reflected the structure of the population on the basis of NUTS II territorial units. In Belgium, this corresponds to the 10 provinces and the Brussels Region. A breakdown of the interviews per region shows 705 for Flanders

([1]) Cedefop (2017). Cedefop European public opinion survey on vocational education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 62. http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/264585

(57.4%), 394 in Wallonia (32.1 %) and 129 in Brussels (10.5 %). The raw data were then weighted per type, age bracket and degree of urbanization.

Upon reading the study, the national coordination expressed its concerns about the definition of the scope of the survey in Belgium. Due to the way questions are formulated and, most of all, translated in the national languages, de facto the study covers only part of the Belgian IVET, i.e. vocational education (28% of former or actual upper secondary students according to the study). For in Belgium, the definition of IVET includes vocational education ([2]) of course, but also technical education ([3]) (BEFL), technical qualification education ([4]) (BEFR and BEDE), artistic education ([5]), but also dual training ([6]) (at school or in a training centre). Furthermore, the different branches of the Belgian IVET at the upper secondary school level now train the majority of young people, i.e. nearly 60% of young Dutch speakers and about half of French-speaking students. Moreover, statistical research shows that historically this proportion, at national level, was already 35% at the end of the 1950s and reached 50% in the 1970s ([7]). The results of the survey are therefore difficult to extrapolate to the entire system. The coordination of ReferNet Belgium has consequently opted not to conduct a comparative analysis of the outcomes. It moreover appeared impossible to fully integrate all the aspects of the three IVET systems of the three Communities and Regions in a 15-page article.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to provide the information on the Belgian IVET systems and to examine the question of image, representation and employment prospects by relying on other studies conducted in Belgium. We should point out, however, that the following document is not an exhaustive analysis of all measures taken or of all the reality in the field. The subject is indeed extremely vast and touches upon various social sectors, far beyond that of VET. Moreover, the focus is on IVET programmes as provided by the formal education system and not on IVET programmes provided by dual training

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([2]) *Beroepssecundair onderwijs* (BSO) in BEFL, *Enseignement professionnel de qualification* (BEFR) and *Berufsbildender Unterricht* (BEDE).

([3]) *Technisch secundair onderwijs* (TSO.

([4]) *Enseignement technique de qualification* (BEFR) and *Technischer Befähigungsunterricht* (BEDE).

([5]) *Kunstsecundair onderwijs (KSO)* in BEFL and *Enseignement artistique de qualification* in BEFR.

([6]) *Leertijd* and *deeltijds beroepssecundair onderwijs (DBSO)* in BEFL, *Formation en alternance* in BEFR which comprises *Enseignement secondaire en alternance* and A*pprentissage* as well as *Lehre* in BEDE.

([7]) For actual figures, see Table 3. For historical figures, see Table 1 and Table 2.

providers (apprenticeships). Generalising the findings and using them in policy recommendations is therefore not recommended. This article is structured as follows: The first part presents the different IVET Belgian systems, with a focus on the formal education systems (figures, courses, descriptions of the branches) and its socio-historical development. The second part deals with the issue of representation, image and access to IVET from studies published on the subject. The third part concerns the effectiveness and outcomes of learning by comparing the vocational integration process for former students with that of students from general branches. This article closes with a reflection on the future of IVET and the different ways of improving its image, by broaching in particular the current reforms concerning the formal education system and the dual system.

CHAPTER 1.

IVET in Belgium: facts and figures

1.1. The development of IVET in Belgium: a socio-historical perspective ([8])

Technical, artistic and vocational education has changed a great deal since the creation of the first training programmes, such as the apprenticeship workshops (1842), the industrial schools (1853), The School of Arts and Trades (1899), the vocational school (1860-90), apace with the socio-economic developments, reflections of the civil society and the different policies for the education of young girls and boys.

Up until the end of World War II, IVET was generally intended for young boys and girls stemming from working class backgrounds. The aim was to train young people to meet the pressing needs of industry. It was also a matter of integrating in society a part of the population for whom general education and the academic path – reserved for the higher social classes – was difficult to access. The purpose of IVET was to enable these young people to live up to role models that provided a real identity: worker- technician, worker-craftsman, seamstress-homemaker or housekeeper. Up until the first half of the 20th century, there were substantial differences between education for young girls and young boys: the purpose of IVET for boys was to train highly skilled workers, while girls were generally prepared to become 'homemakers'.

In 1953, Belgium embarked on a reform of the educational system by creating three parallel streams at the secondary school level of 6 years each: general, technical and vocational. Compulsory schooling was until 14 (as determined by a 1914 law) and the choice of education was made at the end of primary school, at the age of 12. Technical and vocational education was henceforth supplemented by 'general' courses as they were known (native language, history, etc.). This first major development marked an important change in the identity of IVET courses. Rules for progressing from class to class were put in place. A student in a technical course can in theory switch to the general course, but in practice 'the conditions of access are stricter and, in most cases, a student who has difficulties in general education will be re-directed to

([8]) The information presented in this sub-section was gathered from the following studies: D. Grootaers (1995), D. Grootaers (1995), D. Grootaers et al. (1999) and M. Yapu (1995).

technical education without repeating a year. Similarly, a student with difficulties in the technical course can go to the next class of the vocational course without any problem' ([9]). As the author underscores, a new selection method came into play, this time inside the education system itself, by establishing a sort of hierarchy between the courses.

It is especially as of 1971, with the implementation of the so-called 'renovated' reform in secondary education that relegation phenomena would pick up speed and lead to the depreciation of technical – and above all vocational – courses. Most students would from that point on attend general education for the first two years of secondary school (except for those following a vocational programme in their second year of secondary education), before opting for technical or vocational education, as of the third year for the four remaining years.

Although the policy aim at the time was to ensure 'equal opportunities in school', the new organisation, geared as it was to the general education model (which became the cultural standard of reference), led to a gradual loss of identity and value for the technical and vocational courses, particularly for programmes traditionally geared to boys. Consequently, a student who had scarcely finished primary school sees his chances greatly enhanced of ending up in technical education or directly in the vocational branch upon entering the 3rd year of secondary education.

In 1983, compulsory education was raised from 14 to 18 years ([10]), in the wake particularly of the major economic crisis the country went through and the emergence of mass unemployment. The relegation phenomenon got even worse. The IVET courses now catered for students who had previously quit school at 14 years old and had gone to work. It was during this period also that the dual stream was created in vocational education. It was made available to young people aged 15 or 16 who could alternate two days of training in a school centre (general courses and workshops) with three days working in a company. This pathway/programme was intended for youngsters who must be attending school and who didn't find their place in full time education.

This new stream should not be confused with the apprenticeship system which had existed for a long time already in Belgium. In parallel to the developments of the formal education system, following a tradition inherited from the Middle Ages in particular for occupations of craftsmen, apprenticeships were being developed, enabling employers to train young people (in general aged 14

([9]) In: Grootaers (2005), p.4.

([10]) Compulsory full-time education until the age of 15 and part-time from 15 to 18.

to 22). The first modern legal framework dates back to 1906 and was followed by the first legal apprentices status (1929), the grouping of the training centres under the supervision of three community-based providers (70's) and the creation of a separated French-speaking dual training provider in Brussels. Throughout the 20th century, apprenticeship programmes were being developed, whilst giving access to certain professions.

1.2. Belgian IVET at present ([11])

1.2.1. The different IVET branches in Belgium

Secondary school in Belgium comprises six years ([12]). The differentiation between forms is made as of the third year (age of 14) ([13]). Some options offer a seventh year of specialisation.

Beside general education ([14]), IVET in Belgium corresponds to full-time and dual programmes. The full-time programmes correspond to vocational education (for all communities), technical education in BEFL, technical qualification education in BEFR and BEDE. Regarding the dual system, young people can choose between two (BEFR) and three (BEFL) systems as of the age of 15, with the condition that they have at least successfully followed the first two years of full-time secondary school, or as of the age of 16 (no conditions) ([15]). There are consequently part-time education programmes (provided by the formal education system) and apprenticeships provided by dual training providers in each of the communities and/or regions (SYNTRA Vlaanderen in BEFL and Brussels; in BEFR, the IFAPME is active in Wallonia and the SFPME-EFP in Brussels; the

([11]) For more information on the VET system, pathways and qualifications, see chart in Annex 3.

(12) Secondary education is formally subdivided into three degrees, each composed of two years. For the sake of clarity, we refer to years 1 to 6 in this article. Some IVET streams include a 7th year.

(13) In reality, students who have not earned their basic diploma will attend concurrently a so-called 'differentiated' course in secondary school (cf. p. 6).

(14) In BEFR and BEDE, secondary education is subdivided into three sections, each of which comprises different forms. The transition section, which corresponds to 'general education' comprises the following forms: general education, transition technical education and transition artistic education (in BEFR only). The qualification section (IVET) comprises full-time technical qualification education, full-time qualifying artistic education, full-time vocational education and part-time education.

(15) This concerns BEFL and BEFR but not BEDE, as the Community imposes access criteria, even for young people older than 15 years old.

IAWM in BEDE). Since 2016, new dual training programmes are being set up in BEFL in which students can also choose to follow technical dual pathways. In general, apprentices are trained for three years ([16]).

The difference between the technical and vocational streams is situated at the level of the targeted vocational sectors ([17]) (commerce, construction, wood, etc.) rather than in the type of education that is imparted there. As a general rule, vocational education comprises more hours of practice and internship than technical education. The latter offers more hours of general training and is easier to access if not directly in higher education. In the construction sector, for instance, a person who graduates in Flanders vocational education (BSO) ([18]) is trained more in a manual trade (painting and decoration, for instance), whereas a young graduate from technical education (TSO) ([19]) will be generally specialised in the technical and coordination aspects of the worksite (industrial techniques at the worksite, for instance).

Regarding participation, over 50% of secondary education students in BEFR and 60% in BEFL from the third to the sixth year of secondary education are enrolled in an IVET programme (see Table 3 in Annex I). These figures don't include apprentice trained by dual training providers (see above).

The institutional landscape has changed considerably as a result of the successive State reforms since the 1970s. Competence for education and training, including IVET, are henceforth under the purview of the Communities and Regions. In BEFL (Flanders and Dutch-speaking Brussels) and BEDE, the communities are in charge of education and training. In BEFR, the situation is more complex: education (including dual programmes in school) falls under the purview of the Ministry of the French Community (also known as the Wallonia-Brussels Federation), vocational training falls under the Walloon government and the French-speaking Brussels government. This requires an extra coordination effort to see cross-sectional projects through. Moreover, due to the concept of Freedom of Education (Art. 24 of the Belgian Constitution), schools are organised in four different kinds of networks.

([16]) For more information, see ReferNet article *Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes* (2014).

[17]() In BEFL, the IVET streams in the education system provide programmes in 29 fields (construction, optics, sport, etc.) and some one hundred options for a given specialization and/or trade. On the French-speaking side, there are eight fields and more than one hundred options.

([18]) *Beroepssecundair onderwijs, v*ocational secondary education in Flanders.

([19]) *Technisch secundair onderwijs*, technical secondary education in Flanders.

For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to showcase the particular case of the German-speaking apprenticeship system, which is closest to the German dual system. Not only are these programmes open to a broader age bracket (15-29) ([20]), but they are strongly supported by the sectors and socially appreciated. The proportion of young people undergoing apprenticeships in BEDE and in companies is therefore in relative terms higher than in other parts of the country ([21]).

1.2.2. Access, orientation and school career

The different streams of education are accessed as of the end of the second year in secondary education. The class council (composed of the teaching staff in particular) proposes to each student a range of educational options (forms, branches, year repetition) depending on his profile and school results. The schools and the pupil guidance centres (*Centre psycho-médico-social*, CPMS in BEFR, *Kaleido Ostbelgien* in BEDE, and Centrum *voor leerlingenbegeleiding*, CLB in BEFL) play a supporting and guidance role for the students. They are therefore required to inform the students of the different streams and options available to them in upper secondary education and apprenticeship, as offered by the dual training operators IFAPME, SFPME, IAWM and SYNTRA.

The choice of students with difficulties or who have failed is nonetheless more limited. In general, an important proportion of them are guided to IVET. In secondary education teachers see sometimes a hierarchical ranking between the different programmes: general education is for students who have succeeded, whereas vocational and/or dual programmes are for many students who have failed or seen as not being very motivated for a long period of studying. Technical education occupies a position somewhere in the middle, and the situation is better in certain sectors or branches. Some students opt for IVET freely of course, but others are led thereto or prefer to stay in IVET so as not to have to repeat a year – a condition often required to switch from vocational to general education. The figures in Table 5 and Table 6 of Annex I illustrate the different paths between students in general education and in IVET as provided by the formal education system. Far more students in technical education (19.8% in BEFR, 8.1% in BEFL) and in vocational education (19.2% in BEFR and 6.5% in BEFL) repeat a year therefore than those in general education (8.6% in BEFR and 2.5% in BEFL). Furthermore, grade retention is much more prevalent among students from vocational education (96.7% in BEFR, 60.4% in BEFL) than in

([20]) It is possible up to 29 years old to conclude an apprenticeship.

([21]) See VET in Belgium 2016 Country Report.

general education (39.3% in BEFR, 12.3% in BEFL). Figures in Table 4 show that the proportion of IVET students in relation to the school population in their cohort increases, from 51.09% (BEFL) and 38.63% (BEFR) in the 3rd year to 59.22% (BEFL) and 47.73% (BEFR) in the 6th year. This reflects the transitions from general to IVET that happens during secondary education.

We should moreover underscore that a form of differentiation between students already exists in the first two years of secondary education. More specifically, a student who does not have his basic certificate (CEB in BEFR) cannot enrol in the 'classic' system; there is a parallel so-called differentiation track (section B in BEFL) for students with difficulties to undergo education adapted to their level. In a general manner, an important part of these students will end up in IVET programmes ([22]).

1.2.3. Certification

There are differences in certification between general education and the IVET forms as well as within the latter. If they pass their sixth year of secondary school, students in general, technical and artistic education in BEFL and transition education (general, technical and artistic) as well as technical qualification education in BEFR obtain an upper secondary school leaver's certificate (CESS) ([23]) – a precious, socially appreciated open sesame that gives access to higher education and to certain professions. Students stemming from vocational education and dual education programmes in the three communities must complete a seventh year of specialization in order to obtain a CESS. In BEFR; if they pass their sixth year, depending on their sector or option, students will either receive a certification at the end of their sixth year which enables them to join the labour market directly (the so-called qualification certificate) or will have to continue their schooling in the seventh year in order to obtain a certification. Moreover, given that school isn't mandatory as from 18 years, some youngsters drop out and don't go to their seventh year even when it is mandatory. Many young people in vocational education therefore finish their schooling without obtaining a CESS, particularly in BEFR. This proportion is higher in those in dual education, as most of them want to work immediately.

Conversely, access to certification for apprentices ([24]) is not the same everywhere. As the Flemish apprenticeship programme is linked to the education

([22]) In general, access to the 'classic' system is possible but only through repetition.

([23]) This concerns 97% of graduates of technical qualification and artistic education in BEFR.

([24]) Trained by Syntra, IFAPME, SFPME or IAWM dual training providers.

system, students may under certain conditions, obtain an upper secondary school leaver's certificate. On the French-speaking and German-speaking sides, on the other hand, it is necessary to complete an additional year in adult education or on a full-time basis in order to obtain the CESS ([25]). Some apprenticeships pathways however, by a mechanism of equivalency, lead to the delivery of a qualification of the formal education system (the qualification certificate, see above).

It is worth underscoring that the proportion of those who earn the certificate in the IVET branches as provided by the formal education system is lower than those in general education. Whereas 96.05% (BEFR) and 97.6% (BEFL) of students from general education obtained a CESS, this rate falls to 88.30% for technical qualification education (BEFR) and 94.21% for TSO (BEFL). In vocational education, only 82.1% (BEFR) and 89.25% (BEFL) of the students in the seventh year earned a CESS ([26]). But for youngsters who want to have access to specific jobs and don't have plans to continue in higher education, a CESS is not needed and has no direct relevance.

([25]) Upper secondary school leaver's certificate.

([26]) See Table 7.

CHAPTER 2.

The image of IVET in Belgium: lessons to be drawn

This part highlights the representation of IVET. Social representation refers to 'a form of socially elaborated and shared knowledge, with a practical nature that contributes to the construction of a common reality for a social and cultural group' ([27]). For Moscovici ([28]), there are individual, collective and social types of representation, whereby the latter is between the individual and the collective level. Two phenomena occur in the construction of such representation ([29]). The first is the objectivation. It is a process whereby the abstract is turned into the concrete. The second is the anchoring relating to the cognitive integration of the represented object in the pre-existing way of thinking and to the transformations that ensue, which confers a familiar character on the novelty.

No study or survey has been conducted on the image and opinion of IVET in the overall Belgian population. Nonetheless, the few surveys that have been carried out by the study departments of governmental entities and researchers in universities focus essentially (and logically) on the students, teachers and headmasters. Some studies in the north and south part of the country have been published in the last 10 years on the matter, the results of which converge quite considerably.

Ferrara and Friant conducted a study on the social representation of students (n=668) in the first and last grade of secondary education in the different streams ([30]). They show that social representation is based on the notions of ease/difficulty, the characteristics of the student population and those of the education and the outcome of the education. As Donnay ([31]) shows, general education remains the 'standard of reference', accompanied by a notion of prestige, which means that the other branches become relegation education. Ferrara and Friant point out that the population of the 'relegation branches' is associated with lower classes where the terms used have negative connotations such as 'slow, not intelligent students', 'chavs', 'social cases', 'those who have

([27]) Jodelet (2003).

([28]) Moscovici (1984).

([29]) Jodelet (2003).

([30]) Ferrara and Friant (2014).

([31]) Donnay (2005).

repeated years in general education' or 'those who do not have the capacity to attend general education'. The technical branches have negative connections such as 'bad trade', 'low salary' but also positive connotations such as 'practical education that teaches a trade', and 'access to employment'. Whereas general education is described as 'intelligent students', 'elite', 'fine job/good future'.

It seems important to compare these outcomes with those of other surveys such as that on the representation of technical trades and IVET programmes organised by the formal education system at the end of the second year of secondary education which appeared in 2014, for which the Wallonia-Brussels Federation surveyed students in the 2nd year of secondary school that will have to choose or be subjected to a form and section of education as of the next year. In this way, 93 students from 'general' education (schools composed essentially of transition sections), 89 students from 'mixed' education (schools that organise transition and qualification sections) and 85 students from 'technical' education (schools composed essentially of sections that lead to qualification) were questioned. This study ([32]) highlights a set of significant results which are presented hereunder.

Thus, 65.2% of the students asked stated that they knew what they wanted to do in 'future'. When we add the 15% of students who are hesitating between several jobs to this number, the percentage of students who have already made an occupational choice comes to 80.2%, or 214 out of 267 respondents. In view of this percentage, these figures suggest that many students have already opted for a school career linked to the envisaged job, but that is not the case. Whereas 80 % of the students have an idea of what they want to do later, only a little more than half of the sample wish to broach this issue at school, where 23.2% of them tend to confide in their peers on the matter.

It is important to note that with the exception of the teachers (22.5%), the stakeholders in the school world seem relatively withdrawn when it comes to the choice of students, which suggests a lack of knowledge of the processes and the school orientation bodies. In this respect, only 5.2% of the students cite the psycho-medical social centres as an interlocutor, while 5.6% mention educators. A discussion with professionals seems relatively desirable by students, since 18.7% of them mention it. Finally, more than one third of the young people (38%) who wish to discuss their orientation with teachers expect concrete information or orientation counselling from them.

Despite the fact that 80% of the students have an idea of their future job, only 57.3% think it is important to know that job. Nearly one third of those

([32]) Matagne and Zanuss (2014).

questioned chose a trade, although they did not think it is important to have a clear idea at their age of what they would like to do. They say that they have time and that they are still too young. Paradoxically, among the students who do not know what they want to do later, more than 30% indicate that it is important to know, at their age, what job they are going to do in the future' ([33]).

A total of 52% of young people who have an idea of their future occupation answered 'because it is my dream'; 19% 'because you can earn a good living'; 12% 'positive social value', 12% 'other'; 9% 'social representation'; 8 % 'because it will be easy to find a job with this trade'; 6% 'because my parents advised me'. Those who say that they want to become chefs rank first among students who refer to their 'dream'. The remunerating aspect is cited primarily for those who want to become lawyers, and positive social value by those who want to become doctors. The trade most cited for finding a job easily is butcher.

Parents exert influence and transmit their values and representations unevenly, which in turn condition their child's orientation directly or indirectly. It seems appropriate to underscore that in most cases, i.e. for 68.5% of young people, the parents know what the student would like to do later on in life and approve of that choice. In this part of the sample, 44% of the students indicate that their parents think that the choice of their child is in fact a 'good choice'. Conversely, 4.1% of students choose a career that goes against the wishes of the parents. In that case, the latter think that choice ill-suited or inappropriate.

The majority of the sample wishes to opt for general education (49.4%), whereas 33% would opt for qualification sections. 18% of the students are still undecided about what to study and did not reply. Among the students polled, 69.3% have an idea of what they would like to study the following year. The options cited most often are sciences, ancient languages and modern languages – options from general education, which together account for one third of the students (34.4%)' ([34]).

'When the outcomes relating to the type of studies chosen as of the third year and the type of school are juxtaposed, it appears that they are conditioned by the type of school in which the student is enrolled. Thus, students enrolled in a general education type of school would like to study the general humanities in nearly 80% of the cases, compared with qualification humanities for less than 8%. On the basis of the schools visited, we can say that a student in a general education school wishes about 10 times less to opt for studies leading to qualification than a general education curriculum. This observation applies also,

([33]) Op. Cit. p.28-29.

([34]) Idem, p.31-32.

albeit to a lesser extent, for students in a technical type of school, as in more than 68% of the cases, they want to opt for education leading to qualification. Conversely, 19% of the students would opt for general education' ([35]).

'By a large majority, the students think that in the second year, they are in general education. For many of them, choosing or being required to go to qualification education in the third year is tantamount to 'leaving' general education' ([36]). 40% of the students opt for technical or vocational education when they have failed in general education. Paradoxically, 'by a large majority, the students polled are in favour of the suggestion of going to technical or vocational education when they have a plan for the future (83.9% aggregated in favour)' ([37]). 'Whereas a majority of students think that it is possible to access higher education after technical and vocational education (55.7% aggregated), more than one fifth (21.7% aggregated) think that it is not possible, while the last fifth has no comment (22.5%)' ([38]). Contrary to the outcomes of Ferrara and Friant (2014), the large majority of young people asked think that intelligent students go to general education, and the less intelligent ones to technical and vocational education (86.5% aggregated against).

'The students asked consider that it is preferable to attend general education, even if they intend to pursue a technical trade. This attests to poor knowledge of the school system. Even if the students admit that there is a form of hierarchical ranking between the two types of education, they do not have a particularly disparaging perception of the students and of the schools of technical and vocational education' ([39]). Overall however, the students are ill informed about the possibilities and realities of certain occupations. 'By a large majority (80.5% aggregated in favour), students think that going to university or at least undergoing some sort of higher education is necessary to work in technological and scientific fields. They are certainly not altogether wrong. Nevertheless, that shows that they are not aware of the opportunities offered by many sections in education leading to qualification' ([40]).

'The professional orientation wishes of students, or at least their capacity to imagine what is possible, seem a priori not to be based on solid information concerning the occupational sectors and not very much in line with the current

([35]) Ibidem, p.35.

([36]) Ibidem, p.37.

([37]) Ibidem, p.39.

([38]) Ibidem, p. 41.

([39]) Ibidem, p. 42.

([40]) Ibidem, p. 44.

needs of the labour market. It also appears that, in spite of the notably useful, easy, and gratifying nature of certain sectors, students are not interested in opting for them. Agronomy is a sector that is lacking increasingly in appeal. Conversely, the sector of services to people gets positive marks at all levels. Similarly, nearly half of the students could easily see themselves working in the hotel and catering sector. For their part, construction and applied sciences seem less attractive, whereas they could be deemed quite useful and even gratifying. Finally, economics, though not as well rated in terms of usefulness, difficulty and value, is nonetheless considered quite attractive by the students polled' ([41]).

As such, the negative perceptions of the technical programmes do not come solely from a lack of knowledge and information in relation to the opportunities they afford, but also from the impact of deeper structural patterns. A fragmented knowledge of the labour market, misconceptions about certain fields of activity and career orientation choices that are on the whole not very much in line with the socio-economic realities hold sway. Then there are the social role perceptions and more precisely convictions about higher salaries and greater social consideration for certain options and levels of studies ([42]).

([41]) Ibidem, p. 49-50.

([42]) Van Gasse and Van Cauteren (2011).

CHAPTER 3.

IVET effectiveness and outcomes

Several research studies ([43]) conducted by governmental agencies and certain training operators broach the issue of the integration of IVET graduates in the labour market. A quantitative study ([44]) conducted by the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) analyses the career path of young graduates from the Flemish education system (secondary and higher levels in all branches – general and IVET, apprenticeships provided by SYNTRA included) to understand how the different branches can or cannot lead to sustainable employment. To that end, the administrative data on education were crossed with the social security data in the 5 years after they graduated.

This study provides information on the employment rate once the certificate is obtained as well as on the salary level and the medium and long-term longitudinal monitoring (five years). More specifically, the recent literature ([45]) shows that young people from a VET programmes find it easier to get integrated in the labour market than others. Nevertheless, this immediate advantage would be turned into a disadvantage immediately once they start working, because they are less prepared to advance on the salary and career front. This mechanism is known as a trade-off between short and long-term advantages.

The conclusions of the study clarify these issues: in the short term, with the same qualification, young people stemming from IVET can find a job easier and have a better salary. Furthermore, the level of education and length of studies

([43]) In 2015, the Walloon regional public body for apprenticeships, entrepreneurship training and continuous training for SME's (IFAPME) published a study on the longitudinal monitoring of Walloon apprentices. It includes a sector breakdown of the data. The Forem, Walloon Public Employment Service, has published in 2017 a study on the rate employment of school and apprenticeship graduates. The Flemish department of education and training has conducted and commissioned several works on the question in recent years. Furthermore, the VDAB publishes a study on the employment rate of graduates in the year after they left school. On the French-speaking side, a workgroup is currently conducting a project to register educational and post-educational paths. The first measurements are expected to start in 2018.

([44]) Quantitative study commissioned by the Flemish community from the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), conducted by Ilse Laurijsen and published in July 2017: *De arbeidsmarktperspectieven van een beroepsgerichte opleiding, een analyse van de eerste jaren van Vlaamse schoolverlaters op de arbeidsmarkt*.

([45]) Müller and Gangl (2013); Wolbers (2007) cited by the authors, study of the Forem (2017).

are proportional to the rate of employment and the salary level. In other words, a person who completed the 7th vocational year or his higher vocational education programme (HBO) (formerly 4th grade of secondary school) is in a better situation than a person who left the vocational school after the 6th grade. With regards to employability, in the first years, apprentices having successfully accomplished a programme with SYNTRA seem to be more equipped to enter the labour market than most persons steaming from secondary compulsory Education programmes ([46]).

Conversely, according to the findings, general education holds better salary prospects in store than IVET in the long term if there has been progress and success in higher education. This statement applies to all levels, including higher education, such as an academic bachelor's degree compared to a professional bachelor's degree. As regards the development of the employment rate, young people from general education branches (including a master's degree) make up for their lag, and register better progress, with equal qualification. Thus, five years later, general education offers better prospects.

In the long term, the results show a form of hierarchical line within IVET streams. With a comparable qualification level, technical education is more conducive to employment than vocational training, which holds a better future in store than the dual programmes at school (CDO) ([47]). This reflects the relegation effect in IVET in the case of Flanders (see Section 2). Regarding apprenticeships (as provided by SYNTRA), data suggest that employability levels remain pretty stable throughout the years. As a matter of fact, five years after having successfully accomplished their dual programme, former apprentices have approximatively the same chances as graduates from most fulltime secondary education programmes, the latter having caught up.

These data should certainly be put in perspective with the economic crisis of the years 2009-13 that had an impact on the employment market and are not sufficiently nuanced concerning the sectors covered by IVET – the employment and salary prospects of a specialized electrician are not the same as those of a plasterer, for instance. They nonetheless do attest to the hierarchical ranking that Belgian society has created between general education and IVET and inside the very streams of IVET. These outcomes concur with the perception that the

([46]) These findings are correlated by recent VDAB studies regarding the cohort that left education in 2015.

([47]) The 2017 study of the Forem (Forem, 2017) presents different findings: Walloon apprentices have more employment prospective than students from technical or vocational education. However, this study takes into account the data not later than six months following the completion of their education/apprenticeship programme.

population may have of certain occupations: why undergo vocational or technical training only to be less well paid and have fewer career prospects than an engineer or a young university graduate? Furthermore, although the reinforcement of work-based learning and apprenticeships occupies a key place in European priorities and initiatives (Riga MTD 1 in particular), it is difficult to convince people to opt for a branch that is not very appreciated, where the occupations for which it provides training are not necessarily remunerated correctly and the working conditions (arduous nature of the occupations, mobility, work schedules, etc.) are not attractive.

CHAPTER 4.

Recent reforms

Aware of these phenomena, the different Belgian levels of power take initiatives on a regular basis to reform vocational education and training. The matter for upgrading IVET programmes takes centre stage. Confronted with the realities of a highly fragmented education system, the authorities have to content with pressure to maintain a form of differentiation at the secondary level depending on the student's level and the aim of the education stream he pursues on the one hand, and a will to overcome the differences so as to reduce the relegation phenomena and improve the outcomes, and in so doing create greater equality in the system, on the other.

The most recent measures include the reform of secondary education in Flanders, the pact for teaching excellence in the French Community, as well as reforms of the dual system in BEFL and BEFR respectively. Although these reforms aim at several objectives (concerning governance, financing, reorganization, etc.), we are going to focus on the impact that these reforms could have on the image of IVET and on the way that the Communities plan to deal with the problems caused by the differentiated systems and relegation mechanisms.

In 2013, the Flemish government established a masterplan to initiate a change in the organisation of secondary education, supplemented subsequently by other strategic notes. The first impact of this reorganization is expected at the start of the 2019/2020 academic year. The first year of secondary will then follow the model recommended by the Flemish government to strengthen the acquisition of basic/key competences, rationalise the training offer and reduce inequalities between schools, students and branches. In more concrete terms, it was decided to maintain a degree of differentiation both in terms of the first two years of secondary education (sections A+B) and higher secondary education (the current forms retain their name: ASO ([48]), KSO ([49]), TSO ([50]) and BSO ([51]), but to reorganise the options by classifying them in nine areas of education. Furthermore, like the education sections on the French-speaking side

([48]) *Algemeen secundaironderwijs* (general secondary education).

([49]) *Kunstsecundaironderwijs* (artistic secondary education).

([50]) *Technischsecundairondwijs* (technical secondary education).

([51]) *Beroepssecundaironderwijs* (vocational secondary education).

(transition/qualification), each type of education will be divided into one of three aims: transition, labour market and dual aim (transition/labour market). In parallel, a recent reform has made it possible to clarify the field of the dual system by designating SYNTRA Vlaanderen as the administrator of the work component Flemish apprenticeship system. In September 2016, 30 schools started piloting the new dual training programmes. The pilots are planned to last three consecutive school years. A specific regulatory framework was set for the experiment. In September 2017, the number of schools involved in the pilots on dual learning was increased to 100 schools in 20 courses. The Flemish government started the preparatory work to extend these pilot projects for the school year 2018/19 to more than 50 courses and an increase in the number of participating schools. The legislation on dual learning is planned for April 2018, the dual learning will be implemented by September 2019.

On the French-speaking side, the pact for teaching excellence (*Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence*) ([52]), work which started in 2015, is a fundamental reform that will be implemented gradually for all programmes provided by the formal education system, from kindergarten to upper secondary school level. The strategic document adopted by the French-speaking government ([53]) serves as a roadmap for the ministry of education and guides its action. The reform of the core curriculum, coherent and non-differentiated educational continuum from kindergarten (age 3) to the end of the third year of secondary school (age 15), is undoubtedly the big novelty of this pact, the aim being to strengthen the acquisition of basic skills and reduce inequalities.

As regards IVET as provided by the formal education system, there are three main lines of development, namely to:

(a) reorganise the path of qualification education: improve orientation, do away with the distinction between technical and vocational forms, a qualification three-year course, the development of 'certification per unit of learning' (CPU); solid 'general' education; certification of the qualification path and access to higher education;

(b) strengthen the administration of qualification education, in particular: create 'an observatory of qualification education, trades and technologies' in the department; reform the standards for creating and maintaining options;

(c) reinforce education-training-employment synergies.

([52]) http://www.pactedexcellence.be/

([53]) Notice n°3 of the Central Group on the Pact which brings together the main stakeholders from the world of education: http://www.pactedexcellence.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PACTE-Avis3_versionfinale.pdf

In plain terms: the current forms are done away with to create two branches at upper secondary level: one for transition (General), the other for qualification (IVET), aimed at access to Higher education and access to the profession respectively. The latter aspect will also be reinforced: gradual generalisation of education by modules, strengthening of internships and in general links with companies as well as a better distribution of the qualification offer over the entire French-speaking territory. As regards the dual system, the French-speaking dual training service (OFFA) was created to bring together stakeholders and programmes in BEFR (to create a common apprenticeship contract or the harmonisation of the apprentice's status for instance). This is in line with EU priorities regarding apprenticeships. Despite the creation of the OFFA, the regional and community authorities remain in charge of dual programmes and set the priorities and the framework in which providers and schools operate.

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusion

This article focuses on the question of the image and representation of vocational education and training and the employment prospects for students who have opted for IVET. These programmes may suffer from a negative image but above all from a paradox that combines relegation and appeal. Several studies show that requiring a student to go to technical or vocational education in the third year is tantamount to 'quitting' general education (people go there when they have failed on the 'classic' path). Nevertheless, these same students will say that people go to technical and vocational education when they have a plan for the future. These technical and vocational so-called relegation prospects offer real prospects for an occupational future even if they are not socially desirable.

IVET has a poor image as supported by the indicators of programmes provided by the formal education system: far higher grade retention, higher repeated year rate, a lower certification rate, a group in a more precarious situation and from a working class background and a lower graduation rate. These indicators are worse for IVET than for general education because the assessment model is based on what is done in the general branch. Furthermore, the organisation of education in networks attests to a quite strong compartmentalisation with schools specialised in general education and other in technical or vocational education, which does not make for smooth transitions by IVET students to general education ([54]) and from the first two years of secondary education to IVET ([55]). The authorities and IVET stakeholders are aware of the problem and the challenges. They are trying to find solutions and to put in place projects, such as the 'differentiated path in the core curriculum', but in the end, this guides students towards vocational education. The class council has a strong influence on the student's pathway and in particular on the guidance of the student who may end up too rapidly towards vocational education if he fails. The pupil guidance centres don't have a strong presence in this orientation game, and yet they could play a crucial role.

IVET provides real prospects for integration into society and the world of work. A person with a university degree will have a better salary, but those IVET

([54]) This transition from IVET to general secondary education is very hard to make mainly due to content mismatches.

([55]) This is due to the fact that in Belgium schools are 'specialised'.

graduates who have completed a 7th vocational year, can succeed in their career. There is a possibility to integrate even if occupational mobility and salary prospects are limited compared to the jobs that can be found with a university degree. It is noted that a student from IVET finds a job more rapidly in the short-term than a person stemming from general education, but this integration is maintained less well over the long term, because these jobs are less secure. Furthermore, occupational skills are one thing, but they are not sufficient to manage one's career in the long run (change of employment, negotiation of a salary, etc.). Only soft skills and key competences help an individual manage his career, but they are not taken sufficiently into consideration in IVET, whence the determination to create a core curriculum in BEFR to smooth out the differences and strengthen key skills and general knowledge, for all students.

Furthermore, there is the 'establishment effect' ([56]) which relies on a combination of several variables, including the composition of the public and educational and organisational practices. This establishment effect causes a disparity in learning among students from different schools, thereby augmenting educational inequalities. The different schools and streams are regulated by a 'rationale of competitive interdependence' in that having students with high added value constitutes a strategy for maintaining privileges ([57]). As such, the flows of students between schools are asymmetrical, because there are schools that send out (in a strong position, capable of controlling the composition of their public) and there are others that receive (in a weak position, not capable of controlling the composition of their public). Additionally, this modus operandi is accompanied by a negative image of the branches and the occupations.

The establishment effect and the relegation process are accompanied by an 'irreversibility of school careers' ([58]) where the students are directed from the outset to school establishments that are less well positioned on the educational market. These mechanisms show a certain irreversibility of choices, and reduce the real freedom and autonomy of the student in his school and occupational career. The IVET reforms in the past have not had all the expected effects. The image of the IVET must be refurbished by expanding this freedom to choose from various options (inverted funnel system), and must afford an opportunity to make positive choices. This in turn requires a decompartmentalisation and 'de-hierarchisation' between the different streams of education. In this respect, the

([56]) Thrupp, M. (1999). *Schools making a difference*. *Let's be realistic.* Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

([57]) Verhoeven et al (2005), pp. 93-107.

([58]) Ibid.

transitions (within the streams but also between education/training and employment) must be negotiated and systematically arranged ([59]) to reduce structural and social inequalities. This requires the involvement and empowerment of the different stakeholders (education, company, student, politicians, sector, etc.)

The transitions are secured by a strengthening of the individual learners (acquiring professional and soft skills) but also by better equipment at the level of education and labour market. This should lead to better cooperation between schools and companies. By way of example of good practices or at least a system to be tested in other parts of Belgium in order to change the foundations of IVET, there is the specific IVET programme developed in the German-speaking community. In this specific approach, general secondary education and university education being less idealized, a real appreciation of the IVET branch could emerge with a different, more positive conception thereof.

Our current society model remains socially compartmentalised and is accompanied more by a rationale of social reproduction than social climbing. It runs through all fields including the world of education and training, as shown by the results of the studies mentioned in this article.

As such, the general education and training programmes that give access to socially recognised jobs are taken up by the more well-to-do social classes, compared with the technical and vocational streams where the jobs do not have that social or financial recognition. The aim of upgrading the IVET branches (e.g. the massive movement of support for these programmes), through educational reforms in particular, is to provide means and resources to all to access the different types of education. This does not appear sufficient, because the change must be carried out in the bowels of the societal model in terms of mentality, particularly through the perception of jobs, and not just through the political regulation of the school system alone.

([59]) Gazier, B. (2003).

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ANNEX 1. Statistics of the formal education system: differences between IVET and general streams ([60])

Table 1. School attendance in full-time secondary education in Belgium, streams classified by general/IVET (1953-72)

School year	Degree ([61])	IVET ([62])	General ([63])	Other ([64])	Total students at national level
1953/54	Lower Secondary	34.61%	34.51%	30.88%	306 428
	Upper Secondary	35.21%	46.59%	18.20%	76 595
1958/59	Lower Secondary	41.27%	40.87%	17.87%	372 149
	Upper Secondary	34.61%	47.68%	16.48%	92 311
1963/64	Lower Secondary	49.52%	44.04%	6.44%	443 400
	Upper Secondary	36.17%	47.25%	12.22%	162 852
1968/69	Lower Secondary	55.49%	42.30%	2.21%	499 816
	Upper Secondary	44.64%	45.56%	9.80%	215 362
1971/72 ([65])	Lower Secondary	53.97%	44.70%	1.33%	515 367
	Upper Secondary	46.59%	47.53%	5.88%	234 839

Source: Statistical Office of the French Community, calculations by ReferNet Belgium

([60]) This data only concern IVET streams within the formal education system but not apprenticeships offered by providers, which are also considered as IVET.

([61]) Generally speaking, in the so-called traditional system, lower secondary education included the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of secondary education (12-15), whilst upper secondary the 4th, 5th and 6th (15-18). Some streams included additional years.

([62]) This includes technical and vocational programmes.

([63]) This includes general education programmes.

([64]) 'Other' includes programmes such as teacher training programmes, extended primary education and to a lesser extend complementary vocational education and artistic education.

([65]) 1971/72 is the last school year where education statistics were done at national level. The following years are presented in table 2.

Table 2. School attendance in full-time secondary education (IVET vs general streams) in Belgium, by community (1978-2014)

School year	Community	Degrees ([66])	Age of students	IVET ([67])	General ([68])
1978/79	BEFL	Lower + Upper Secondary (Trad.)	12-18	57.01%	42.99%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
	BEFR+ BEDE	Upper Secondary (Trad.)	15-18	45.00%	55.00%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
1983/84	BEFL	Lower + Upper Secondary (Trad.)	12-18	57.28%	42.72%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
	BEFR+BEDE	Upper Secondary (Trad.)	15-18	46.26%	53.67%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
1988/83	BEFL	Lower + Upper Secondary (Trad.)	12-18	56.50%	43.50%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
1989/90	BEFR	Upper Secondary (Trad.)	15-18	46.69%	53.31%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		
1993/94	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	59.03%	40.97%
	BEFR	Upper Secondary (Trad.)	15-18	46.17%	53.83%
		2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18		

([66]) From the 70's until the school year 1989/90 (in BEFL) and 2000 (BEFR+BEDE), two systems in secondary education were coexisting: traditional (comprising 2 degrees lasting in general 3 years) and the renewed (comprising 3 degrees lasting in general 2 years). The figures until 2000 include therefore students from both systems. In the traditional system, IVET streams started in the first year of secondary education, whilst in the renewed system, they generally started in the 3rd year (also known as 1st year of the 2nd degree of secondary education).

([67]) The calculations include the following programmes. In the traditional system: technical and vocational secondary education; for the renewed system: technical secondary education (BEFL), vocational secondary education (BEFL), technical qualification education (BEFR/BEDE), vocational qualification education (BEFR/BEDE) and artistic qualification education (BEFR).

([68]) Calculations include the following programmes. For the traditional system: general secondary education; for the renewed system: general secondary education (BEFL), general transition education (BEFR/BEDE), technical transition education (BEFR/BEDE) and artistic transition education (BEFR).

School year	Community	Degrees ([66])	Age of students	IVET ([67])	General ([68])
1998/99	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	60.07%	39.93%
1999/2000	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	60.15%	39.85%
	BEFR	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	46.39%	53.61%
2003/04	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	60.28%	39.72%
	BEFR	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	53.23%	46,77%
2008/09	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	59.91%	40.09%
	BEFR	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	47.36%	52.64%
2013/14	BEFL	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	59.73%	40.27%
	BEFR	2nd+ 3rd degree (Renewed)	14-18	46.19%	53.81%

Source: Statistical Offices of the Flemish and French Communities, calculations by ReferNet Belgium

Table 3. School attendance from the 3rd to 6th/7th ([69]) year of secondary (full-time + part-time), by stream in % of students (2015/2016)

BEFR		BEFL		BEDE	
General Transition Education (EGT)	44.43%	General Education (ASO)	39.29%	General Transition Education (EGT)	66.55%
Technical Transition Education (ETT)	7.35%	Technical Education (TSO)	30.33%	Technical Transition Education (ETT)	4.88%
Technical qualification Education (ETQ)	23.09%	Artistic Education (KSO)	2.06%	Technical qualification Education (ETQ)	13.39%
Vocational Education (EPQ)	21.41%	Vocational Education (BSO)	25.32%	Vocational Education (EPQ)	15.18%
Dual-learning at school (CEFA)	3.72%	Dual-learning at school (CDO)	3.01%	Dual-learning at school (CEFA)	/
Transition (EG+ETT)	48.22%	General (ASO)	39.29%	Transition (EG+ETT)	71.42%
IVET (ETQ + EP + CEFA)	51.78%	IVET (KSO + TSO + BSO + CDO)	60.71%	IVET (ETQ+EP+CEFA)	28.58%

([69]) Some IVET streams include a 7th year.

Table 4. School attendance per school year (3rd to 6th) in full-time secondary education

BEFR (2015/16)					
Year/ Section	Transition Number of students	Transition %	IVET Number of students	IVET %	Total
3	39 740	61.37%	25 013	38.63%	64 753
4	33 467	58.28%	23 962	41.72%	57 429
5	27 672	49.07%	28 719	50.93%	56 391
6	24 071	52.27%	21 983	47.73%	46 054

BEFL (2016/17)					
Year/Section	General Number of students	General %	IVET Number of students	IVET %	Total
3	33 182	48.91%	34 662	51.09%	67 844
4	29 598	44.61%	36 748	55.39%	66 346
5	26 790	39.62%	40 832	60.38%	67 622
6	25 157	40.78%	36 531	59.22%	61 688

Table 5. Average repeat rate by stream in full-time secondary education (3rd to 6th year), % of total students of each cohort

BEFR (2015/16)		BEFL (2016/17)	
General Transition Education (EGT)	8.60%	General Education (ASO)	2.5%
Technical Transition Education (ETT)	19.59%	Technical Education (TSO)	8.08%
Technical qualification Education (ETQ)	19.83%	Artistic Education (KSO)	10.30%
Vocational Education (EPQ)	19.19%	Vocational Education (BSO)	6.51%

Table 6. Average school delay rate by stream in full-time secondary education (3rd to 6th year), % of total students of each cohort

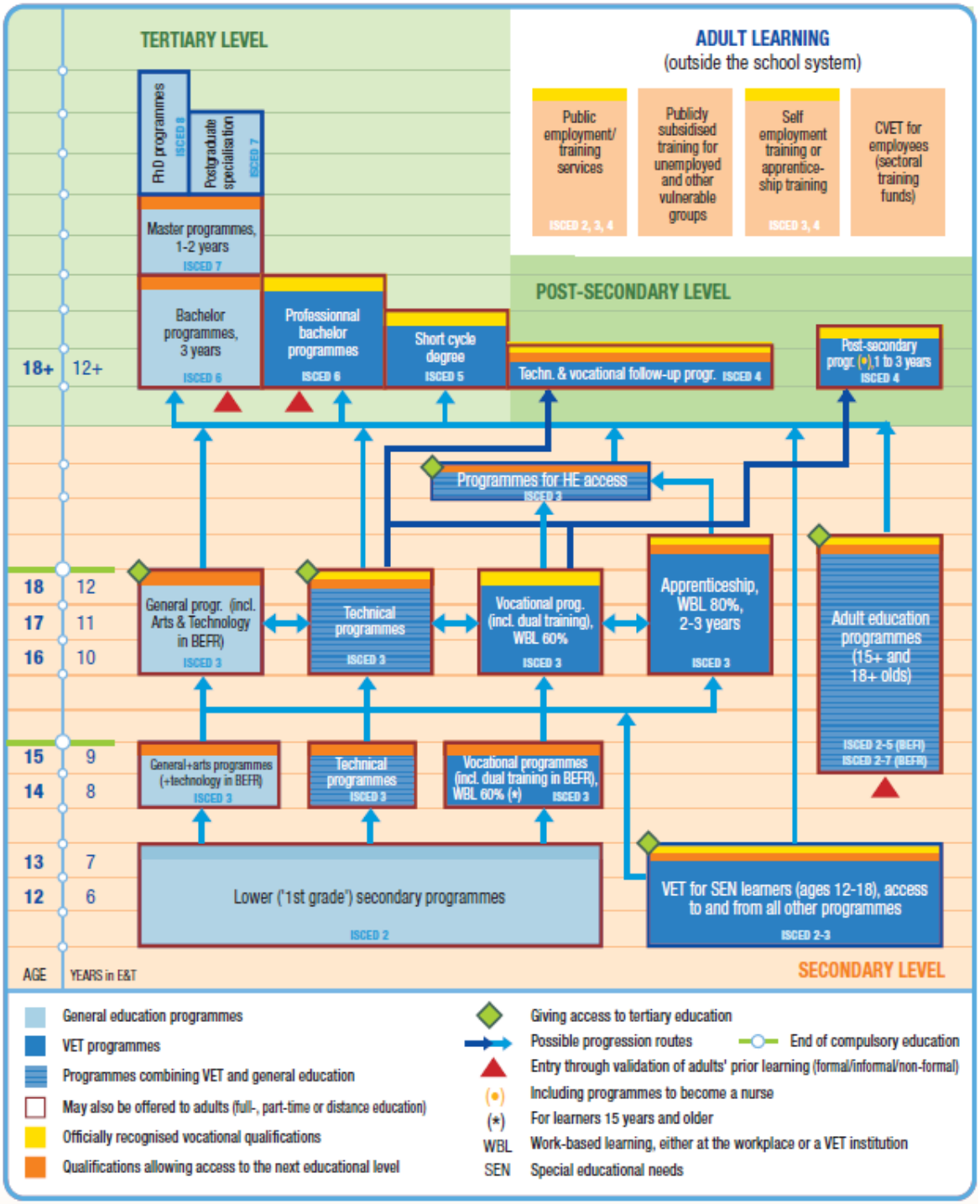
BEFR (2015/16)		BEFL (2016/17)	
General Transition Education (EGT)	39.27%	General Education (ASO)	12.28
Technical Transition Education (ETT)	75.82%	Technical Education (TSO)	36.92%
Technical qualification Education (ETQ)	92.03%	Artistic Education (KSO)	42.24%
Vocational Education (EPQ)	96.65%	Vocational Education (BSO)	60.40%

Table 7. Certification rate at the end of full-time secondary education (6th or 7th year), in % of total students in each cohort

BEFR (2014/15)			BEFL (2015/16)		
Stream	Year	N° certifications/ n° students %	Stream	Year	N° certifications/ n° students %
General Transition Education (EGT)	6	96.05%	General Education (ASO)	6	97.6%
Technical Transition Education (ETT)	6	91.19%	Technical Education (TSO)	6	94.21%
Technical qualification Education (ETQ)	6	88.30%	Artistic Education (KSO)	6	93.36%
Vocational Education (EPQ)	6	81.32% ([70])	Vocational Education (BSO)	7	89.25%
Vocational Education (EPQ)	7	82.12%			

([70]) This data includes all qualifications/certificates issued following the achievement of a 6th year in vocational education: qualification certificate and/or a teaching certificate. In order to obtain an upper secondary school leaver's certificate, students have to go through a 7th year and succeed.

ANNEX 2. VET in Belgium's education and training systems: Chart (2015)



NB: ISCED-P 2011. Levels do not fully fit VET and qualifications systems.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Belgium, Spotlight on VET – Belgium (2015)