

Secondary Data in Mixed Methods Research (Mixed Methods Research Series)

Summary

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secondary education, the second stage traditionally found in formal education, beginning about age 11 to 13 and ending usually at age 15 to 18. The dichotomy between elementary education and secondary education has gradually become less marked, not only in curricula but also in organization. The proliferation of middle schools, junior schools, junior high schools, and other divisions has produced systems with more than two stages. Because of their wide influence throughout the world, it is appropriate to sketch briefly the educational patterns of a few major European nations and the United States. More From Britannica education: Secondary education

The French system France initiated a number of educational reforms beginning in 1968. Contemporary France has a first cycle of education for all children up to grade 5. The transitional grades 6 and 7 are followed by grades 8 and 9, which comprise the so-called guidance cycle, in which students pursue a certain core curriculum, a second foreign language, and a collection of electives. They must decide by the end of grade 9 whether to pursue the academic tracts in upper secondary school or to pursue vocational options. In principle, parents, students, and school counselors must reach an agreement on this decision, but appeal procedures exist to resolve differences. Students 15 to 18 years of age enter either of two lycées, or high schools: (1) the lycée of general and technological education (lycée d'enseignement général et technologique, or LEGT) is the successor to the traditional academic lycée of the past; (2) the vocational-educational lycée (lycée d'enseignement professionnel, or LEP) encompasses a range of vocational-technical studies and training. The curriculum of the LEGT begins in grade 10 with certain tracked basic courses that lead in grades 11 and 12 to specializations in any one of five subject areas: literary-philosophical studies, economics and social sciences, mathematics and physical sciences, earth sciences and biological sciences, and scientific and industrial technology. In grades 10 and 11 there is a common core of subjects plus options, but in grade 12 all subjects, being optional, are oriented toward the student's major area of study. The baccalauréat examination taken at the end of these studies qualifies students for university entrance. Vocational-technical secondary education includes a three-year selection of optional courses leading to one of the 30 or so technical baccalauréats. A student may instead opt for a one-year course conferring no particular qualification or may opt for apprenticeship training in the workplace.

The German system In Germany, schools are the responsibility of the governments of the states, or Länder, and the structure of elementary and secondary education is not entirely consistent throughout the nation. In all states, however, the period of elementary education covers eight or nine grades. After this period, three basic options are available to the pupils. They may, after counseling by the elementary school teacher and upon the request of the parents, be placed in a Realschule, a Gymnasium, or a Hauptschule, the last representing a continuation of elementary education. Get a Britannica Premium subscription

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and gain access to exclusive content. Subscribe Now Those pupils attending the Hauptschule proceed with their study of language, arithmetic, geography, history, science, music, art, and physical education. After completion of a four- or five-year program of studies at the Hauptschule, the pupil typically enters apprenticeship training. In Germany the term "secondary school" refers to institutions offering courses leading to the "Certificate of Maturity" (the Reifezeugnis), a qualification for entrance to an institution of higher education. The Realschule offers pupils further general education, some prevocational courses, and English-language study. At the age of 16, students conclude their program of studies and transfer to a vocational school or enter apprenticeship training. If academically qualified, a pupil may also transfer to the Gymnasium. The Gymnasium, the third alternative for German youth, offers rigorous academic preparation for higher education. Like the lyc e in France and the grammar school in England, the Gymnasium is designed for those students who have shown the most academic promise; and its curriculum, emphasizing languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences, requires a high degree of diligence throughout all of the nine grades. Unsuccessful students in the Gymnasium may be transferred to the Hauptschule. At the age of 16, moreover, pupils may terminate their academic studies and enter a vocational school. Students in the Gymnasium must pass an examination, the Abitur, entitling them to the Certificate of Maturity, if they are to be admitted to a German university. The content of the Abitur is adjusted to the focus of studies, such as classical languages or mathematics-science, chosen earlier by the student.

The British system Great Britain's current system of secondary education is the successor to a slightly older system that assigned students at age 11 to one of three types of schools by means of selection tests. From the 1950s and 1960s these schools were gradually replaced by a single type of school called a comprehensive school, which admits children irrespective of ability or aptitude and which offers both academic and vocational programs under one roof. In Britain the first stage of education is called primary education and includes students from ages 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) to 11 (12 in Scotland). About 90 percent of students then attend comprehensive schools. These schools are

organized in various ways, serving ages 11 to 18; 11 to 12 to 16; or 12 to 14 to 16 to 18. Most of the remaining students receive secondary education in secondary modern or grammar schools (these being remnants of the old tripartite school system), to which they are assigned after selective procedures at age 11. The Education Reform Act 1988 established a national curriculum and regular assessment of performance for children of ages 5 to 16 in all state schools in England and Wales. Similar legislation was passed in Northern Ireland in 1990. In England, Scotland, and Wales parents have a statutory right to express preference for a specific school. Those students seeking university entrance must successfully complete a series of examinations that result in the General Certificate of Education. These examinations have two levels: General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE; formerly "ordinary") and advanced. Entry to a university requires a prescribed combination of passes on the GCSE and advanced level in such subjects as English, foreign language, science, and mathematics. The sixth-form curriculum (i.e., that of the last two years of secondary school) is largely oriented toward preparation for the advanced-level examination and provides intense specialization. In Britain a small, separate, but highly significant group of independent schools also exists. These primary and secondary schools are financially self-supporting. The best known of the independent schools are the "public schools," some of which, notably Eton and Harrow, have long maintained a distinguished reputation. These schools for centuries have prepared students academically for higher education, typically at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and ultimately for leadership in British life. Although a controversial element in British education and frequently accused of reinforcing invidious social distinctions, these institutions remain popular.

The Soviet system The contemporary nations that once formed the U.S.S.R. have an educational pattern that differs distinctively from that just described. The first stage of education takes place in an eight-year general-education school. After graduating from the eight-year school, students, if qualified, have a number of secondary schools open to them, including polytechnical or general secondary schools and various vocational or technical schools. Education authorities attempt to provide prolonged guidance for the pupils and place them into increasingly differentiated programs of study throughout the last few years of the elementary school and the first two or three years of secondary school. Many of those leaving the elementary school go directly into an occupation. Most critical for students wishing to continue their education is the selection at 17 or 18 years of age for higher education. The universities and higher institutes admit only 15 to 20 percent of the graduates of the secondary-level institutions. Most graduates of the polytechnical or general secondary schools are required to take jobs for two or three years, after which those qualified may proceed to higher education.

The U.S. system Historically, the United States has made little distinction between primary and elementary

education—i.e., between those lower schools that prepared students for advanced (or higher) education and those schools that merely provided literacy and some general education for larger groups of children. This heritage has led in the United States to a single system of elementary and secondary education for the great majority of its students. In the United States, education is the responsibility of the individual states; therefore, some variation in structure exists. Typically, however, students at the age of 13 or 14 enter a neighbourhood secondary school; the education there usually lasts for four years, and the students graduate at age 18 on average. In the United States, more than 80 percent of the secondary-age groups attend secondary school. The American goal for decades has been to provide secondary education for all within a single type of institution popularly referred to as the comprehensive high school. Although the precise meaning of this term is frequently not clear, comprehensive schools usually include a broad program of general and specialized curricula and accommodate a wide range in the academic abilities of the pupils. Thus, in the same American secondary school, some students plan to pursue university study and others seek terminal secondary education.

Reference

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