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Data-based school development processes as the basis of a long-term reorganization of individual schools

A secondary analysis of qualitative longitudinal data based on school case-studies from 2005 to 2013 (Duration: 09/2017 until 08/2019)

Questions regarding the controllability of school development processes represent one of the main topics of educational research in Germany, not only since the PISA study. Since the 2000s the related research areas can be categorised under the term ‘new governance’ in education. Since then various studies have generated comprehensive knowledge on, for example, the use of data from comparative studies or centralized state-wide examinations (e.g. van Ackeren et al., 2013).

Currently there are two further desiderata, which can be summarised as follows:

- How has organizational action changed in conjunction with particular education policy instruments with the change in school environment over an extended period?
- How stable or sustainable are any shifts in action undertaken within the schools?

Theoretically, the study assumes that the implementation of the education policy instruments creates a need to change, which can be described as a *need to reorganize the organization*, i.e. the redesign of organizational structures in schools (Thiel, 2008).

Essentially, there is an empirical and theoretical deficit about which key assumptions are at all effective regarding school development in the interplay between development in terms of organization, teaching and pupil achievement. In particular, these are questions, which can only be analyzed through observation over an extended period rather than the usual two years in most studies in schools. Relevant areas here are above all those, which concern the reciprocal influence between the requirements of education policy instruments and the changes in the school environment associated with them (e.g. the establishment of central bodies for quality assurance) and practical organizational action.

Currently it can merely be stated that the pressure for reorganization does not follow the programme requirements associated with the education policy reform measures (Thiel, 2008). There has already been empirical evidence to demonstrate that the expected spectrum of reorganization possibilities can be reconstructed, for example on the basis of changes in school leadership actions or management practice, changes in the school programme or decision-making for organization, school or staff development (Thillmann, 2012).

The aim of this study is to analyze a long-term and systematic reorganization of schools with reference to the changes in school environment. The study aims to systematize organizational school development in a qualitative typology (Kelle & Kluge, 2010) as a pattern of reorganization for schools, in order to contribute to the development of existing models of school development research. For this purpose, based on a secondary analysis of previous qualitative school case-studies over eight years, a reorientation of the assessments shall be achieved which examines a long-term perspective of school development.

Methodologically, the analysis focusses on organizational action in schools which is related to shifts and changes in organizational structure and is associated with the implementation of education policy instruments such as mandatory proficiency tests. This approach allows an insight into sustained and established development processes or patterns of reorganization in school development. The following areas are therefore considered in the secondary analysis:

- the influence of education policy reform measures since the 2000s
- the changes in organizational action in schools (e.g. the establishment of management or working groups, mechanisms for self-evaluation) and
- the sustainability and stability of the changes and the connection between education policy instruments and the quality of work in schools.

Study design outline:

- Secondary analysis of qualitative longitudinal data based on school case-studies (Yin, 2009) from 2005 to 2013 in 28 schools from 6 federal states (Bundesländer)
 - 351 guided interviews with different school representatives (e.g. school and department leaders, teachers)
- Assessment using categories (qualitative content analysis: Kuckartz, 2016; Mayring, 2010) which based on the design parameters of professional organizations:
 - Interpretation step 1 (September 2017 - June 2018): re-coding of data
 - Interpretation step 2 (July 2018 - February 2019): analysis of long-term perspective
 - Interpretation step 3 (March - July 2019): typification

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