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"School leadership and school achievement – school leadership measures in consequence of central assessments of student achievement and their effect on school achievement"

In the research program for "Governance in Education", funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF)*, different research projects are presently focusing on the practical effects caused by instruments that in recent years have been implemented for the governance of school education systems, investigating participants' barriers to using evidence-based knowledge and how the implemented measures and procedures can be further developed for a sustainable assurance of educational quality in schools. The following project is part of this research priority program; it assesses the relationship between school leadership actions and school achievement.

So far, the educational scientific domains of *data use* and *school leadership research* have been disconnected. In school leadership research, use of findings from central assessments of student achievement constitutes a desideratum, while in data use studies there is a need to investigate the particular responsibility of school leadership in measures of test-based school reform. This desideratum will be treated in this research project.

Theoretically, the project will first refer to research on school leadership efficiency which describes the relationship between academic student achievements on the one hand and school leadership on the other, while also drawing on *distributed leadership* where school leadership responsibility is conceptualized in relation to the organizational responsibility of a school and the body of teachers.

Indications to school leadership practice can be gleaned from both theoretical approaches, which can be put to a particularly productive use when linking them to findings from student assessments. Findings from usage studies enrich the model assumptions on school leadership practices and their entailment in the context of school and school administration.

Against this background, the study focuses on the following aspects:

I. Do school leadership measures targeting the assurance of instructional quality vary with student achievement findings in VERA?

II. Do measures initiated by principals correspond with measures implemented/realized among academic staff?

III. Do measures as listed above (I and II) bear an impact on subsequent school achievement results in VERA?

The project pursues two objectives: First, insights shall be gained into how the assessment results that are fed back to the schools lead to principals' implementations of specific measures targeting quality assurance. Moreover, the study aims to investigate the consequences that result from respective principal measures, and effects that might be

demonstrated for schools in subsequent assessments of student achievement. To work on the desiderata outlined above, school achievement data from central student assessments will be analyzed in association with process information on school-based quality assurance measures. Process information at individual school level concerns the school leadership activities that target quality assurance and the implementation of such activities by responsible teaching staff in general respectively groups of teachers. The matched dataset will be subjected to longitudinal modelling whereby a cycle of analysis takes the average level of a school's achievement as a starting condition, school internal measures constitute process characteristics and another average school achievement level is treated as a result.

A brief description of the study design is presented below:

Planned sample

- Federal states involved in the assessment: Brandenburg (BB) and Berlin (B)/possibly Lower Saxony
- Schools participating in mandatory proficiency tests in year 8 (VERA 8)
- Secondary school types: Gymnasium (B/BB), Sekundarschule (B), Oberschule (BB) and Gesamtschule (BB)
- Random sample size of N= 125 for the first point of measurement; N=86 for the second point of measurement

Plan of study design

- Longitudinal questionnaire-based assessment
- Two measurement points in time distributed across two years, each following a VERA 8-assessment:
  - 1st measurement point: questionnaire with principals
  - 2nd measurement point: questionnaire with principals and teaching staff with leadership function (head of department)
- Construction of achievement profiles based on VERA 8 data from school years 2010/11ff.
- Matching VERA 8 data (longitudinal dataset aggregated at school level) with questionnaire data
- Final round of feedback to schools: e.g. in workshops
- Assessment respectively evaluation of relationship by regression analyses and path models

2013	2014		2015		2016
	1. questionnaire		2. questionnaire		
central assessments		*central assessments*		*central assessments*	
Aug-Dec	*Jan-June*	*July-Dec*	*Jan-June*	*July-Dec*	*Jan-July*

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