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Zur Chancengerechtigkeit und Leistungsfähigkeit der deutschen
Schulsysteme mit einer Vertiefung zum schulischen Ganzttag

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Abstract

Equity in German education has long been the subject of heated debates that have been driven primarily, however, by emotions and anecdotal experience. The OECD's PISA assessments, introduced ten years ago, generated the first empirical data regarding equal opportunity in German schools. Among the key findings of the first PISA study was that Germany, more so than any other OECD country, suffered the strongest links between educational success and social origin. This verdict helped ground in fact debates in Germany over education policy and diffuse ideological tensions. Nonetheless, emotions run high from time to time, in part because the definition of equal opportunity remains unclear, as does the question of which indicators best measure equal opportunity.

The Equity and Excellence Monitor, first published in 2012, aims to help clarify these issues. Unlike other reporting formats, it focuses on a central theme: equal opportunity in the German school system. The Equity and Excellence Monitor sees equal opportunity in terms of *a fairness of opportunity to participate in society that is ensured by a just education system in which pupils do not suffer additional disadvantages as a result of their socioeconomic and physical status, and in which the empowerment of all individuals and mutual recognition is fostered*. Informed by theories of social justice in education, this concept of equal opportunity involves attempts to offset social disadvantages and foster potential among pupils. Children and youth are provided fair opportunities to fully develop their potential by school systems which are integrative, permeable, promote skills development and provide effective qualifications. These four theoretically derived dimensions of social justice are the focus of the Equity and Excellence Monitor. For each dimension – integrative capability, school system permeability, skills development and certification – the Equity and Excellence Monitor draws on the available quantitative data from German federal and Länder statistics offices as well as empirical studies on education to establish robust indicators of equity in German education. Though clearly not exhaustive, these indicators are nonetheless highly relevant for understanding opportunity in German education. For each indicator, the Länder are classified according to three groups: the

upper group includes those among the top 25 percent, and points to the opportunities available for students in the »more successful« Länder. The mid-range group includes those Länder comprising the mid-50 percent, and the low-range group includes the bottom 25 percent.

For its inaugural publication in 2012, the Equity and Excellence Monitor drew primarily upon data from the 2009/2010 school year. The data for the 2013 edition draw upon official statistics available as of February 2013 and figures from other published studies, that is, data from the 2011/2012 school year. For those indicators for which data are available for both reporting years, the current Equity and Excellence Monitor records changes since 2009/2010.

In developing educational equity, the key finding here is that equality of opportunities have improved somewhat in the last two years. To give but just two examples: The risk of leaving school without qualification has declined, and the opportunities for gaining university entrance have risen in nearly all Länder. At the same time, the Equity and Excellence Monitor shows that the need for action remains imperative. Indeed, the risk of segregating students with special needs remains high, and the chances of most primary and secondary students being provided access to all-day school programs remain slim. For these reasons and others, socioeconomic background continues to factor considerably in shaping success in education. This is true of primary and secondary education alike.

Disparities between the Länder remain considerable. The differences found among them in handling inclusion and all-day education suggests that there is neither a shared understanding of these challenges nor national standards. In end effect, this means that school systems in the Länder vary considerably in providing children and youth fair education opportunities. To be sure, no one system is on all counts either exemplary or utterly inferior.

The 2013 Equity and Excellence Monitor also provides a qualitative analysis of strategies to develop all-day school programs in Germany's Länder. These strategies are part of a larger policy goal targeting improved education for all school-age children.

The Equity and Excellence Monitor is a joint project run by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in cooperation with the Institute for School Development Research at the TU Dortmund and the Institute of Educational Science at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena.