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Chancenspiegel – eine Zwischenbilanz

Zur Chancengerechtigkeit und Leistungsfähigkeit
der deutschen Schulsysteme seit 2002

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6. Abstract

Educational opportunities are life opportunities. However, the chances for pupils to participate in education and attain educational achievement in the school systems of Germany's 16 Federal States differ enormously depending on a pupil's social background and place of residence, as national and international studies in education and school research have been demonstrating for years. Thus, the questions of to what extent do German school systems ensure equal opportunities and of how efficient they are remain relevant. At regular intervals, education reports and school achievement surveys continue to reflect the discrepancies in the distribution of opportunities for educational participation and achievement – despite numerous reforms. The “Chancenspiegel” a project run by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Technical University of Dortmund and Friedrich Schiller University Jena, also seeks to contribute to this debate with what is now the fourth edition of a scientifically-based paper. As a tool for monitoring school systems that is based on data and focused on equal opportunities, the Chancenspiegel draws the attention of scholars and the public to a key social policy goal: reducing institutionally rooted educational inequality.

The Chancenspiegel offers an ongoing and systematic comparison of Germany's 16 different school systems and of their development in the various dimensions of equal opportunities. With the aid of secondary statistical evaluations of data sets produced by public statistics agencies as well as of empirical school achievement surveys, the Chancenspiegel has performed an indicator-based stocktaking of the German education system each year since 2012. The system-related understanding of fairness in the Chancenspiegel derives from selected considerations of school and justice theory. Thus, “equal opportunities” is interpreted as *a fair chance to freely participate in society that is also ensured by a school, as an institution based on fairness, in which pupils do not experience any additional disadvantages owing to their social and natural characteristics, by a fostering of the abilities of all, and by a mutual respect for everyone participating in a school*. The measuring concept of the Chancenspiegel is derived from this basic theoretical understanding. Observations focus on the abilities of school systems to integrate all pupils (dimension of “integration capacity”), to enable them to move on to different types of schools or to switch from one type to another (dimension of “permeability”), to provide good support for skills development among all pupils (dimension of “skills promotion”), and to award degrees that give children and youths the best-possible starting point from which to continue on to their lives ahead (dimension of “certificate award”). With the aid of these four fairness dimensions and the school statistics indicators and analyses they are based on, the 16 German school systems and their developments can be described in a systematic fashion. At the same time, the Federal States are ranked according to their indicator and dimension results in a manner that allows the differences between school systems in terms of levels of equal opportunities to be shown.

This final edition of the report series examines the development trends of the school systems in Germany since the first PISA survey. Immediately following its publication, Germany's Federal States agreed in 2002 on a comprehensive catalogue of measures to optimise educational conditions in schools. Measures such as establishing quality-assurance instruments, raising the provision of full-time schooling, and guaranteeing the right to inclusive education have sparked a lot of change in the German education landscape.

The new *Chancenspiegel* reviews this eventful period and casts light on the changes in the German school systems regarding the four central dimensions of "integration capacity", "permeability", "skills promotion" and "certificate award" since 2002. The statistical time series sometimes demonstrate considerable developmental differences between the school systems of individual Federal States, but it also reflects trends at the federal level. The analyses make it possible to see the specific progress that each state has made towards modernising its school system while also highlighting the need for further development. According to the evaluations, it appears that the school systems are generally headed in the same direction, but that the pace of development can vary significantly. Disparities between the states have increased over the last few years, especially with regard to integration and graduation prospects, but also in terms of skills development among pupils. Based on a comparative survey of school legislation frameworks, the significance of diverging institutional structures has been demonstrated in relation to the provision of equal opportunities by school systems. Such types of observation in school-system monitoring offer those responsible for education policy specific occasions for identifying the causes of unequal educational opportunities and developing specific options for improvement.

Given the findings from the empirical analyses, the *Chancenspiegel* reveals that education policy and research need to further explore the circumstances and impacts of the disparate opportunity-related situations of the states' education systems as part of research into school-system development informed by socio-ecological and institution theory. The aim of this kind of more in-depth research must be to improve equal opportunities among school systems, to enable better access to good education, to promote achievement and to prevent discrimination. It is only in this way that school systems can offer their pupils the best-possible conditions for developing their full potentials.