

Media-Information

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The impact of Corona on schools – initial results of a large-scale survey of school principals: schools are coping well

Initial findings from the KWIK study (Continuity and Change in Schools in Times of Crisis): Based on a survey of school principals in seven German states, the study shows that schools are coping well with the challenges posed by the pandemic. However, it also shows that students with a migration background, special educational needs or social disadvantage require additional support.

The KWIK study - Continuity and Change in Schools in Times of Crisis

With this study, the Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education in Kiel (IPN), the University of Hamburg and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) want to accompany and support schools on a long-term basis in the change process caused by the pandemic. In the summer and early fall of 2020 approximately 800 elementary and lower secondary level school principals were surveyed on schooling in times of the Corona pandemic and on their approaches to solutions in school practice. In order to support the schools participating in the study in their development work, the first scientific findings will be reported back to them this week.

In March 2020, regular school operations were suspended in all federal states due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The closure of the schools and the associated changeover to teaching and learning from home, as well as the resumption of school operations after the several-week break, have stressed the schools in many ways. The renewed school closures in November 2020 presented the schools with further challenges. They had to and must find viable solutions to cope with these exceptional situations. However, dealing with the situation also offers the opportunity to pioneer innovations and to use the experience gained from the crisis for the long-term further development of schools and teaching.

Digital equipment for families: disadvantaged students need support

The information provided by the school principals surveyed can encourage optimism, but it also points to problems. For example, around half of the respondents estimate that a large majority of parents can support their children in learning at home on a digital device. On the other hand, almost two-thirds of the principals surveyed say that they estimate that up

to 20% of students do not have a digital device available for distance learning at home. According to school principals, disadvantaged students are particularly affected. Study director Olaf Köller: "We can see that the more students with a migration background, special educational needs or social disadvantage there are at a school, the more often the school principal estimates that students do not have access to a computer for learning at home. These students need support, for example by being provided with digital devices."

Lockdown experiences: communication was maintained, students were being reached by schools

According to the interviewed principals, communication during the school closure in spring 2020 largely functioned smoothly, both within the teaching staff and with the parent body and students. Elementary schools tended to focus more on core subjects when providing instructional materials, while lower secondary schools tried to serve as many subjects as possible. Elementary schools tended to use analog routes to deliver instructional materials (teachers dropping off materials, sending them by mail, or children picking them up from school), while lower secondary schools more often used digital routes such as data exchange portals or sending them by email. Just under 40% of the principals surveyed indicate that all students were reached, and just under half of the respondents indicate that 90% were reached. Only 3.6% of principals say that less than 80% of students were reached. Köller: "Once again, the correlation with students' family background is reflected in the findings. The more socially disadvantaged students there are at a school, the greater the proportion of those who could not be reached by teachers. The same applies to children with an immigrant background."

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After the first lockdown: schools make up for learning losses with additional learning opportunities

After the schools reopened, many schools provided students with additional opportunities to compensate for the learning losses suffered during the lockdown. The additional programs offered by elementary school primarily targeted disadvantaged students, while lower-secondary schools increasingly made offers to support students with low IT skills.

Schools were well prepared for the second lockdown

Almost all (97%) of the principals surveyed say they had prepared for another lockdown after the first pandemic-related school closure, and 94% (lower secondary) and 84%

(primary) say they have prepared for further periods of distance learning. According to Olaf Köller, "these findings give cause for optimism that schools will also come through the difficult period in spring and summer 2021 well".

Commenting on the results of the KWiK study, Dr. Dirk Hastedt, IEA Executive Director, said: "While the pandemic is an extraordinary challenge for schools and teachers, it is encouraging to see a number of positive results in this study. Communication has never been more important, so it is especially reassuring to see that the majority of students could be reached while schools were closed. However, KWiK also underlines select groups of students who are not as well equipped with digital media and were less likely to be reached. Providing additional support for these students when reopening schools can help to prevent learning losses, as well as expanding the digital infrastructure and computers, in order to be well prepared for future disruptions."

What's next for KWiK: What's still to come

Evaluations of the open questions in the questionnaire for school principals will follow shortly. In a further step, the study will be extended to teachers and, if necessary, to students and their parents.

The KWiK study is a joint project of the IPN - Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (Prof. Dr. Olaf Köller), the University of Hamburg (Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Ingrid Gogolin) and the IEA - International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (Dr. Dirk Hastedt).

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