Two decades of decentralization in education governance: Lessons learned and future outlook for local stakeholders

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NRW beendet „Bildungskrieg“ mit neuer Schulform


Düsseldorf. Mit einer neuen Schulform beenden die rot-grüne Ministerialregierung und die CDU einen Jahrzehnte danach streit um das Schulsystem in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Nach mehrwöchigen Spitzengesprächen einigten sich beide Lager darauf, eine schülerübergreifende „Sekundarschule“ ohne eigene Oberstufe für die Klassen 5 bis 10 einzuhalten.

„Wir haben für Nordrhein-Westfalen einen Schultypus für die nächsten zehn Jahre geschaffen“, sagte die Ministerpräsidentin und SPD-Landesvorsitzende Hanfhofer Kraft (SPD) am Dienstag in Düsseldorf, der CDU-Landesvorsitzende, Bundesvorsitzender Norbert Röttger, betonte, mit dem Kompromiss werde das gegenwärtige Schulsystem belassen und verhaftungsmäßig abgesicherter, „Es wird definitiv in Nordrhein-Westfalen keine Einheitschule geben.“ Er gehe davon aus, dass der Konsens über NRW hinaus Bedeutung erlangen werde.

Vertreter der Verhandlungsparteien und mehrere Lehrerverbände sprachen von einem „historischen Kompromiss nach Jahrzehnten ideologischem Streit“. Kraft räumte ein: „Jeder hat Kosten schlecht machen müssen.“
Introduction and overview

- Decentralization of education: A global trend!? 
- Commonalities and differences across countries 
- Historical and political context: Why decentralization? 
- Pros and Cons of decentralization 
- What comes next? 
  From the local back to the national level? 
  From outputs back to inputs? → Teacher training and education 
  New ways of thinking about accountability → Social inclusion, employability and social capital
Global trend towards decentralization

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>+ 54.1</td>
<td>+ 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>+ 47.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>- 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>+ 46.7</td>
<td>+ 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>+ 1.9</td>
<td>- 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>- 4.3</td>
<td>+ 5</td>
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Convergence and catch-up
Commonalities across nations

- Increasing the role of local stakeholders
- From hierarchical, input-oriented governance modes to output-oriented steering from a distance
- New forms of accountability and competition

→ But: different dimensions of decentralization: administrative, fiscal, political
→ Deconcentration
→ Deregulation
→ Privatization
National flavors of decentralization

- Limited decentralization, focus on administrative dimension (ex. France)
- Cooperative model (examples: Scandinavian countries)
- Voluntaristic model (examples: UK, US)
- Federalist countries: „double movement“: strengthening the role of schools as well as the central level

Historical and political context

- Education system embedded in political economy and welfare state
- Decentralization of education runs parallel to...
  ...liberalization of labor market policies
  ..."recalibration" of welfare state benefits
  ...general shift from state to market provision of services
  ...but also: expansion of family policies (early childhood education), service dimension of the welfare state, „social investments“

→ Is this a coincidence or is there a deeper causality at work?
Explanations

- Neoliberal ideology
- Long-term historical dynamics of welfare capitalism
  Regulation: creation of national education systems
  Popular demand for deregulation and decentralization
  negative side effects lead to re-regulation
- Popular demand for decentralization
  opposition to bureaucratization, capture by special interests, inefficiencies, inequities, etc.
- Structure of organized interests explains whether decentralization reforms are successful or not
Pro decentralization

- Better fit between schools and local demands, more choice for families
- Local level has information advantage
- Promoting participation and democracy at the local level, prevents capture of national institutions by special interests
- Enhances efficiency of provision because localities compete with each other
Contra decentralization

- Not less, but more bureaucracy
- Local institutions can also be captured by special interests
- Administrative “overload” on the local level
- Competition might have deleterious consequences in terms of costs
- “Gaming” of the system when performance standards are set at the distant national level
- Impact on educational performance remains unclear
- Negative externalities: increasing stratification
School autonomy and educational inequality

The graph illustrates the relationship between school autonomy and educational inequality across different countries. The x-axis represents school autonomy (2006) ranging from 50 to 100, while the y-axis represents educational inequality also ranging from 30 to 50. Countries such as New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Australia, Spain, and Portugal are plotted on the graph. The data suggests a positive correlation between school autonomy and educational inequality, indicating that as school autonomy increases, educational inequality tends to increase as well.
School autonomy and educational performance

![Graph showing the relationship between school autonomy and educational performance among different countries. The graph includes points for countries such as Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, and Spain. The x-axis represents school autonomy (2006) ranging from 50 to 100, and the y-axis represents educational performance (PISA Reading Score) ranging from 480 to 540. A positive correlation is observed between school autonomy and educational performance.]
What comes next?

From decentralization to re-centralization?

- National standards/curriculum
- Collective wage bargaining over teacher pay
- Infrastructure investments
- Expansion of underdeveloped sectors of education system (i.e. early childhood education)
What comes next? (II)

From outputs back to inputs? Reforming teacher training and education

- Increasing the attractiveness of teaching profession
- Increasing the permeability between teaching and other kinds of employment
  → improving the link between education and the world of work
- Reviving trust in professional educators
What comes next? (III)

*New forms of accountability*

- Focus on educational performance too narrow
- Additional dimensions:
  - social inclusion
  - connection to world of work
  - connection to local community

→ Revival of community model of accountability?
Social capital and educational performance

Social capital and education in international comparison: General trust
Social capital and education: Membership in civil society associations
Community Accountability

Social Capital

Educational Performance
Thanks for your attention!