OECD Education Working Papers No. 113

Reforming Education Governance Through Local Capacity-building: A Case Study of the "Learning Locally" Programme in Germany

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https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js6bhl2mxjg-en

OECD

Unclassified **EDU/WKP(2015)2**

Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économiques
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development **09-Feb-2015**

English - Or. English

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

EDU/WKP(2015)2
Unclassified

Cancels & replaces the same document of 30 January 2015

REFORMING EDUCATION GOVERNANCE THROUGH LOCAL CAPACITY-BUILDING: A CASE STUDY OF THE "Learning Locally" PROGRAMME IN GERMANY

Education Working Paper No. 113

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JT03370305

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ABSTRACT

This report is an assessment of the programme "Lernen vor Ort" [LvO – "Learning Locally"] initiated by the German federal government in order to support the development of local governance structures in education. LvO ran between 2009 and 2014 in about 40 participating local governments, which were chosen in a competitive process. It aimed at promoting cooperation between local governments and civil society stakeholders, creating sustainable structures in educational monitoring, management and consulting as well as improving local capacities in knowledge management. Besides providing important background information on the German education system and the design of the LvO programme, this study engages in five detailed case studies of the implementation of the LvO programme in different local authorities. These studies are mainly based on approximately 90 interviews with local and national experts, and stakeholders. The main findings are that LvO can be regarded as a success due to the fact that it had a lasting and probably sustainable impact in the cases studied in this report, in particular with regard to those structures that produce concrete and visible outputs, such as educational monitoring. The case studies also reveal a number of local factors that influence the relative effectiveness of the implementation of the programme. Political leadership and support from the head of the local government are crucial, in particular during critical situations during the implementation. Furthermore, the impact of the programme was particularly positive, when the process of local implementation was characterised by clear communication strategies, broad stakeholder involvement in governing bodies and the implementation of concrete goals and projects. However, relative success also depended on important background factors such as local socio-economic conditions as well as financial and administrative capacities, which could not be adressed directly by the programme's goals. The report concludes with some general recommendations and lessons learned of relevance for other countries.

RÉSUMÉ

Par le biais de l'initiative « Lernen-vor-Ort (LvO)» (« Apprentissage local »), le niveau central en Allemagne a lancé un programme politique d'envergure en 2009, qui vise à renforcer la gestion de l'éducation au niveau local. Active entre les années 2009-2014, environs 40 communes participaient à LvO. Le programme vise à promouvoir la collaboration entre les gouvernements locaux et les organisations de la société civile, et la création des structures viables pour améliorer le suivi pédagogique. Par ailleurs, l'organisation du programme facilite la création d'un nouveau système de connaissances dans l'éducation et l'amélioration de la capacité locale dans ce domaine. Le programme LvO peut être considéré comme une réussite car il a eu des répercussions durables et probablement pérennes au niveau de structures comme le suivi pédagogique. Le leadership politique et le soutien apporté par les collectivités locales constituent d'importants facteurs de réussite. L'incidence de ce programme a été particulièrement marquée au moment où la mise en place au niveau local s'est traduite par des stratégies de communication claires, une large implication des parties prenantes dans la direction des organes et la concrétisation des objectifs et des projets. Son succès a néanmoins été lié à d'importants facteurs comme les conditions socio-économiques locales ainsi que les capacités financières et administratives, qui ne pouvaient pas être abordées directement dans le contexte des objectifs du programme. Le rapport conclut avec des recommandations d'ordre général et les leçons pertinentes que d'autre pays peuvent en tirer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Within the OECD Secretariat, the authors would like to thank Tracey Burns and Harald Wilkoszewski for the coordination of this report, Patrick Blanchenay and Florian Köster for comments on earlier drafts, and Leonora Lynch-Stein for editorial support. The authors would also like to thank Friederike Strub and Susanna Haastert, who supported research for this report as student assistants. Moreover, the authors would like to thank the interviewees at the national and local level in Germany for their cooperation and willingness to provide first-hand insights into the LvO programme.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BA	*Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (Federal Employment Agency)
BLK	*Bund-Länder Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung* (Joint Commission for Educational Planning and Research Support)
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research)
BMFSFJ	Bunesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugendliche (Federal Ministry of Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youths)
BR	Bildungsregion (educational region)
DIE	*Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung* (German Institute for Adult Education)
DIPF	*Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung* (German Institute for International Pedagogical Research)
DLR	Deutsches Luft- und Raumfahrtzentrum (German Aerospace Center)
ESF	European Social Fund
GCES	GCES – Governing Complex Education Sytems
GC	Governing Circle
IQB	*Institut für Qualitätssicherung im Bildungswesen* (Institute for Quality Assurance in Education)
KMK	*Kultusministerkonferenz* (Conference for State Ministers of Culture)
LEIF	*Lernen erleben in Freiburg* (Experiencing Learning in Freiburg)
LR	*Lernende Regionen* (Learning regions)
LvO	Lernen vor Ort ("Learning Locally")
PT-DLR	Projektträger im DLR (project administration body in the DLR)
QUIMS	*Qualität in multikulturellen Schulen und Stadtteilen* [quality in multicultural schools and city districts]
RB	*Regionales Bildungsbüro* (regional education office)
RBN	*Regionale Bildungsnetzwerke* (regional educational networks)
SG	Steering group
VET	Vocational education and training
WG	Working groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governing complex education systems is a challenge that affects many countries. This case study provides an assessment of the programme "Lernen vor Ort" [LvO – "Learning Locally"] enacted by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research as an example of a policy instrument based on the principle of voluntary cooperation between different stakeholders. LvO runs in two phases from September 2009 until August 2014 and provides 100 Million Euro to 40 local governments and to 35 local governments in the second phase. Its goals are to support the development of networks between local administrations and civil society actors as well as local capacity-building with a focus on educational monitoring, management and consulting. Districts and cities had to compete for funding. The funding decision was based on the quality of the proposal, ranked by a jury of experts from the federal administration and civil society. A specific characteristic of LvO is that it promotes cooperation between local administrations and non-profit philanthropic foundations at the local and the national level. Furthermore, LvO rewarded strong political commitment to the goals of the programme in the application phase as a means to ensure the sustainability of the established structures and processes beyond the end of the funding period.

This study identifies factors at the local level which explain why the implementation of the programme was more successful in some localities compared to others. It also provides an assessment on the effectiveness and limitations of the programme as a whole. The most important empirical foundation of this study are 89 expert interviews conducted with relevant actors and stakeholders on the federal level as well as in five localities, which are studied in detail within-case studies. The interview partners were bureaucrats, politicians, and representatives of different groups of stakeholders in the education system such as foundations, organised interests or educational providers.

Key findings

In general, the voluntary and bottom-up approach exemplified by LvO can be an effective policy instrument to promote change at the local level. Given the legal limitations and the limited budget of the programme, its effects on local governance structures are impressive. The most sustainable effect of the programme will likely be seen in the field of educational monitoring, because this produced concrete and visible outputs in the form of educational reports.

The case studies reveal a number of local factors that influence the effectiveness of the implementation of the programme. Political leadership and support from the head of the local government play an important role, in particular during critical situations in the implementation phase. The impact of the programme was particularly positive, when the process of local implementation was characterised by clear communication strategies, broad stakeholder involvement in governing bodies and the implementation of concrete goals and projects. Further factors were local socio-economic background conditions, financial and administrative capacities, previous experiences with educational monitoring and management, the presence of a culture of cooperation and the differences in political structures and institutions at the municipal level.

Given the importance of local conditions, a continued concern are growing disparities between localities with regard to their capacities for educational monitoring and management. Furthermore, even though the programme design of LvO required local governments to commit to continue funding after the end of the programme period, the issue of sustainability is still a challenge in many local governments. Finally, capacity-building for educational monitoring needs to be accompanied by the development of a usage culture for quantitative data. In Germany at least, many stakeholders are not yet used to new forms

of accountability that go along with the introduction of educational monitoring, which may trigger anxieties and lead to conflicts.

Recommendations

Based on the case studies, the following recommendations related to the use of voluntary policy instruments such as LvO in decentralised education systems are developed:

- Let local governments compete for funding: This helps to mobilise political support. Excellency of submitted proposals should be decisive, but attention should also be paid to differences in starting conditions across localities.

- Create governance structures that are both inclusive and effective: The broad inclusion of stakeholders helps to generate legitimacy and political support. But governance structures also need to allow for effective decision-making. Most LvO districts and cities developed a set of institutions that allowed for both.

- Clearly define responsibilities and ensure accountability to multiple stakeholders: It is important to avoid ambiguities and uncertainty about the goals of the programme and the specific roles that actors ought to play.

- Create mixed and diverse project teams: Project teams responsible for the implementation of a particular policy programme should bring together locals with strong connections to the local level as well as external hires, who can bring in new perspectives and ideas.

- Produce visible outputs, e.g. in the form of educational reports and concrete projects: Visible outputs help to create legitimacy and political support for the programme at the local level. Making available new data on the state of local education systems helps to identify particular problems and can serve as a viable basis for policy deliberation and public debates. Concrete cooperation projects between administrative and non-state actors further help to mobilise support.

- Make use of different kinds of knowledge: Statistical data and scientific knowledge created by educational monitoring and reporting should be complemented with other types of knowledge, in particular practitioner knowledge. The development of a usage culture for quantitative data is important to allay anxieties among local stakeholders and to increase political legitimacy for evidence-based policy-making.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The project *Governing Complex Education Systems* [GCES] of the OECD analyses the new challenges that have emerged for the governance of education in most economically developed democracies, which can be subsumed under the label of "increased complexity", that is associated with a stronger need for data and comparative indicators on the relative performance of schools and local education systems, i.e. educational monitoring (Fazekas and Burns 2012). The trend towards increasing complexity is often accompanied by a general trend towards the decentralisation of decision-making authority and accountability from the national to the local level. In light of this process, the crucial question is how policy priorities and objectives, set at the central level, can be promoted at the local level under the conditions of increasing complexity. This question is at the core of the OECD's *Governing Complex Education Systems* [GCES] project that focuses on *governance mechanisms* and *knowledge options* as two core dimensions of multi-level governance in education that are key elements in the more general challenge of "governing complex societies" (Pierre and Peters, 2005).

Against this background, the "*Lernen vor Ort"* [LvO – "Learning Locally"] programme enacted by the German federal government is the focus of this study. The programme intends to support local governments in building capacities for education monitoring and management as well as creating sustainable networks between local administrations and civil society actors. The LvO programme ran from September 2009 until August 2014 in two phases and provided a total sum of 100 Million Euro to support local districts and municipalities in setting up network structures and developing capacities. Districts and municipalities had to compete for funding and their participation is entirely voluntary. Forty cities and districts were chosen in the first phase and 35 were chosen in the second phase in a process that centred on the excellence of submitted proposals and involved a jury of experts from the administration and the civil society. The programme did not change the formal distribution of competencies between different levels of government, although it has supported reforms of structures within local administrations. LvO supported four core fields of activity (local education management, local educational monitoring, educational consulting and management of transition processes) that could be complemented by different further fields of activity depending on local needs. An innovative element is that LvO required participating localities to cooperate intensely with philanthropic foundations by involving them in local governance structures of the programme. Furthermore, LvO aimed at mobilising the political support of the heads of local government by allowing only local governments to submit proposals (and not other local institutions) with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of programme elements beyond the end of the official funding period.

Overall, the LvO programme is a good example of a specific policy tool that central governments can use to promote change at the local level. In particular, when formal decision-making power is limited as it is in the case of the German federal government in education policy, the central government can set up competitive funding schemes on a model or experimental basis, which can be taken up by local governments voluntarily. This study provides insights into the effectiveness of this voluntary approach to supporting local governments in improving steering capacities, which are relevant for other federalist countries with a similar set of political institutions. The study also identifies a set of critical factors at the local level that contribute to or prevent a successful implementation.

The report is structured as follows. The first introductory chapter identifies the main research questions and explains the theoretical and methodological approach. Chapter 2 provides some background on the broader context of education policy-making and governance in Germany. Chapter 3 provides details on the LvO programme more specifically, its development history, its design and goals as well as a discussion of problems and challenges during the implementation phase. Chapter 4 looks at the implementation of the programme in five selected districts and cities. The empirical basis for chapters three and four are 89 expert interviews with national and local stakeholders and policy-experts conducted between 29 November 2013 and 7 February 2014 (see Annex A for details), which are complemented with an analysis of relevant policy documents and secondary sources. Chapter five is a comparative analysis and synthesis of the main findings of the empirical analysis. The final chapter broadens the discussion by drawing general lessons and presenting recommendations of relevance for policy-makers in other countries.

Research questions and theoretical approach

In the last few decades, there has been an upsurge of publications on the topic of *governance*. This trend in academic publications is related to actual changes in the policy-making process in many countries (Benz 2010; Benz and Dose 2010; Fürst 2010; for the case of education: Altrichter et al. 2012; Brüsemeister 2011; Dedering 2010; Kussau and Brüsemeister 2007). Previously, hierarchical forms of government which dominated new modes of governance are often based on the horizontal cooperation between governmental and civil society (non-state) actors. This is because cooperative modes of network-centred governance are believed to be more effective in dealing with the complex problem structures to be found in advanced democracies.

The present study draws on the governance concept developed by Pierre and Peters (2005), which has the main benefit that it integrates the pivotal role of the state in governing (especially for conflict resolution and resource allocation) with the steering capacities that can be developed by rather loose networks of actors (ibid. 3). Following their approach, governance can be said to consist of four key activities (ibid. 2-6):

- articulating a common set of priorities for society (goal selection and decision-making): mechanisms to decide upon collective and legitimate priorities;
- coherence: the coordination and consistency of policy goals;
- steering: mechanisms and instruments for goal attainment such as provision, regulation, subsidies, private-public partnerships, etc;
- accountability: the possibility to hold governing actors accountable for their actions and decisions.

While these key activities all require a rather high level of institutional capacity (Weaver and Rockman 1993) in terms of financial resources, staff and access to information as well as trust by the general public, the division of responsibilities between state and private actors in the performance of these tasks is not *per se* a given. Thus, a relevant question for the present study is the distribution of power between state and non-state actors in the decision-making process and the implementation of LvO, especially since the participating districts and cities had some leeway in designing their local governance structures.

A second related question is which *kinds of knowledge* are produced by and circulated between different stakeholders (politicians, bureaucrats, organised interests, individual citizens). These types of knowledge are by no means mutually exclusive but rather co-exist within a local education system. Examples are:

- knowledge from international and national accountability systems (e. g. indicators, results of standardised tests);
- knowledge from local accountability systems (e. g. education monitoring within LvO, local indicators);
- knowledge of local politicians, bureaucracy, organised interests, media (context);
- knowledge from educational research, practitioner knowledge.

This study pays particular attention to the interplay between knowledge on the part of governmental actors and practitioner knowledge held by non-governmental stakeholders in a local education system (such as unions, employer organisations, foundations, non-state education providers, and education practitioners). Here, the central questions are which effects LvO had on the emergence of new knowledge and whether LvO changed practices in the use of different types of knowledge.

In other words, the study analyses the extent to which LvO contributed to *capacity-building*, which refers to the process of learning and knowledge production of different stakeholders in education governance and the institutionalisation of decision-making structures for local education policy (Fazekas and Burns 2012). Establishing capacities for educational monitoring is a concrete example for this process, although it is of course not the only one. Rauschenbach and Döbert (2008: 938) provide a succinct definition of the purpose and goal of educational monitoring (see also: Altrichter 2010; Döbert and Klieme 2009; Döbert 2010a, b; Döbert and Weishaupt 2012; Rürüp et al. 2010): "The goal of continuous and effective educational reporting is the observation of the education system of a nation, a state or a region on the basis of reliable data which allows to evaluate the current state of affairs from the system's perspective and to describe and highlight developments over time. Educational monitoring in general should increase the transparency of an education system in a particular territory, and by doing so create a foundation for public debates about the goals of education and educational decision-making." (Rauschenbach and Döbert 2008: 938, authors' translation). Thus, the primary goal of educational monitoring and reporting is to improve the factual basis for educational decisions and public debates. The actual decisions are still political, i.e. reflect the prevailing dominance of certain values or political coalitions (Brüsemeister 2007; Döbert 2010). Still, establishing a common knowledge can help to create consensus among stakeholders about necessary reforms (Lijphart 1999; Culpepper 2008).

To sum up, building on the broad literature on education and the governance of complex societies (Pierre and Peters 2005, for education see: Hooge et al. 2012; Fazekas and Burns 2012; Keep 2006) and the framework for case studies in the GCES project more specifically (Burns and Wilkoszewski n.d.), this study focuses on two aspects: governance structures (in terms of priority-setting, steering and accountability) and the use of different types of knowledge. This framework has been applied successfully in two case studies of the Norwegian and the Dutch education system (Hopfenbeck et al. 2013; Van Twist et al. 2013).

In particular, there are two sets of research questions. The first set aims at describing and explaining differences in the implementation of LvO in five selected cases. This will help to identify factors on the local level that influence the relative success of the programme's implementation. In describing differences in the implementation, the following aspects are crucial:

- Which actors were involved and influential in setting priorities and defining goals in the application and implementation phases?
- Which governance structures were established in the implementation phase in order to enhance capacities for steering, management and educational monitoring?
- Which stakeholders were involved in the process of implementation and which forms of accountability developed?
- Which types of knowledge were used and to what extent did the establishment of educational monitoring change practices in the use of knowledge?
- What was the role of political leadership and support? Which factors explain why political support may differ across cases?
- Which forms of cooperation between local administrations and civil society actors developed?

The second set of questions to be addressed in this study relates to the LvO programme as a whole:

- Was the programme an effective instrument to promote educational monitoring and management at the local level?
- Will the structures and institutions established during the funding period be sustainable beyond the funding period?
- Which broader lessons can be drawn for other countries with similar education systems?

Methodology

This study provides an assessment of the effectiveness of LvO as an instrument of central steering as well as an analysis of the factors conditioning the relative success of the implementation of the programme at the local level. For the latter five cases out of the total group of currently 35 participating districts and cities were selected for an in-depth analysis. This selection is based on the strategy of selecting "typical cases" (Gerring, 2007), i.e. cases that, taken as a whole, can be regarded as a representative of the whole universe of cases, based on a number of variables. Of course, representativeness should not be understood in a strict statistical sense here. More specifically, the variables used in the process of case selection refer to *challenges* for local education policy-making on the one hand and as *resources* on the other. Challenges are captured, for example, by the population share of the elderly, population density, the number of pupils and unemployment ratios. Examples for resources are differences in the availability of educational opportunities, GDP per capita and public debt per capita. Furthermore, the selected cases have different political institutions (urban and rural districts, municipalities and city-states). Based on these criteria, the selected cases are the city-state of Bremen, the urban district of Freiburg, the city of Leipzig, the rural district of Mühldorf am Inn and the rural district of Recklinghausen. The structural characteristics of each case will be discussed in Chapter 4 and additional data can be found in Annex D.

The interview partners were identified with a double strategy that consisted of *(i)* an official request for the identification of relevant interview partners submitted to the BMBF (the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) and the selected local governments and *(ii)* the identification of relevant interview partners from secondary sources and policy documents. Furthermore, the interviewees were selected on the basis of their involvement in the project (e.g. whether they were part of the project team or the local administration or whether they were only loosely affiliated), their responsibilities within the project (constant vs. temporarily limited contributions) and their organisational background (local administration vs. civil society). On request, interviewees could get access to the questions of the GCES framework. Once the contact was established, almost all potential partners agreed to be interviewed, i.e. the response rate was close to 100 per cent. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Annex B). In order to protect the anonymity of interview partners and to encourage more open discussions about problems with LvO during the interview process, this report does not provide details on the responsibilities of the interviewees and only differentiates in terms of organisational background (local administration including politicians vs. civil society).

Although the empirical foundation for this report is broad, there are methodological limitations. First, there were no interviews in districts and cities that did not participate in LvO. It might be the case that (at least some of) these have also managed to create capacities for local educational monitoring and management without the support of the BMBF programme. Second, none of the five districts and cities that were funded only in the first phase of the programme (2009-2012) were analysed.[1] Understanding why these cases dropped out of the programme after the first phase could have identified additional factors explaining relative success and failure. Third, because the focus is only on participating local authorities, the study might have a "selection bias": The successful application for funding from LvO is already an indicator of superior preconditions for a successful implementation of the programme. With these limitations in mind, the detailed in-depth case studies should still yield important insights into the mechanisms explaining relative success and failure of the programme.

[1] Forty districts and cities participated in the first phase of the programme; four of those decided to not submit a funding application for the second phase, which does not necessarily imply that efforts in local education government reforms ended after 2012. The loss of another "case" in the programme resulted from a merger between two local districts that had participated in the first phase.

CHAPTER 2: EDUCATION IN GERMANY: CONTEXT AND GOVERNANCE

The governance of Germany's education system is a highly complex endeavour. Legal competencies and policy-making powers are distributed across different levels of government, reaching from the local level, via the regional level of the states (in German *Länder*), to the federal level. Therefore, the various levels of government usually cannot act independently from each other but instead need to coordinate with their counterparts. The distribution of competencies also varies across the different sectors of the education system. Finally, there are large social and economic differences between the German states.

The following section provides relevant background information on the socio-economic and institutional context in which education governance takes place in Germany. The first subsection presents socio-economic and demographic data for the German states, followed by a description of the complex institutional regime of education policy-making in German federalism. The chapter concludes with a brief review of recent changes and reforms in the system that have strengthened the regional perspective in educational governance, a perspective of which the programme *"Lernen vor Ort"* is a prime example.

The socio-economic and legal context of education policy-making in German federalism

There is huge variation in the demographic, social and economic conditions across the 16 states in terms of population size and density, GDP per capita, demographic challenges and educational performance (measured by average scores in the PISA-E study, which is a follow-up study of PISA focusing on differences between states within Germany, see Prenzel et al. 2008). Table 2.1 (on the next page) provides detailed data on these variables. Although more recent data are available, 2008 data was used in order to reflect the state of background conditions when LvO started.

The distribution of legal competencies between the federal, regional and local level is stipulated in Germany's Basic Law (in German *Grundgesetz*). Education is one of the few policy fields in which the regions have far-reaching competencies, which were even expanded in the last significant reform of the federalist constitution in 2006 (see Figure 2.1). In terms of political institutions, there are significant difference between the city-states (Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin) on the one hand and the remaining thirteen states. The city-states are in effect both municipal and state governments, i.e. their territory is largely restricted to the boundaries of the respective city. The other states are also called *Flächenländer*, best translated as "area states", because their territory encompasses a larger area, including large and small cities.

As mentioned above, the governance structure of education in German federalism is highly complex (see Hepp 2011 for a general overview). The Basic Law stipulates that states are free to pursue their own policies, unless it is specifically regulated differently in the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz* Art. 70 (1)). In reality, though, the ability of state governments to do so is constrained significantly.

One such constraint is the necessity of states to work with the federal government to varying degrees across policy fields. In general, states have much more autonomy in education policy compared to other areas, and a far-reaching reform of the federalist constitution in 2006 formally delegated even more decision-making powers to the *Länder* (e.g. in the area of higher education). Today, as a consequence of this reform, education policy is almost exclusively in the hands of state governments. The federal government only retains some competencies to regulate the firm-based part of the dual apprenticeship system in vocational education and training (VET) and admission to universities (Basic Law Art. 75 (1)).

Table 2.1: Information on the demographic, social and economic background in the German states

State	GDP per capita (€)	Number of students (per 1000 inhabitants)	Rate of public childcare for under 3-year olds	Population Density	Population share of elderly (aged 65+)	Debt per capita	Unemploy-ment (% of civilian labour force)	Pisa-E 2006 (Natural sciences)	Pisa-E 2006 (Reading)	Pisa –E 2006 (Mathematics)
Baden-Württemberg	*33661*	*118.1*	*13,6*	*301*	*19,25*	*3880*	*4,6*	*523*	*500*	*516*
Bayern	*34968*	*114.3*	*13,2*	*177*	*19,36*	*1767*	*4,8*	*533*	*511*	*522*
Berlin	26241	95.5	40,4	3849	18,77	16307	16,1	508	488	495
Brandenburg	21620	86.6	44,8	86	21,98	6792	14,5	514	486	500
Bremen	*41254*	*105.4*	*12,7*	*1637*	*21,37*	*23082*	*12,6*	*485*	*474*	*478*
Hamburg	48716	102.8	20,1	2347	18,81	12199	9,4	497	476	488
Hessen	36306	111.9	14,2	287	19,82	5038	7,4	507	492	500
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	21570	77.1	44,9	72	21,70	5958	15,5	515	480	500
Niedersachsen	26827	120.1	9,1	167	20,61	6318	8,6	506	484	489
Nordrhein-Westfalen	*30501*	*123.0*	*9,3*	*526*	*20,16*	*6335*	*9,4*	*503*	*490*	*493*
Rheinland-Pfalz	26234	116.5	15,0	203	20,49	6713	6,3	516	499	500
Saarland	29668	102.5	14,1	401	21,96	9215	8,0	512	497	498
Sachsen	*22578*	*72.6*	*36,5*	*228*	*24,14*	*2286*	*14,3*	*541*	*512*	*523*
Sachsen-Anhalt	22111	74.1	52,7	116	23,73	8316	15,3	518	487	499
Schleswig-Holstein	26105	116.5	11,6	179	21,26	7893	8,6	510	485	497
Thüringen	21814	76.0	38,9	140	22,60	6755	12,4	530	500	509
Average	29386	100,81	24,45	669,75	21,01	8053	10,49	513,63	491,31	500,44

Sources: Authors' calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt (Statistisches Jahrbuch 2009) and Prenzel et al. (2008) for PISA-E **results**

Notes: Federal states, in which the selected cases for this study are located, are set in italics, data are for the year 2008, as this is the year in which the *Lernen vor Ort* Programme was conceived.

Furthermore, the federal government may cooperate with states to finance large-scale investments in machines and buildings in higher education and non-university research as well as in providing "assessments to evaluate the performance of the education system in international comparison" (Basic Law Art. 91b (2)). In essence, however, the German constitution is fairly strict in containing most of the competencies in education policy to the states: direct cooperation between state governments and the federal level is formally prohibited, although this can in fact be circumvented to a certain extent.

A second constraint on the actions of states in education policy is horizontal coordination between the states. This happens on a voluntary basis and has therefore been interpreted as an indication of a cultural preference for federal (centralised or coordinated) approaches to education policy despite the federalist constitutional structure (Erk 2003; Wolf 2006). The central institution of horizontal coordination is the Permanent Conference of Ministers of Education and Culture [in German *Kultusministerkonferenz* or *KMK*). The *KMK* is a voluntary association of the education ministers of state governments. Its primary

purpose is to develop recommendations that are not legally binding and need to be implemented in the state parliaments in order to become law.[2]

Because of its voluntary character, the *KMK* is often criticised for being inefficient (Immerfall 2010). Until recently, decisions were taken unanimously, potentially contributing to lowest-common-denominator policies.

Figure 2.1: The basic structure of the German administrative system

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Federal Government (Bund)</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Area states (Flächenländer)</td><td rowspan="3">City states (Stadtstaaten)</td></tr>
<tr><td>(Rural) districts (Kreise)</td><td rowspan="2">Urban districts (kreisfreie Städte)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Municipalities (Gemeinden)</td></tr>
</table>

What is the role of municipalities and local governments in education policy-making? The situation differs somewhat between the city-states on the one hand and the remaining states on the other (Figure 2.1 presents an overview of the structure of the administrative system in Germany). In the city-states, potential conflicts of interest are muted, because the municipal government and the state government are essentially the same. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest. In the non-city states, there are generally two different kinds of local governments: cities or urban districts on the one hand [*kreisfreie Städte*] and (rural) districts [(*Land)Kreise*] on the other. Rural districts then have another level of local government: municipalities. Thus, the number of levels and actors involved in educational governance may vary across regions and states.

In principle, municipalities have few formal competencies in education. They are responsible for "external school affairs", i.e. basically to maintain school buildings and pay the janitor. In cities, the responsibility for schools lies in the hands of the city government. In districts, however, the district level may be in charge of running schools in some states, whereas in others, the municipalities in a district are in charge and the district level is only responsible for some types of schools.

"Internal school affairs" remain in the hands of state governments. This concerns the employment of teachers, design of school curricula, teacher training and other matters related to the quality of education. In short, municipalities are responsible for bricks and mortar, whereas the *Länder* are in charge of teaching and education. For the most part neither municipalities nor individual schools can decide whom to hire or what to teach. The hiring and training of teachers is in the hands of state-level agencies and bureaucracies, which allocate teachers to schools from the central state level. The centralisation of personnel authority at the *Land* level also implies that movement of teachers across state borders is difficult, because training standards are not exactly compatible.

The PISA shock and the development of regional perspectives in education governance

The publication of the results of the first round of PISA in the year 2000 triggered a major debate on the state of education in Germany. Commonly known as the "PISA shock", both policy-makers and the

[2] Still, the KMK has played a hugely important role in harmonising the structure of education systems and has issued several hundred such recommendations on all sectors of the education system over the years, which are regularly implemented in the individual states. Important decisions include the *Düsseldorfer Abkommen* (1955) and the *Hamburger Abkommen* (1964) that laid the institutional foundations for the three-tiered structure of secondary education.

public at large were surprised about the dismal performance of German pupils compared to other countries. Another surprising discovery: the German education system was found to cause high levels of educational inequality and stratification.

The "PISA shock" opened up a window of opportunity for significant reforms. It became an important instrument in breaking the stalemate of lowest-common-denominator policies, even though policy-makers might also have used PISA to justify and legitimise reforms that were bound to happen anyway, or were only loosely related to the topic. For example, all states – except Rhineland-Palatinate – have now shortened the period of schooling in the top academic tier of the segmented secondary school system [the *Gymnasium*] from nine to eight years, although there are already discussions about moving back to nine years. Many states also moved forward with changing the institutional structure of their secondary education systems by merging the two lowest tiers [*Hauptschule* and *Realschule*] into new types of partly comprehensive schools. These changes were partly motivated by practical concerns, as it is too expensive to maintain three different types of schools in rural areas; at the same time the success of PISA in countries with comprehensive secondary school systems, such as Finland, has also played a role.

Furthermore, spurred by the PISA shock, the *KMK* issued a series of important decisions, and initiated reforms in the governance regime as a whole. For some, this policy change signalled a paradigmatic shift (Altrichter and Maag Merki 2010; Baumert and Füssel 2012). In 1997, the *KMK* decided to let the German education system be evaluated scientifically in international comparisons such as PISA. Since 2003, the *KMK* followed up by developing common national education standards for the most important subjects for different grades. The Institute for Quality Assurance in Education [*Institut für Qualitätssicherung im Bildungswesen IQB*] was established in 2003, and charged with administering and improving these tests. The introduction of tests to measure the performance of schools, students and teachers signalled a turn away from the input-oriented character of the old system towards output-oriented instruments of steering, because the former had not delivered the desired results (KMK 2005: 5).

The *KMK* also decided to promote educational reporting by the first national report on education in 2006, published biannually ever since, accompanied by the adoption of a "Comprehensive Strategy of the Standing Conference on Educational Monitoring" (KMK and IQB 2006). Since national reporting remained on a highly aggregated level (Niedlich and Brüsemeister 2012), the increasing general interest in educational monitoring lead to more fine-tuned reporting mechanisms on the regional and local levels. As of today, a number of regions publish regular educational reports (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Berlin-Brandenburg[3], Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, North-Rhine Westphalia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Schleswig-Holstein). Educational reporting is expanding on the local level as well, to a significant degree driven by the programme "Lernen vor Ort", with about 10% of municipalities publishing local education reports (Döbert and Weishaupt 2012).

The PISA shock also helped to focus minds on enhancing local governance mechanisms in education. The pending problems of coordination and steering, due to the separation of regulatory powers across governance levels, had been acknowledged for a long time (Deutscher Bildungsrat 1973; Manitius and Berkemeyer 2011). Previous attempts to enhance central capacities for educational planning largely failed (Busemeyer 2009, 2014). There is also a pertaining lack of coordination between education and adjacent policy fields, in particular youth welfare services and labour market policies. Similar to education the latter two policy fields are characterised by a complex multi-level governance structure. In youth welfare services, the district and the state level are more important, whereas in labour market policies the federal level is decisive.

[3] This is a joint report by the states of Berlin and Brandenburg.

As a consequence of this fragmentation of decision-making competencies, a number of initiatives have been developed to improve local governance mechanisms (Brüsemeister 2012; Emmerich 2010). A central concept that has become a very popular normative reference point is the notion of a "regional or local educational landscape" [*lokale/regionale Bildungslandschaft*] (cf. Bleckmann and Durdel 2009). The concept was popularised in a policy paper by the German Association for Public and Private Welfare [*Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge*] in 2007: "A municipal educational landscape develops when all actors involved in the process of education and care connect their activities and bring them together in a consistent system: families, childcare institutions, children and youth welfare services, business and employers etc." (Deutscher Verein 2007: 3, authors' translation)".

Furthermore, the development of local educational landscapes should go along with the promotion of a "culture of cooperation" (ibid.: 3) as well as the establishment of "comprehensive educational monitoring and integrated reporting about educational careers on the local level" and "continuous evaluation" (ibid.: 4, authors' translation). In this policy paper, it is argued that local governments, need to occupy a central place in local educational landscapes:

"The municipality is responsible for the establishment and the maintenance of networks and cooperation structures between the individual actors. Central steering by the municipality, while respecting the individual autonomy and contributions of the actors involved, guarantees that the local educational landscape will become a central strategic framework for a comprehensive cooperative process, to which all actors contribute with their competencies and possibilities in the design of education and care." (Deutscher Verein 2007: 14, authors' translation).

The interest in local educational landscapes coincided with a change in perspective regarding the link between education and care for children and youths. In particular the 12 th Report on Children and Youth (*12. Kinder und Jugendbericht*, cf. BMFSFJ 2006) of the Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth [*Bundesmnisterium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugendliche, BMFSFJ*] contributed to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the process of education by bringing into focus the linkages between schools as central institutions in education and adjacent policy fields, in particular care services for children and youth. In 2003 the federal government decided on a programme to support the establishment of all-day schools, which also required schools and educational administrators to work more closely with non-profit associations and care institutions (Eisnach 2011; Mack 2007; Mack et al. 2006). The programme for all-day schools made available the substantial amount of 4 billion Euros from 2003 until 2007 to help the *Länder* in establishing all-day schools (i.e. extending the duration of the typical school day) (cf. BMBF n.d.). This involvement of the federal government in school policy already stretched the limits of the federal competencies at the time. It would have been even more difficult after the 2006 reform of federalism.

The rise of local educational landscapes also coincided with a change in the self-perception of municipalities. Following a large congress on the topic of "Education in the city", in 2007 the German Association of Cities [*Deutscher Städtetag*] proclaimed the Aachen Declaration [*Aachener Erklärung*], which stated that "Education is more than just schools!" (Deutscher Städtetag 2007: 1) The Declaration documents a newfound interest of municipalities in education and showed their commitment to the model of municipal education landscapes as well as their assertiveness to demand more responsibilities and competencies in this field.[4] At the same time, the notion of educational landscapes did not claim to re-instate hierarchical forms of steering and governance at the local level. It envisions the establishment of

[4] This was one of the key messages of the *Münchner Erklärung* (Deutscher Städtetag 2012), which was decided in 2012 and continues along the lines of the *Aachener Erklärung*.

regional and local governance arrangements that aim to facilitate horizontal – and largely voluntary – cooperation between stakeholders (Hebborn 2009b: 7).[5]

In order to support the creation of local networks, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research set up the programme *"Lernende Regionen"* [LR – "Learning Regions"] that ran from 2001 until 2008. This programme can be considered as an immediate predecessor to *Lernen vor Ort*.[6] LR was directed towards the promotion of lifelong learning and continuous education. It aimed at facilitating transition processes between school, training and employment, both for young graduates as well as for unemployed adults. In the mid-2000s, the lack of a sufficient number of training places for youths was a pressing problem. In response to the excess demand for training, a complex and largely uncoordinated range of training and educational measures was developed, the so-called "transition system" (Busemeyer 2009). In this context LR aimed at increasing the transparency of the system by improving management and consulting services, and facilitating transition processes. In contrast to LvO, municipal governments did not necessarily play a central role in the networks that were established during the duration of the project. Proposals for funding could be submitted by different institutions, whether they are municipal, district governments or further institutions of educations.

Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the governance of education in Germany. The regions are clearly the central actors in educational policy-making. The role of the federal government had always been constrained to setting the regulatory framework and facilitating horizontal and vertical voluntary coordination. Since the reform of the federalist constitution in 2006, the federal government is restricted to influence education policies. At the same time, local governments are restricted to managing "external school affairs", while the states are in charge of "inner school affairs", e.g. the hiring and training of teachers and the design of school curricula. Since the late 1990s, however, a paradigmatic change has been underway. Also fuelled by the dismal performance of Germany in the PISA studies, the *KMK* as the central institution of horizontal coordination between the *Länder* has been pushing for the introduction of national education standards, testing, new forms of school inspection and educational monitoring at different levels of government. Since the mid-2000s, municipalities and other actors in the field have tried to strengthen the role of the local level in educational governance. The notion of "local educational landscapes" has become the normative focus and role model in this debate. It aims at creating durable network structures between local stakeholders and improving accountability, steering, and monitoring capacities. Following up on previous initiatives and programmes, the federal government announced *Lernen vor Ort* with the goal of further promoting local educational governance structures. This programme will be studied in detail in the next section.

[5] The legitimisation for renewed efforts of municipalities to become involved in educational governance has been to highlight the importance of education as a basic local service. The legal term (*öffentliche Daseinsvorsorge*) for this is generally recognised as a prime responsibility of municipalities. By strengthening the perspective of education as a basic service, local governments try to legitimise their stronger involvement in this field (Kühnlein and Klein 2011: 175).

[6] When we speak of the LR programme as a predecessor to LvO, we do not imply that participation in LR opened up funding entitlements under LvO for participants of LR. Rather, the programme had a similar aim as LvO in reforming education governance on the local level.

CHAPTER 3: THE CASE STUDY: THE PROGRAMME "LERNEN VOR ORT"

This chapter provides an overview of the design and goals of the LvO-programme and how it was developed. It discusses challenges and issues that arose during the implementation phase and also looks at the current debate about so called "transfer agencies" that are supposed to facilitate the inclusion of further municipalities after the programme has ended. The chapter draws on interviews[7] with actors at the federal level, in particular representatives of the federal administration as well as representatives of the federal associations of foundations, cities and districts.

Design and goals of LvO

The programme LvO consists of two phases: phase I ran from September 2009 until August 2012 and phase II began in September 2012 and lasted until August 2014. The budget was about 60 million Euros for the first phase and 100 million Euros for the whole duration of the programme, jointly financed by the BMBF and the European Social Fund (ESF) (cf. for the following: BMBF 2008). An important outcome of the evaluation of the predecessor progamme LR was that the involvement of municipalities was central to achieving durable and sustainable network structures (Tippelt and Schmidt 2007); therefore, LvO required municipal and district governments to claim political ownership of the projects and demonstrate in the funding proposal that the established structures and procedures would be maintained, also financially, after the end of the funding period.

There is significant variation among the participating municipalities (40 in the first phase and 35 in the second), partly reflecting the peculiarities of German federalism. Roughly speaking, there are three different types of participants:

- The city-states (Bremen, Hamburg), the governments of which represent both the municipal and the state level.
- Cities (*kreisfreie Städte*), which may be large (e.g. Munich, Leipzig) or small in size (e.g. Dessau-Roßau in Saxony-Anhalt and Trier in Rhineland-Palatinate).
- Districts (*Kreise* or *Landkreise*), which may be more rural in character (e.g. Mühldorf am Inn in Bavaria) or more urban (e.g. Recklinghausen in North-Rhine Westphalia).

[7] In this chapter and appendix E, references to interviews are included in parenthesis similar to references to secondary sources (e.g. BU-x for interviews with federal actors, MD-x for interviews in Mühldorf etc.). Appendix A contains a list of all interviews that were conducted.

Figure 3.1 presents an overview over the distribution of participating districts and municipalities across Germany, highlighting the municipalities analysed in detail in this study.

Figure 3.1: Map of districts and cities that participate in LvO

Source: http://www.lernen-vor-ort.net/ info with authors' modifications.

LvO identifies four mandatory fields of activity, which had to be addressed in project proposals (BMBF 2008: 6-7):

- Local education management: Core tasks are to provide an assessment of the educational opportunities and activities that are available at the local level, to integrate educational responsibilities distributed across departments within a coherent management framework, to provide information for citizens on local educational opportunities, to bring together the relevant actors in the local community (childcare institutions, social welfare services, schools, further education institutions, chambers of industry and commerce, the local employment agencies etc.) and to develop a comprehensive strategy for the future.

- Local educational monitoring: The goal of LvO is to support municipalities and districts to introduce and implement local education monitoring as an important instrument of education management. Localities in turn are required to collect and evaluate information on all educational sectors, from early childhood education via schools and VET to further education and lifelong learning.

- Educational consulting: LvO required participating local governments to set up neutral bodies in charge of providing information and consulting to the consumers of education, including the set-up of quality assurance systems for educational consulting.

- Transition processes: Participating localities are required to develop concepts and activities to improve the management of transition processes from one sector of the education system to another (e.g. from primary to secondary school or from secondary school to training and employment). This includes measures to improve the cooperation between pedagogical personnel (teachers) and supporting institutions (care institutions, training and employment providers, etc.).

In addition to the mandatory fields of activity, LvO allowed municipalities and districts to choose optional ones of particular local importance among the following topics (ibid: 7):

- demographic change;
- integration and diversity management;
- democracy and culture;
- family and parental education;
- business, technology, environment and science.

A structural innovation of the LvO programme was the requirement to involve foundations (cf. Kahl 2009; Niedlich et al. 2014). As part of the project proposal, localities had to name a foundation with which they were going to cooperate during the duration of the programme. The involvement of foundations aimed at increasing the involvement of civil society associations. Interestingly, these were not primarily employers' associations, welfare associations or trade unions, which had traditionally played a strong role in the German welfare state. Instead, the programme aimed at promoting the cooperation between state actors and philanthropic foundations.

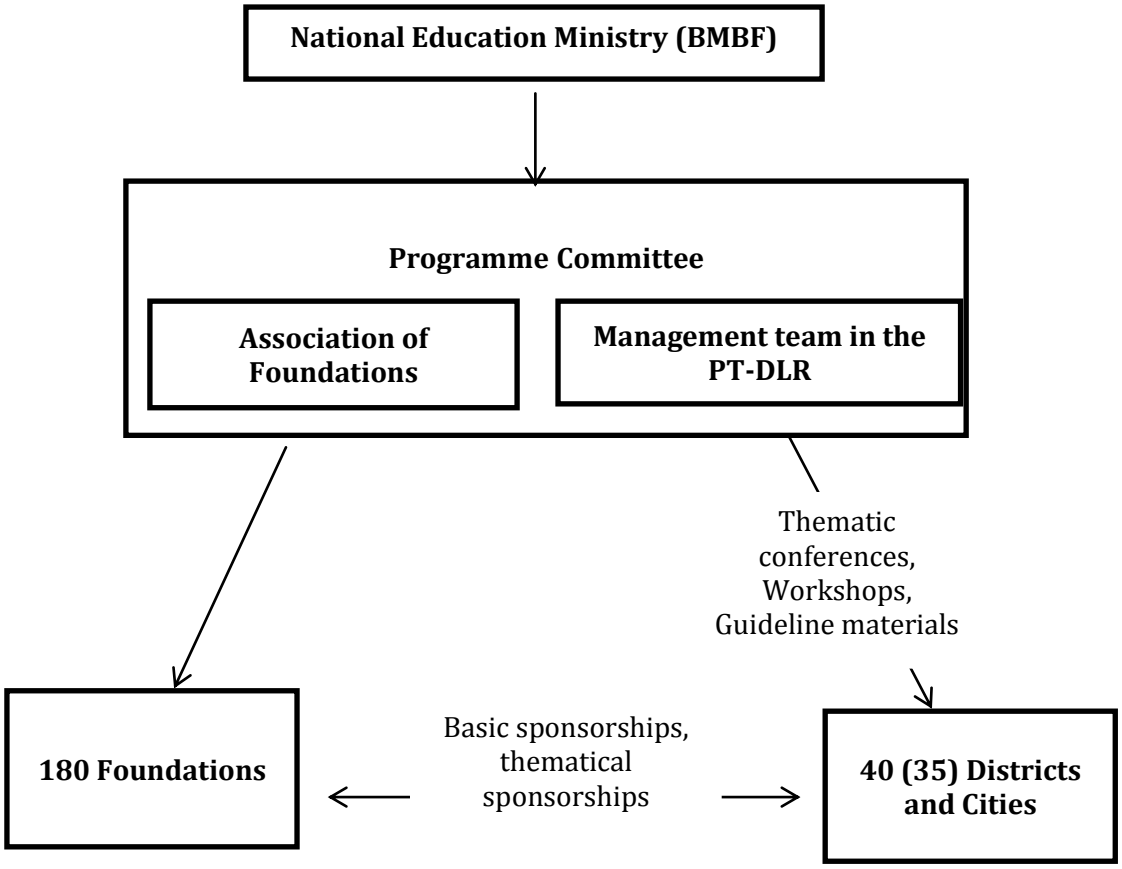
Foundations could get involved in two ways: first, in the form of *lokale Grundpatenschaften* ["local (basic) sponsorships"] that envisioned the cooperation between a municipality or district and a foundation in one particular locality on a broad range of topics; or second, in the form of *Themenpatenschaften*

["thematic sponsorships"], in which a particular foundation took over responsibility for a particular topic across a number of different localities.

On the federal level, the BMBF delegated the day-to-day management of LvO to a subordinated management authority that was put in charge of handling the funding applications and, later on, the administration of the programme: the Project Management Office, which is based at the German Aerospace Centre DLR (*Projektträger im DLR*, abbreviated as PT-DLR). The Office has become an important administrative and management body for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, whose limited personnel capacities require it to outsource project management activities (BU-3). The Office cooperates with the Association of Foundations for "Lernen vor Ort" (*Stiftungsverbund Lernen vor Ort*), which represents all foundations that act as cooperation partners in LvO. By now, the Association has more than 180 members.

The administrative structure of LvO implies a particular division of labour between the BMBF, the Project Management Office and the Association of Foundations (see Figure 3.2). The Office and the Association jointly form the Programme Committee and meet regularly (every two to four weeks) with representatives of the BMBF (BU-1). The Office is responsible for day-to-day administrative management of the programme and the organisation of interregional conferences and workshops (BU-4). The executive office of the Association is financed by the BMBF, and coordinates the work of foundations across localities, which also involves the recruitment and activation of new partners and the organisation of regular meetings of the core group of about 30 to 50 foundations twice a year (BU-4, BU-6). The German Association of Cities and the German Association of Districts are involved in a more indirect manner in the central governance of the LvO (BU-5, BU-7) – they are not part of the formal governance structure.

Figure 3.2: The governance structure of LvO.



Source: Authors' depiction based on interviews

History of LvO

Since the "PISA shock", German policy-makers have been deeply concerned with improving the performance and equity of the German education system by changing its governance structure. A specific aspect in the governance structure highlighted in the previous section is the complexity of governance arrangements at the local level. The most important issues in this context are:

- the limited legal competencies of municipalities with regard to the management of schools;
- the lack of coordination between local activities in education, care, labour market policies and other related policy fields;
- the lack of transparency and information with regard to educational opportunities at the local level;
- the lack of involvement of non-statist stakeholders in education, e.g. parents, businesses, unions, civil society organisations etc.

The LvO programme directly addresses these issues, based on previous experiences with LR and similar programmes, responding to the political momentum behind the discourse on local educational landscapes and educational monitoring described in Chapter 2. Legally speaking, the options for the federal government to get involved in matters of local policy-making are very limited, because these issues fall into the domain of the *Länder*, in particular in the field of education. Therefore the BMBF did not claim formal decision-making powers, but defined its role in a more limited fashion as motivator, initiator and patient companion for local governments (BU-1). An important lesson that the BMBF had learned from the experiences with LR was that the commitment of the local political leadership is a crucial condition for success (BU-1, BU-3). Whereas LR supported the establishment of loose network structures with a strong involvement of chambers of industry and commerce, further education institutions, schools or newly founded non-profit organisations, LvO allowed only local governments (districts and cities) to submit a funding proposal in order to create more sustainable and binding network structures.

The shift in the self-perception of local governments and their more self-assured position on their central role in local educational landscapes contributed to the political demand for a programme such as LvO (BU-5) and was also perceived in this way at the Ministry (BU-1). The comprehensive approach to education in LvO highlighting the connections between different educational sectors from pre-school to adult education was also promoted by the German Association of Cities in the *Aachener Erklärung,* and the associated concept of local educational landscapes (BU-5, BU-7).

A second factor influencing the development of LvO was the involvement of foundations, in particular in the *Innovationskreis Weiterbildung* [Innovation Circle on Further Education] that was set up by Federal Minister Annette Schavan in 2006. This committee consisted of representatives from unions, employers, academia, educational providers, local governments and foundations. Via their membership in the Innovation Circle, the representatives of foundations became deeply involved in the process of designing the basic structure of LvO (BU-1, BU-3, BU-4, BU-5). Some individuals in the foundation scene acted as political entrepreneurs, i.e. actors that are deeply concerned with promoting a particular issue politically because they are normatively committed to it. They generated interest in LvO among round 30 foundations and played a part in expanding the role of foundations in local educational governance (BU-6). The development of new forms of cooperation between local and federal administrations on the one hand and philanthropic foundations on the other also received support from the top of the administrative hierarchy in the ministry. Financial support from the BMBF for the establishment of an executive office of

the *Stiftungsverbund LvO* [National Association of Foundations in LvO] was crucial at the beginning in order to coordinate the various local activities of foundations (BU-6).

In the programme design phase, some difficult legal issues related to the distribution of competencies had to be solved. The reform of the federalist constitution in 2006 aims at strengthening the competencies of *Länder* in education policy-making, and even explicitly prohibits the cooperation between the federal and the state level (the so-called *Kooperationsverbot*). In order to deal with these constitutional questions, the establishment of LvO had to be justified as a model pilot project with experimental character (BU-3). Still, the formal involvement of the *Länder* remained limited (BU-4). Furthermore, LvO combined funding from the federal government with funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), although this aspect created some administrative challenges in budgeting (BU-3).

After the publication of the funding criteria for LvO, about 150 funding proposals were submitted (out of roughly 400 potential funding applicants, i.e. the total number of city and district governments in Germany), of which 40 were eventually selected. The resonance to the programme in terms of submitted proposals was much larger than expected; therefore, the number of districts and cities that would get funding was raised from about 15-20, as was initially planned (BU-4). Four of the selected applicants did not receive programme funding in the second phase of LvO and the loss of one more applicant resulted from a merger of two local districts, so that the total number of funded districts fell to 35 in the second phase of the programme. The criteria used in the selection process were, among others, the quality and plausibility of the submitted proposal, a convincing concept how foundations should get involved, how the four basic components of LvO would be implemented and a sufficient budget for the period after the LvO funding period in order to ensure the sustainability of established institutions and processes (BMBF 2008; BU-1).

The Project Management Office developed a complex matrix on the basis of these criteria and provided the BMBF with a preliminary ranking of proposals. A jury consisting of representatives of the BMBF, the KMK, the German Association of Cities, further experts and representatives of civil society organisation issued recommendations, which applicants should get funding (BMBF 2008: 9-10). The final decision was taken at the BMBF (BU-3). The distribution of participating districts and cities across the Federal Republic did not play a strong role in this process (BU-3). Notably, some prominent cases did not receive funding because of quality problems in the concept.

Promoting capacity-building from the centre

The Project Management Office played an important supportive role in the creation of local capacities, in particular in the field of educational monitoring. Already prior to the start of LvO, the Federal Statistical Office provided a feasibility study on local educational reporting in 2007, analysing which data could be made available easily for districts and municipalities (BU-2). This process of data integration was continued after the start of LvO. The Federal Statistical Office worked together with the Regional Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg and academic research institutes, the German Institute for International Pedagogical Research (DIPF) and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), to develop a handbook for local educational monitoring. This handbook should serve as a reference document for local governments in creating capacities. It provides concrete suggestions on which indicators to use in educational monitoring and ensures the compatibility between the local and the federal education reports, because the DIPF is responsible for national educational reporting as well.

However, the handbook is more than a reference document, as it represents the visible output of a long process of communication and coordination between the federal and state statistical offices as well as between academic researchers and statisticians, which was not always without tensions and conflicts in the beginning (BU-2). Whether or not participating municipalities and districts followed the suggestions of the

handbook was their own decision. On the one hand, this could be regarded as a weakness of the LvO programme, because the heterogeneity of local educational reports makes the establishment of a comprehensive integrated system of educational reporting more difficult (BU-1). On the other hand, forcing local governments to adopt the same set of indicators independent of local contexts could have mobilised opposition to the programme (BU-2).

A second concrete tool made available by the Project Management Office to participating local governments was an IT tool that is compatible with the set of indicators suggested in the handbook.[8] Again, local authorities were free to use the IT tool or employ their own instruments. As a consequence, the take-up rate differed depending on local administrative structures. Large cities with more than 300 000 inhabitants have their own statistical offices and thus the integration of an external IT tool in local IT infrastructures posed more problems than benefits for them. Medium-sized cities (100 000 - 250 000 inhabitants) were most interested in using the IT tool (BU-2), because they usually had some statistical capacities available, but required external support and assistance to develop these further into fully-fledged systems of educational reporting. The Office estimates that from the 35 participating local governments in the second phase of LvO, approximately 8 to 12 are intensive users of the IT tool, although it has been installed by 27 users (BU-2). A concrete problem in promoting the use of the IT tool was that IT departments used different operating systems, which necessitated the use of an additional server by local IT departments in order to run the IT tool with its integrated interfaces, which sometimes met resistance by the local IT departments.

Districts and cities differed significantly with regard to their approach in the creation of monitoring and reporting capacities. In some cases, the personnel in charge of educational monitoring were hired on a full-time basis and had an academic background, i.e. they were used to handling social data. In other cases, local governments created part-time positions or hired personnel with different backgrounds. Another difference emerged between municipalities and urban districts on the one hand, which usually have their own statistical offices or departments within the administration, and rural districts on the other, which often lack these capacities and had to establish institutions and procedures from the very beginning (BU-2, BU-5). Larger cities – often perceived to be the pace-makers in educational monitoring (BU-5) – could also collect their own data if needed in addition to the data provided by the state and federal statistical offices, which was not feasible in rural districts or smaller cities. Finally, some local governments had already engaged in educational monitoring before the start of LvO. From one perspective, this was a benefit because these capacities could easily be expanded and developed further in the LvO programme. However it could also be a problem because existing institutions were harder to change (BU-2).

Promoting stakeholder involvement and networking

The involvement of foundations in the local and thematic sponsorships is an innovative characteristic of LvO. Within the Federal Association of Foundations, LvO is regarded to be a role model for the further development of the relationship between civil society actors and governments (BU-6). Foundations perceive their role to be that of an external motivator and facilitator, urging local administrations to reform their existing structures. Because of the stalemate between the federal and state governments in the conflict over competencies, foundations think of themselves as innovative elements in transforming the governance of education and in contributing to the solution of concrete problems (BU-6).

Again, heterogeneity of local background conditions was significant. In some (mostly rural) districts, local governments had a hard time identifying a foundation, which could act as a partner in the application

[8] The Project Management Office also organised a number of workshops and devised a training programme for personnel in charge of educational monitoring at the local level. It was also the primary go-to-point for local staff looking for guidance to solve concrete problems.

procedure (BU-4). The Association of Foundations in LvO played an important role here, facilitating contact between local governments and foundations already in the application phase.

In the first phase of the programme, local sponsorships between administrations and foundations were the only form of cooperation. Reacting to demands from foundations, which were more active on the national level promoting certain topics, thematic sponsorships were developed further in the later phase of LvO. Today about one fifth of the participating foundations are involved in thematic sponsorships, the remaining in local sponsorships, although some foundations do both (BU-6). In general, the thematic sponsorships seem to have worked better than the basic sponsorships (BU-4), potentially because large foundations active on the national level were more engaged in the former than in the latter.

In contrast to the positive self-perception of foundations and their contribution to LvO, some regard them as helpful in some instances, but not central to the success of the programme as such (BU-7). Others assess the involvement of foundations more critically. In particular, in the initial phase of the programme, the commitment of foundations both in terms of activities and finances was perceived to have been quite low (BU-3). On the other hand, foundations never understood their primary function as being the financier of local governments, but more as being an external adviser and expert (BU-6). Furthermore, the coordination and communication with foundations was perceived as complicated and cumbersome in some cases, from the perspective of actors on the federal level. For one, many foundations are bound by their specific statutes (BU-3, BU-6), which regulate the kind and sometimes the geographical range of activities they could engage in. Second, civil society actors and local administrators have very different backgrounds in terms of organisational culture and self-perceptions. Therefore, it took some time to develop a cooperative communication culture (BU-6).

Success factors and deficiencies from the perspective of federal actors

Similar to the responses of interview partners at the local level (see Chapter 4 and Annex E), the federal stakeholders identify political commitment and leadership at the local level as one, if not *the* crucial factor determining the success of the implementation of LvO (BU-1, BU-5, BU-7). Besides leadership, the creation of a broad political consensus via open and participative procedures and the definition of clear goals to be achieved during the implementation of the programme were mentioned as important conditions for success by the interview partners (BU-4, BU-7).

Deficiencies in the implementation were more likely when LvO was treated as simply one more project among many and when departmental divisions in local administrative structures were not overcome (BU-1). Another critical issue from the perspective of interview partners was the relatively short duration of the LvO programme (five years). The establishment of educational monitoring capacities might be possible to a certain extent within this time frame, but the development of a common identity and cooperation culture with the new civil society partners, and the general transformation of the self-perception of local governments and their role in educational governance are processes that take a lot of time. It was generally felt that the short duration of the programme might pose an obstacle towards the creation of sustainable network structures and common identities (BU-4). Because the process of network development necessarily relies on voluntary participation and cooperation, it requires strong political leadership. If this leadership is lacking or if the personnel responsible for LvO changed during the duration of the programme, these tentative network structures often ran the risk not continuing. (BU-4).

Socio-economic background conditions of participating municipalities and districts also play a role. The lack of local financial resources, a difficult economic situation or the concentration of pressing social problems in particular areas are factors that might detract the focus of policy-makers away from education to other pressing issues (BU-5). On the other hand, LvO might have a larger impact exactly in localities with significant problems (BU-5).

Current and future developments

LvO is generally regarded as a success story, triggering non-trivial changes in the participating districts and cities (BU-1, BU-3, BU-6, BU-7). A particular strength of LvO is believed to be the fact that it was a "learning programme" (BU-6). This means that structures and processes are flexible enough to allow for changes and adaptations after first experiences in the management of the programme. The programme also contained a significant scientific evaluation component that constantly monitored the evolution of LvO and gave feedback to localities and the central level (Lindner et al. 2013). From the perspective of the BMBF and the Project Management Office, LvO was mostly successful in establishing institutions and tools for educational monitoring at the local level, which have contributed to more objective and rational perceptions of existing local problems, and represent a solid empirical foundation for local policy-making (BU-1, BU-4). A second example for a success story is the contribution of LvO in creating sustainable networks between local stakeholders and developing procedural tools for how to achieve this (BU-1, BU-4). In contrast, the fact that LvO provided relatively generous subsidies to local governments now might make it harder to sustain these structures (BU-1, BU-7), because local governments have a hard time matching the funds provided in LvO with own resources despite the fact that the initial proposals contained plans on sustainability (see below).

From the perspective of the BMBF, the next step is to establish transfer agencies in order to make the experiences gathered in LvO available to a larger group of local governments. For that purpose, the BMBF has set up a new funding programme promoting Transfer Agencies for Local Education Management.[9] It will fund the establishment of up to ten transfer agencies that are also supposed to coordinate with each other in a federal network. These agencies will collect, process and (re-)distribute "transfer subjects", i.e. elements of local educational management, that have been developed within the LvO programme. The ultimate goal is to establish a self-sustaining knowledge management structure that promotes the development of local educational landscapes beyond the original LvO participants.

The funding principles of LvO required participating districts and cities to define transfer modules early on in order to facilitate the transfer process (BU-1). Compared to their limited formal role in LvO, the *Länder* are more intensely involved in the establishment and eventual administration of the transfer agencies (BU-1, BU-4). However, the bodies responsible for the transfer agencies will not be the states themselves, but actors such as academic institutions or non-profit organisations (BU-4). Local governments are explicitly prohibited from applying for a transfer agency, because the goal is to distribute knowledge beyond the local or regional level in order to create interregional network structures. In general, state governments are perceived to be very supportive of the process of strengthening local educational governance, although their direct involvement in the federal programmes must be limited because of the constitutional prohibition of cooperation between the federal government and the regions.

There will be no immediate successor programme to LvO (BU-1), the purpose of which was mainly to initiate and motivate local governments to improve and develop local educational governance mechanisms on their own. An extension of the LvO programme itself is not possible either, because this would go beyond the legal competencies of the federal government (BU-4).[10] Local governments, represented by the German Association of Cities, are critical of this state of affairs. In the Munich Declaration mentioned above, local governments demand more autonomy and decision-making powers for themselves. From their perspective, this involves a more significant role for the federal government (implying a decreased role for state governments) (BU-5). The German Association of Districts, in contrast, is not in favour of increasing

[9] http://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/21593.php

[10] The new federal competence for educational monitoring and reporting at the international level introduced in the 2006 constitutional reform has not been used as a reference in the design of LvO in the first place (BU-3), and it is therefore unlikely that it will enhance the involvement of the federal government in the future.

federal involvement, and would like to see the *Länder* increase their support for the development of local educational governance (BU-7). Foundations are also supportive of a continued and even increased involvement of the federal government (BU-6).

The public perception of LvO

LvO is a programme that is directed at improving the local governance structures and management of education. The notion of local educational landscapes is very well known among policy-makers and academics (e.g. Mindermann et al. 2012; Haugg 2012; Stolz 2012), but not necessarily among the public. The following short analysis of national media compares the resonance of LvO with other topics in educational reform discussed at the same time (see figure A1 in Appendix C). The archives of major daily newspapers representing the gamut of the political spectrum (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau, Die Welt, taz*) were scanned for the key words "Lernen vor Ort" or "LvO" (for the time period between 2008 and 2013), which was then compared with the number of hits for the terms "Gesamtschule" and "Gemeinschaftsschule", both of which refer to the discussion on comprehensive secondary schools, the G8 reform mentioned above and the PISA studies.

Not surprisingly, LvO is not a topic that is broadly debated in the national media or talk shows. There were roughly 100 references in the national media to LvO between 2008 and 2013 compared to more than 6 000 for the discussion on comprehensive schools. An explanation for this lack of debate is straightforward: First, the scale of LvO is small in comparison (100 million Euro spread over 5 years and 40 local authorities (35 in the second phase) out of a total of about 400 in Germany). Second, LvO does not directly threaten established institutions and structures. It aims at facilitating cooperation between stakeholders and existing institutions but is based on voluntary cooperation. It does not affect the distribution of legal competencies between the local, state and federal levels, and it does not change the structure of educational institutions. Third, the impact of LvO is most likely felt at the local or regional level. A brief analysis of local newspapers for one of the cases studied below (for which local newspapers provided access to online archives) leads to more than 70 hits for "LvO" between September 2009 and November 2013. Although this is merely a snapshot, it indicates that the perception of LvO might have been much stronger at the local compared to the national level.

CHAPTER 4: PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: FIVE CASE STUDIES

This chapter sheds light on the implementation of the LvO programme at the local level in five participating districts and cities. The first section provides a comparative overview of the socio-economic and political structure of the studied cases, which is put into contrast with the structural characteristics of the *regions* in which they are located. The second section comparatively depicts how the programme was set up on the local level, which governance and steering structures were developed and which different groups of stakeholders were involved. Section three then presents the main findings from the local interviews, which are grouped thematically along five aspects: governance structures, political support and leadership, education monitoring, cooperation between civil-society and administration, and sustainability. For each case, key aspects and mechanisms are identified that contributed to the programme's relative success. Chapter 5 then takes up the findings in a cross-case comparison of the five case studies highlighting commonalities and differences between the cases.

Socio-economic and political background conditions

As discussed in Chapter 2, the 16 *Bundesländer* display a significant variety in socio-economic and educational characteristics. In order to control for a potential impact of different background conditions, the strategy is to select typical cases that can be regarded as representative. Table 4.1 gives an overview on the basic characteristics of the cases that were selected for an in-depth analysis.

Table 4.1 Basic information on the five studied districts and cities

Name	Bundesland	Type	Previous programmes relevant for local education policy
Freiburg	Baden-Württemberg	Urban district	*Educational Regions* (Bildungsregionen)
Kreis Mühldorf am Inn	Bavaria	Rural district	None
Leipzig	Saxony	Urban district	*Learning Regions* (LR)
Bremen/Bremerhaven	Bremen	City-state	*Learning Regions* (LR)
Kreis Recklinghausen	North Rhine-Westphalia	District of ten cities	*Learning Regions* (LR); *Educational network programme* (Regionales Bildungsnetzwerk),

Source: Authors' compilation based on the five case studies.

The selected districts and cities are located in different regions with Freiburg and Mühldorf am Inn in the south Leipzig in the east, Bremen in the north and Recklinghausen in the western part of Germany. They differ with regard to their political and administrative structures: two are urban districts (Freiburg, Leipzig), one is a rural district (Kreis Mühldorf am Inn) and one a city-state (Bremen), consisting of two cities (Bremen and Bremerhaven). Recklinghausen is a special district as it consists of ten rather large cities, but governance is shared among the district level and the individual cities similar to rural districts.

As can be seen from Table 2.1, the background characteristics of the *Länder* in which the cases are located vary significantly. Among the selected cases, Bremen was the only city-state with 548 000 inhabitants in Bremen and 115 000 in Bremerhaven. Although Bremen has the third highest GDP per capita among German states, the level of public debt per capita is the highest in intra-German comparison; the unemployment rate of 11.4% is also above average, and even higher in Bremerhaven with 18.3%.[11]

[11] Source:Statistisches Landesamt Bremen: http://www.statistik-

Moreover, it performed the poorest of all states in the PISA-E student competency assessment (Prenzel et al., 2008).[12]

Leipzig (515 000 inhabitants) and Freiburg (220 000 inhabitants) are urban districts (large cities). Bremen, Leipzig and Freiburg have several higher education institutions and a high population share of youths in education. Furthermore, in all three urban cases, the socio-economic inequality between the cities neighbourhoods is quite high.

In Leipzig and Freiburg, unemployment is above the average of their respective states (Saxony and Baden-Württemberg) and, moreover, both have an above average share of citizens from a migrant background.[13] Leipzig is located in the eastern German state of Saxony. In comparison to other German states, Saxony has a low level of public debt but high unemployment as well as the highest share of elderly in the population and the lowest number of students per 1 000 inhabitants. However, in the 2006 PISA-E study Saxony outperformed all other states (Prenzel et al. 2008). Freiburg is part of Baden-Württemberg, which is a wealthy state in southern Germany with above average PISA scores.

With regard to the other two cases, the district of Recklinghausen is a special case in Germany because it is the district with the largest population (637 000 inhabitants)and consists of ten rather large cities. The district of Recklinghausen is part of North-Rhine Westphalia, the largest German state in terms of population, suffering from the negative socio-economic consequences of the decline of the coal and steel industry. Mühldorf am Inn is an example of a more classical rural district with 110 000 inhabitants distributed among 31 smaller municipalities. Neither district has their own higher education institution, instead they are located in neighbouring districts. In Recklinghausen unemployment was above the state average (11.2% compared to 9.4%), but below average in Mühldorf with 4.6% (4.8% in Bavaria). However, youth unemployment was quite pronounced in Mühldorf and amounted to 11%. Moreover, Mühldorf faces a particular challenge in terms of demography: With almost 25% of the population aged 65 and above, it exceeds the average of Bavaria and since 2003, the proportion of people aged between 18 and 25 who have left the district is continually higher than the number of those who relocated to Mühldorf am Inn (cf. Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn and Lernen vor Ort 2012: 7-9).

Besides socio-economic factors, the political structures of the selected districts and cities, and especially the distribution of competences in education-policy making, vary significantly. In Leipzig and Freiburg, the Lord Mayor has a guideline competence to influence the cooperation between administrative departments (education, youth welfare, city planning, health care, etc.) headed by other mayors. In Recklinghausen and Mühldorf am Inn however the division of competences in education policy is more complex. The administrative responsibilities in the districts are shared between the district government and its municipalities. While the former is responsible for general administration, social assistance and elections, the latter are legal entities in their own right and responsible for youth, childcare and infrastructure, including the maintenance of schools. Finally, Bremen has some interesting peculiarities as a city-state. First, the administrations of the region and the two associated cities are intertwined with each other in terms of practical policy-making, though competences are formally divided between the Land and municipalities. Second, the head of the state governments' executive (Lord Mayor and first senator) does

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bremen.de/bremendat/statwizard_step1.cfm?tabelle=20110 (accessed 18 February 2014).

[12] Unfortunately for the comparison of the five selected participants, PISA-E data are not available at the level of districts and cities.

[13] Of course, there may be significant differences between cities such as Leipzig and Freiburg with regard to the socio-economic composition of relatively disadvanted groups such as the unemployed or migrants, and a more detailed analysis would need to take these into account. However, to a certain extent the challenges that emerge from a heterogeneous local population are similar across cities.

not have a guideline competence to authoritatively direct the other members of the executive (senators [Senatoren]), who are comparable to mayors in Freiburg and Leipzig, and are each responsible for one administrative department (such as education, youth welfare, city planning, etc.).

The selected cases also had different prior experiences with other programmes in local education governance. Mühldorf am Inn had no experience with such programmes, but Bremen, Leipzig and Recklinghausen had already participated in "Learning Regions".Freiburg also participated in the project educational region Freiburg [BR- Bildungsregion Freiburg] that created a regional educational office [RB - Regionales Bildungsbüro] and produced a first education report in 2008, i.e. before the start of LvO. In Recklinghausen, the programme launchcoincided with the beginning of a state programme supporting regional educational networks [RBN – Regionale Bildungsnetzwerke] that created an educational office at the district level.

Governance structures and stakeholder inclusion in a comparative perspective

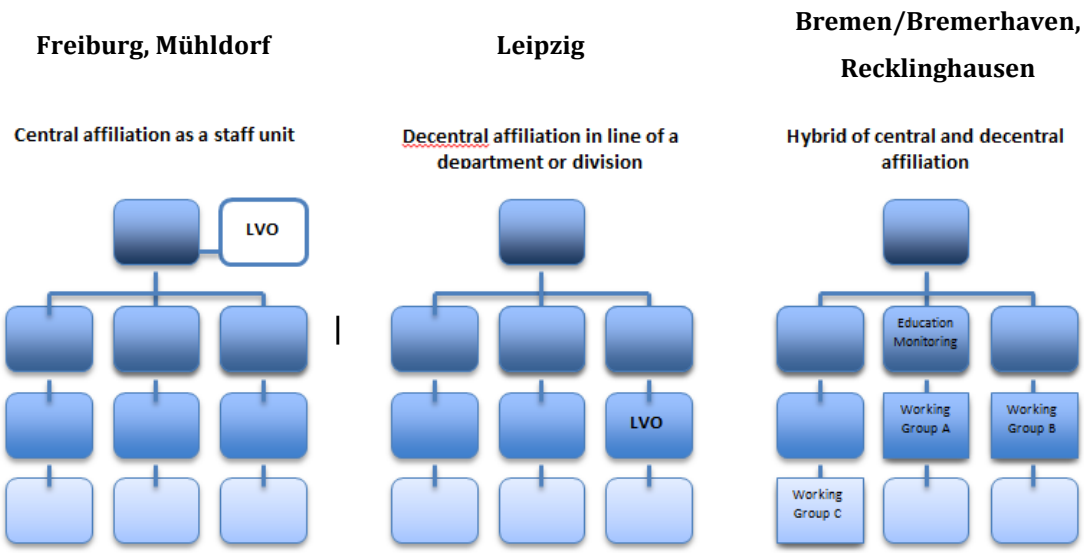
The five cases studied here developed steering and governance structures, which, although quite similar, differed in some non-trivial ways. First, the LvO programme was flexible with regard to how additional personnel financed by LvO should be allocated. Therefore, the local authorities made different strategic decisions on how to include the LvO project teams into the local administration. The scientific evaluation of LvO identified three typical approaches (cf. Lindner et al., 2013: 23-28), which are depicted in Figure 4.1 below.

Some local governments decided to affiliate the project team directly with the office of the highest representatives of the local administration (Lord Mayor, Mayors or the Landrat [the district's chief executive] in districts) as a staff unit. A second option was to include LvO into an administrative department or an administrative division within a department. A third option was a combination of the former two approaches. Figure 4.1 illustrates which option each of the five cases took.[14]

For the two cases that chose the hybrid model (Bremen and Recklinghausen), it was also decided to implement LvO with a "localised approach". This means that not all fields of activity were covered by a central staff unit, but were implemented in specific sub-projects (e.g. a model city-quarter in Bremen (Gröpelingen) or distributed among different municipalities in the district of Recklinghausen). Bremen established rather complex governing structures due to its nature as a city-state (see Annex E for a full description of the cases).

[14] Note that Leipzig had first affiliated LvO as a central staff unit with the Lord Mayor, but was then integrated into the administrative line structure of the department for youth, family and education.

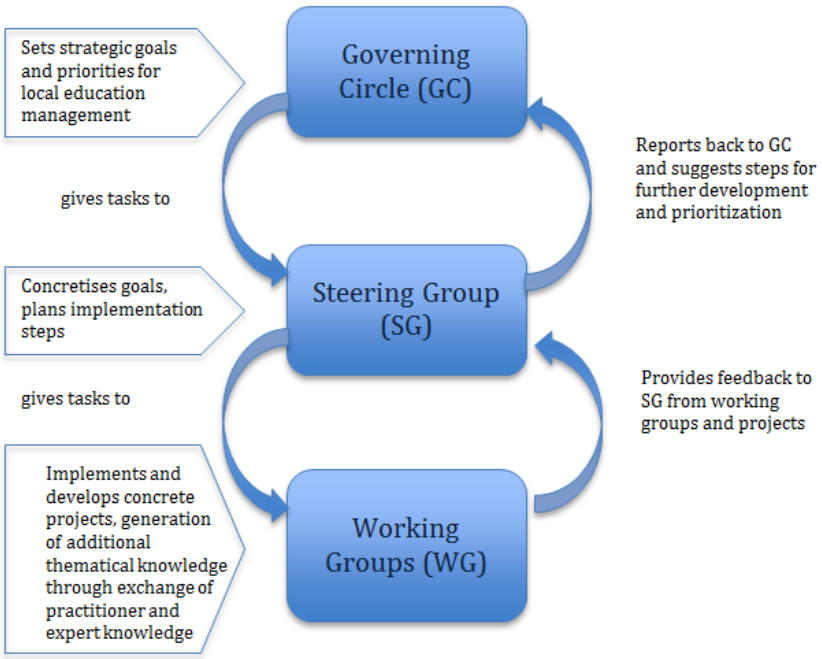
Figure 4.1. Optional affiliations of LvO with local administration



Source: Authors' depiction after Bogumil et al. 2009; in: Lindner et al. 2013: 24.

In addition, formal governance and steering structures were quite similar in all of the in-depth studies. While the main governance bodies were named slightly differently in each case, for the sake of clarity, the governance bodies are denoted with similar names. Figure 4.2 presents a stylised overview on governance structures at the local level.

Figure 4.2: Model of local LvO-governance structures



Source: Authors' depiction based on the case study findings.

From a general perspective, the governance of LvO in the selected districts and cities followed a classical structure where tasks were divided into the three levels of 1. strategic decision-making and priority-setting, 2. programme steering, and 3. the development, testing and implementation of concrete projects. The central structures of local education management are – in hierarchy from highest to lowest – the governing circle (GC – *Steuerkreis*), the steering group (SG – *Lenkungsgruppe*) and working groups (WG – *Arbeitsgruppen*).

In terms of membership composition, the five cases differed especially with regard to the inclusion of administration and external stakeholders (see Table 4. 2.). The *governing circles* usually consisted of high profile representatives of the most relevant institutions. They were headed by the Lord Mayor or the *Landrat* and always included the local school authorities. Moreover they often included major institutions with relevance for the local education system such as universities and adult education centres, representatives of the employment office or chambers of industry and commerce. Also, foundations were usually members of these bodies, but only in an advisory function (without full voting rights).

Table 4.2 Composition of governance bodies in five cases and working groups

Name	Scope of stakeholder composition in governing circle	Scope of stakeholder composition in steering committee	Examples of fields with working groups
Freiburg	**Broad:** Lord Mayor, four other majors, school president, chambers, employment office, university Freiburg; two foundations as advisory members	**Very broad:** More than 30 members that represent local (education) authorities; educational institutions; business; and associations of civil society (foundations and welfare associations), consultation with LvO-team	Monitoring; Educational consulting; Educational Transitions; Integration and diversity management; business, technology, environment and science
Kreis Mühl-dorf am Inn	**Broad:** *Landrat*, three division managers of district administration; factional speakers of district council, school authority, chambers, adult education office, two foundations as advisory members	**Small**: *Landrat* and three divisional managers, consultation with LvO-team	Monitoring; Educational consulting; Educational Transitions; Family and parental education; business, technology, environment and science
Leipzig	**Broad:** Lord Mayor, five mayors, school authority, one trade union, employment office, three higher education in-stitutions, job centre Leipzig, two foundations as advisory members	**Medium:** Mayor for education, deputy mayor for education, administration, school authority, employment office, adult education office, input by LvO team	Monitoring; Educational consulting; Educational Transitions; Democracy and culture; family and parental education; business, technology, environment and science
Bremen/ Bremer-haven	**Small:** eight senators; but consultation with other actors	**Mixed** (four sub-projects): mostly composed of administration and LvO personnel; partial consultation with external actors	Monitoring; Educational consulting; Integration and diversity, family and parental education
Kreis Reckling-hausen	**Small**: district representatives, representatives of ten cities, school authorities, employment office	**Medium**: district representatives, representatives of four cities, school authorities, employment office, sports association, adult education centre; one foundation as advisory member, input by LvO team	Monitoring; Educational consulting; Educational Transitions; Demographic change; family and parental education. Most working groups located within cities of the district

Sources: Authors' compilation based on findings of case studies.

Stakeholder representation varied more in the *steering groups*, which were the main bodies of coordination between LvO project teams, the administration and actors from other organisations. Freiburg is an extreme case of very broad stakeholder inclusion with more than 30 members with different institutional backgrounds in the steering group, while in Mühldorf, the steering group only consisted of the *Landrat* and three division managers of the local administration that consulted implementation steps with the LvO project team. In Leipzig and Recklinghausen, the scope of membership of the steering groups was slightly smaller compared to the governing circles with regard to the involved institutions. Some of these were also represented by actors from lower levels of organisational hierarchies. Moreover, in Recklinghausen, only four cities that had concrete LvO projects were represented at this level. Finally,

LvO in Bremen is a complex case as it had four steering groups, but these were mostly composed of the LvO teams and administrative personnel.

Finally, the *working groups* were composed of stakeholders active in the respective fields (see Table 4.2) and ranged from the administrations via educational institutions to representatives of the civil society or organised interests. Supported by feedback from the higher governance levels and consultation with scientific actors and local practitioners, the WGs regularly worked on very concrete projects, which were jointly developed and put into practice. Implementation examples are given below. Finally, these structures were complemented by educational conferences [*Bildungskonferenzen*] that are open and public discussion forums for topics in education, such as the results of educational monitoring and current developments in education on the local level. The educational conferences were usually that part of the governance structure, where the largest number of actors became involved, but this involvement could obviously not be very intense. In some cases they were regarded as an important inclusive element of the programme that increased the visibility of LvO and also facilitated debates about education policy on the local level.

Perceptions of LvO in five selected districts and cities

This section offers condensed descriptions of how local actors perceived the performance of LvO. These analyses are based on interviews with representatives from the local administration, the LvO project team, civil society actors (in particular foundations) and other local stakeholders. More detailed case descriptions, in particular references to the specific interview-sources are given in Annex E. As pointed out above, the case summaries are structured along five dimensions: governance structures, political support and leadership, education monitoring, cooperation between civil-society and administration, and sustainability.

1. Freiburg im Breisgau

Freiburg stands out because of an extraordinarily broad representation of local educational stakeholders in LvO's *governance structures*. This participatory approach had already begun during the application process for LvO and the established governance structures were very suitable for the creation and exchange of knowledge between different fields of expertise. At an early stage, Freiburg developed seven core goals of local education policy that were decided on by broad consensus in the governing circle. Subsequently, a strong emphasis was put on the goal of strengthening connections between different educational actors and institutions. Following this approach, LvO was designed in order to complement the structures of the regional educational office: While the latter was centrally focused on the realm of education in schools, LvO was devised with a more holistic approach that additionally focused on educational transitions, non-formal and further education, and learning at different stages of the life cycle. Despite these successes, the programme also faced initial obstacles. Being an independent staff unit, the project team first had to establish links with the administration and the relevant actors in local education policy. This proved to be challenging as some actors within and external to the administration feared a loss of influence when the project started and it correspondingly took some time to develop a common understanding of LvO's goals.

When problems occurred, strong *leadership* and adamant *political support* greatly mitigated the issue. First, the leading project manager and the LvO team played a key role in the resolution of conflicts by following a strategy of clear and transparent communication and by insisting on a participatory approach. While some institutions already had representatives that were committed to the programme, the project team facilitated cooperation and the broadening of commitment by pointing out the crucial role of actors' active participation in LvO for its success. Second, education had a central place on Freiburg's political agenda, and the mayor for education strongly supported LvO, which facilitated the mobilisation of additional resources and the continuous development of the programme.

Moreover, LvO's output of concrete projects and products helped the programme to gain acceptance via higher visibility. In this regard, *educational monitoring* was successful in delivering educational reports and studies that also fed back into politics and inspired the creation of new networks. Previous monitoring experiences that had been made under the RB-programme and had produced a first education report in 2008, werefertile ground for its further development with the additional resources of LvO. This bore fruit in a number of ways: A second report on educational inequality in the context of migration and social inequalitywas published in 2010. Following a joint initiative of LvO and the local education authority, education and migration were then included as new topics into a biennial citizen survey. ,Monitoring under LvO became a "bridge" between different sources of knowledge. One example of this is a *workshop report on education and migration* (Initiative-LEIF 2012) that brought together the findings of two previous reports that showed a strong link between migration background and educational achievement, added local quantitative data, and complemented these with qualitative interviews. This, together with other LvO projects, inspired the establishment of the network education and migration [*Netzwerk Bildung und Migration*]. In conclusion, education monitoring was proved to be important as it increased the knowledge ofthe local education system and LvO's additional resources contributed to a quality increase of education reporting.

Several concrete projects were developed in Freiburg, in *cooperation with civil society and administration*, in the mandatory and optional fields of activity of LvO. For example, in the field of education joint working group of different actors (LvO-team, small and big education providers and the chambers) developed two products. One was the Freiburger magnifier [*Freiburger Lupe*], an online tool that increases the transparency of education offers in different stages of the lifecycle.[15] The second development was that the working group succeeded in establishing a neutral consulting institution that provides information for educational services consumers. While these two projects were ultimately successful, their development did not occur without conflict. A fundamental obstacle to initial cooperation was that many education providers were already active in this field and therefore stood in competition with each other to some extent. Here, the explicit communication that provider-neutral consultation was the goal proved essential to keep the respective actors engaged in the project. LvO also inspired cooperation between civil societal associations, which was greatly aided by financial support from the local administration and foundations. For example, a project on Green Tech Jobs [*Green-Tech Berufe*] was jointly developed by the craft chamber, an institution for ecological education and representatives of youth-work with concrete support from the LvO team. Moreover, Freiburg was generally successful at involving many foundations and assisted in the creation of a local association of foundations.

The future prospects for local education management in Freiburg are favourable in terms of *sustainability*. This is partly due to the fact that the structural conditions are favourable, i.e. there are functioning networks and good financial background conditions. LvO complemented the local education office that previously existed . Additional funds will go to education management, something already envisaged/requested in the applications for LvO's two phases. Moreover, education consulting will be continued (provider neutral) and regular administrative resources will be devoted to LvO components, such as the governance structures and concrete projects, in order to secure their future. However, a significant reduction of resources could still become an effective constraint of the process of capacity-building that started under LvO: several interviewees from civil society remarked that LvO's time frame was too short to effect structural changes in local education policy making.

2. Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn

With regard to governance structures, Mühldorf chose to attach the LvO project team as a direct staff unit to the *Landrat* where the cooperation culture and responsibilities of the governing circle, and the

[15] See http://www.leif-freiburg.de

steering group were quite different from Freiburg. Primary functions of the governing circle included exchange of information and legitimising the implementation steps, while agenda setting and – to a certain extent – decision-making were mainly in the hands of the Landrat and the LvO-team. In the same vein, the steering group only consisted of the latter two and three divisional managers from the local administration. Mühldorf, which did not have any prior experience with programmes such as LvO, faced two big challenges at the start of the programme. First, the programme's goals were regarded as imprecise and not well understood by local stakeholders, including the administration. In addition, the new personnel hired for LvO at a high salary (compared with wages in the local administration) had no previous connections to the district or its educational networks. These factors complicated access to, and cooperation with, relevant local stakeholders. Second, the administrative structures of this rural district were an initial obstacle to accepting the programme: The 31 municipalities are legal independent entities with their own competences in education policy and some perceived the programme as an additional financial burden with concrete costs (financed via redistribution from the municipalities to the district) and no concrete benefits.

Political support and leadership proved to be very important for the resolution of these problems that had led to dissatisfaction and necessitated a redesign of LvO during the implementation phase. In particular, the commitment of the *Landrat* was a key factor in determining the successful implementation of LvO, and two of his decisions were critical for the creation of cooperation within the project. First, in order to improve cooperation and clarify accountability between the project team and the local administration, he introduced a mentor system [*Patensystem*] between administrational divisions and the LvO employees, under which the heads of divisions were given responsibility for one particular field of activity to be jointly developed with the corresponding LvO employee(s). This system also had positive spill-over effects as the mentors facilitated the project team's access to local politicians and practitioner networks and were respected in the district. Second, the heads of the political factions in the *Kreistag* [district council] were included in the GC, which increased LvO's connection to local politics, the exchange of information and the political accountability of LvO to local education management.

Compared to Freiburg, *educational monitoring* was more complicated to implement given that Mühldorf had no prior monitoring experience. For example, unlike most urban districts it did not have a statistical unit to collect and process data, which were hard to collect as they were scattered among a wide number of institutions. In addition, data from external institutions, such as the Bavarian statistical office, were only available in a highly aggregated manner or displayed significant time lags of two to three years. The start of monitoring led to irritations, as some institutions feared that data would be used to judge their performance. Therefore, some were reluctant to cooperate with the monitoring team of LvO, who had to clarify their use of the data. Despite this clarification, getting access to data from the administration often remained complicated and time-intensive, and some institutions refrained from disclosing data. The latter aspect is also indicative of the fact that monitoring was a new task for the district and that a culture of how to make use of this new type of knowledge has yet to be developed. Frequent personnel changes within the LvO-monitoring team led to a loss of information and exacerbated these problems. However, the first education report was published in 2012 and attracted great interest from local politicians as a potential basis for political decision-making. For example, the report helped to clarify that school leavers without a degree often still managed to directly start an apprenticeship or work. This was a very important finding, because previous analyses had shown that the number of school-leavers without a degree was significantly higher than in other Bavarian districts.

The *cooperation between civil society and administration* worked best where the programme could build upon existing networks, e.g. between schools and economic actors in VET, and when LvO nevertheless created added benefits. Here, the WG were a fruitful means for promoting cooperation, as practitioners could jointly develop goals and concrete projects that were intended to improve education quality and to retain and attract qualified youth in order to prevent skill shortages. A concrete example is an education portal [*Bildungsportal*], a website that presents the educational offers in the district, the joint

training of childcare workers and the upgrading of childcare facilities towards family centres. Additionally, the cooperation between the chambers, a semi-public foundation and regional higher education institutions has made higher education courses available within the district.

In Mühldorf, the prospects for a *sustainable* development of local education management are quite good. While the programme gave education policy a different place on the political agenda and increased the local politicians' and stakeholders' perception of education as a local and joint responsibility, the *Landrat* that acted as a key policy entrepreneur for LvO was recently re-elected and has already signalled his continued commitment. The introduction of the mentoring system has also had a very positive effect as it facilitated contact with local politicians and key education stakeholders, whereas concrete projects were successful in generally boosting local support for LvO. When the programme gained acceptance and an increasingly positive reputation, formerly reluctant stakeholders started to cooperate – a positive "contagion effect". The district has already signalled the continuation of education management and monitoring, which were also envisaged in the application for LvO. However, some members of the district council still have reservations towards the approach of local education management as they regard education policy as no responsibility of the local level.

3. Leipzig

In contrast to the first two cases, Leipzig had opted for a decentralised approach in the allocation of LvO personnel. Moreover, as a major city its administrative apparatus is much larger and the **governance structures** of LvO were concomitantly more focussed on the inclusion of different administrative departments. The latter already cooperated in the programme application and were subsequently represented in the governing circle. This ensured a consistent approach from application to implementation. More generally, it had a beneficial effect on cooperation between departments and divisions within the administration that had little prior knowledge of each other's tasks in education. Despite this interdepartmental cooperation, some employees of the administration expected a further increase of their workload and were therefore initially reluctant to cooperate with the project team. Moreover, a comparatively strong compartmentalisation of the administration impeded fast programme development and initially complicated the establishment of working routines between the administration and the LvO team. As a reaction, Leipzig also instituted a mentor system, where the LvO employees received guidance from higher administration officers that had already been involved in the programme application. This decreased the potential conflict within the administration and enabled a quicker development of working relationships.

While LvO in Leipzig had *political support* from the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for education, two additional factors stand out. First, the leadership of the former chief officer of the department for education was very important for success in Leipzig. He was a key policy entrepreneur from application through implementation and was lobbied for the inclusion of LvO employees in existing working groups and panels. Moreover, his initiative facilitated coordination in local education associated with a merger of the departments for school and welfare. Second, LvO created positive feedback effects for education as a local political responsibility. Since 2011, the city council has held a yearly meeting on education for which its factions have nominated educational speakers. Furthermore, in 2012 the GC decided on seven key goals for local education policy that were confirmed by the city council in the following year. These aspects are indicative of an increased awareness of education in the political discourse.

Although Leipzig had no prior experience with *educational monitoring***,** LvO nevertheless succeeded in the build-up of monitoring capacities and produced a substantial amount of educational reporting. Compared to the other cases, Leipzig invested a substantial amount of personnel resources into monitoring and profited from additional financial support from a local foundation. Monitoring also benefited from a

close cooperation with the DIPF; and the monitoring guidelines by the PT-DLR were perceived as very helpful although they had to be adapted to local circumstances. The educational reports, which were published in 2010 and 2012, compile a substantial amount of information and are structured along educational biographies and differentiated by learning sites. These were complemented by two reports on school-development and six special studies that focused on selected aspects of local education.[16] Despite the impressive performance, educational monitoring faced obstacles similar to Mühldorf: the lack of a central database, difficult cooperation with some departments and education providers, data not available in the appropriate form, for example, in time series or for the informal sector of the education system. Additionally, the datasets of different institutions often gave different values for the same indicator. Despite these growing pains, educational monitoring had nonetheless a very important effect on the creation and dissemination of knowledge among key administrative personnel and politicians. One concrete example is that the first education report identified a high rate of school drop-outs and in turn, local education policy and LvO were redirected towards this topic.

Arguably, the *cooperation between civil society and administration* remained more limited in Leipzig compared to the other cases due to the preponderance of administrative actors. Thus, the LvO team did not engage in the creation of new networks but cooperated with already existing networks for which LvO provided an additional input. The inclusion of civil societal associations and other external actors was stronger in the working groups, the implementation of concrete projects, and an annual educational conference that increased the visibility of LvO activities for a broader audience. A registry of offers in cultural education is an example of successful cooperation between the administration, LvO and cultural institutions. Another example of cross-institutional cooperation is a pilot project called out-seeking parental work [*Aufsuchende Elternarbeit*], in which LvO, a school in a structurally disadvantaged area, social workers and the *Christlicher Verein Junger Menschen* [CVJM – Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)] have come together to strengthen the awareness of the parental role in education. This project facilitated the educational transition of children from socially disadvantaged families and is now continued by the school. Leipzig also succeeded in the creation of provider-neutral education consulting, which had already been attempted before, but had failed because of competitive pressures between different providers.

Although Leipzig managed to create two regular and permanent positions for education monitoring and education consulting, the case study revealed more critical views on its *sustainability*. Compared to the first two cases, the fiscal situation of Leipzig is rather tense and core tasks such as investments in school infrastructure and the provision for a growing number of social assistance recipients have priority. Second, some external actors could not overcome rivalries despite general support for cooperation and others even refrained from cooperating due to the limited duration of the programme, as they did not see a benefit in "short-time" cooperation. Third, high personnel fluctuations in the project team, the administration and cooperating organisation were an obstacle to developing the programme in certain fields of activity, which also raised concerns for sustainability with more limited personnel resources.

4. Bremen

The *governance structures* that Bremen chose were a hybrid approach of personnel allocation, which are comparatively complex, with one GC and four SGs: one for the coordination of the overall project, one for each of the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven, and additionally a steering group for a localised approach in Bremen's city quarter of Gröpelingen. This division of governance among five bodies made steering and coordination very time-intensive. In the same vein, several stakeholders (both internal and external to the administration) argued that they could not perceive clear goal- or priority-setting in the overall project. Similar to other cases, the new LvO personnel had initial difficulties to "get access" to the

[16] For concrete examples and more information, please consult Annex E.

administration, which functioned better when and where closer working relationships could be developed on the basis of direct cooperation between LvO personnel and the responsible administrative personnel. Furthermore, the limited financial capacities of Bremen, as well as limited personnel and time resources on part of the administration made cooperation more difficult, because some actors perceived the project as an additional workload. An additional challenge was existing tensions between different administrative departments, which displayed a varying commitment towards LvO. Arguably, the project worked best in Gröpelingen, where the development of cooperation between various actors was because of the localised approach.

Bremen is a very instructive case for the role of *political support and leadership*. Here, conflicts between administrative departments could not be resolved by political decree from the Lord Mayor, because he does not have the authority to issue orders to the other members of the executive and administration. Thus a top-down approach (as in Mühldorf) was not feasible. In Bremen, the political support of the education senator was crucial for the programme's introduction and success. She promoted integration and diversity as core topicsof LvO in Bremen. Against the background of strong inequalities between and within different quarters in Bremen, she commissioned a study on migration and education, which was carried out by researchers at the University Bremen and published in 2011 (Karakaşoğlu et al., 2011). One central recommendation of this study was to create a quality assurance and support programme for education facilities in areas with a high share of migrants. This programme was set up in Gröpelingen and named "quality in multicultural schools and city districts" [QUIMS – *Qualität in multikulturellen Schulen und Stadtteilen*]. However, the political support for LvO decreased when a new education senator took office and came under political pressure to focus on the core area of education in schools, to invest in teachers and to reduce the cancellation of lessons due to personnel shortages.

Bremen had good preconditions for *educational monitoring* as the state government has its own statistical office, but LvO provided additional resources to establish education reporting. Influenced by the expert study cited above, the first educational report was prepared with a special focus on the impact of migratory and socio-economic background (Autorenteam Bildungsberichterstattung Bremen und Bremerhaven 2012), increasing the knowledge of the association between socio-economic background and educational success in Bremen. This was complemented by two additional studies on school graduates in Bremerhaven that stressed the necessity to provide more training places for school graduates, which in turn fuelled a discussion between local politics and the chambers. As in the other cases, education reporting had a positive effect on the creation of knowledge about local education and monitoring was also the area in which cooperation between different departments functioned best compared to other thematic fields. However, data availability can still be improved from the perspective of local stakeholders, especially for particular neighbourhoods, as well as further and adult education.

The cooperation between **administration and civil societal actors** varied in success. First, the development of a common approach to education consulting failed, because the participating stakeholders in the respective working group could not agree on a common concept. Second, in Bremerhaven, the cooperation between a broad range of civil society stakeholders in workshops and conferences resulted in the development of an integration concept. However, further steps were blocked by the local administration, where the proponents of the concept did not occupy decision-making positions. In contrast, the establishment of an educational centre in Gröpelingen is an example of successful cooperation between local actors with different backgrounds. With the introduction of QUIMS (strongly supported by the local LvO team) consulting opportunities for teachers and other education personnel was offered, and topical workshops were held in order to increase cooperation with parents and pupils.

Another success of the localised approach was the joint planning of a new school, called the *Campus Ohlenhof*. In this case, LvO facilitated the cooperation between different administrative departments and local stakeholders, such as a recreational youth centre, a childcare institution and a school. To summarise,

the concrete projects in Gröpelingen show the benefits of a localised approach, but concrete projects could not always be expanded to cover the whole city.

Compared to previous cases, many of the interviewees had a critical perception of the *sustainability* of LvO in Bremen, independent of whether they were representatives of the administration or the civil society. The dire financial situation of Bremen was a central challenge, as many of LvO's projects would arguably not have been feasible within the normal budget. Thus, even if the programme's components, such as monitoring and education management, are to be continued, it is an open question as to whether the programme will have lasting effects. The loss of personnel capacities after the end of LvO might also endanger newly developed routines in coordination and communication, especially under the already tense situation of a heavily overburdened administration. Similarly the programme duration might have been too short for Bremen, as many processes are still on-going and even the future of successful programmes such as QUIMS is strongly dependent on Bremen's fiscal state and related political decisions.

5. Kreis Recklinghausen

Recklinghausen, which chose a hybrid approach like Bremen, constitutes a special case because of its unique structure as a district that consists of ten rather large cities. The initiative to apply for LvO came from four cities within the district, who wanted to shore up existing or implement already planned projects, but needed the formal support of the district government in order to be eligible for participation in LvO. When the application was approved by the BMBF, a part of LvO's project team was directly situated in the so-called lighthouse projects [*Leuchtturmprojekte*] in the four cities. As the governance of LvO was strongly centred on these projects, the interviews in Recklinghausen showed that many interviewees remained unsure on which basis priority- and goal-setting within the *governance structures* should occurr. Moreover, tensions developed between cities with and without lighthouse projects as some of those without lighthouse projects, envied the additional resources, such as personnel, provided by LvO to the four cities. These conflicts were partly allayed by district-wide development workshops and the perspective of policy transfer towards the end of the programme, which had been clearly communicated throughout the process. However, municipal governments were sceptical about interference in education by the district, because they feared that it would usurp their competencies. These conflicts were never fully resolved, but political commitment mattered for their mediation.

In regards to *political commitment and leadership*, the basic conflict between the district level and the cities complicated political agreement. Because of the district's limited formal education competences, individual mayors were key for their municipalities' commitment to the programme. While the *Landrat* was a strong supporter of LvO and tried to use his connections to individual mayors, LvO could only point to structural challenges of education policy-making but not necessarily resolve fundamental coordination problems or increase the limited steering capacity of the district government. Moreover, political differences impeded a binding decision on common goals and approaches in the main governance bodies, because some members were unsure if their municipalities would support these goals politically.

Recklinghausen had no previous experience with *educational monitoring* and no central statistical office at the district level. This initially made data collection very cumbersome as cities had different capacities to collect and provide data, and some cities were reluctant to provide data. Moreover, foundations and school authorities were sceptical about the usefulness of monitoring, and little knowledge about the aims of educational monitoring existed in some cases. When the first education report was published in 2011 this led to very mixed reactions. One central, and positively received, finding was that the district had already reached its goals to increase the share of school graduates with an university entrance qualification [*Abitur*] and to reduce the number of school-drop outs without a certificate. This corrected former analyses that had not taken the vocational colleges in the district into account. However, discussions on the use of indicators emerged and some cities complained about a seemingly worse

performance in the provision of childcare, which was not supported by their own data. This led to a continued discourse between the municipalities and LvO and culminated in the development of a common tool for data collection for the ten cities in the district. However, it was not possible to implement an obligatory data collection, which would have required additional monitoring resources on the part of LvO and the municipal governments, or a transfer of the formal responsibility for education monitoring from the cities to the district level.

Similar to Bremen, the *cooperation between civil society and administration* mostly occurred at a local level in the four cities with lighthouse projects. Generally, administration-external actors had a very limited role in the governance structures. Moreover, the lack of involvement by civil society actors meant that governance bodies remained strongly focused on core educational aspects, i.e. schools. Due to the lighthouse approach, LvO had limited district-wide effects besides monitoring. For example, efforts to improve the management of school-to-work transitions were stifled by different existing initiatives across the municipalities, which also competed for skilled youth. These problems might, however, decrease under a new initiative of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia that is intended to support the development of a "new transition-system" in VET. Additionally, the municipalities were quite reluctant to develop a joint concept for education consulting and preferred to develop their own approaches. LvO published a document that compiles many educational offers in the district (Kreis Recklinghausen 2012a), but did not manage to establish local provider-neutral consultation offices on a district-wide basis. In contrast, LvO worked better in the lighthouse projects, because they improved the transparency of, and access to, educational offers in the respective cities. Here, the joint development of projects between administrative and civil society actors functioned comparatively well. Although the impact of LvO on these projects cannot be directly assessed since some of them had already existed prior to LvO, the additional funding was very beneficial to these projects. A sign of the relative success of the lighthouse projects is that some of them are already being transferred within and between cities.[17]

The sustainability of the structures developed under LvO in Recklinghausen must be seen from two perspectives. On the one hand, a regional educational office at the district level had already been created by the RBN-programme of Northrhine-Westphalia, and LvO was integrated into its governance structures. Moreover, the lighthouse projects were very successful in their respective cities and the LvO-personnel closely cooperated with the respective administrations, which should be beneficial for their sustainability. On the other hand, the strained fiscal resources in the municipal governments might impede the transfer of the lighthouse projects to further cases, especially if the experienced personnel of LvO cannot be kept in order to accompany the transfer.

[17] For the development of project transfer, see Kreis Recklinghausen (various): Bildungsblick Recklinghausen.

CHAPTER 5: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a comparative analysis and synthesis of the main findings emerging from the case studies. These findings are put into a broader context here. As a reminder (see Chapter 1), the guiding research question is to identify factors (institutional, political, socio-economic) that can explain why LvO was more or less successful in participating local governments. The second goal is to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of LvO ,as a policy instrument, to improve capacities for central steering and coordination in the decentralised German education system. The first question is the focus of the following chapter, whereas the final concluding chapter of this study discusses the second. Table 5.1 presents details on the most important aspects of the individual cases analysed in the previous section.

Table 5.1: Most important takeaways from individual case studies.

Case	*Main characteristics/findings*				
	Freiburg	**Mühldorf**	**Leipzig**	**Bremen**	**Recklinghausen**
Main background factors	Prior experience with Educational Region *programme*; Regional educational office (RB);comparatively good fiscal situation and state of education	No previous experiences in education management; challenge in retention of qualified youth	Prior experience in *Learning Regions*, high unemployment and inequality between cities' districts, fiscal problems	Prior experience in *Learning Regions*, high unemployment and inequality between cities' districts, fiscal problems	prior experience in *Learning Regions*; *Land* programmes: educational office, educational transitions, high unemployment and in-equality between cities, fiscal problems, few policy making competences of Kreis versus cities
Programme development/ conflicts	Conflicts about personnel allocation and funding for concrete projects; conflicts in education consulting, mostly resolved during programme development	Conflicts between LvO-team and administration, resolved via introduction of sponsor system; political scepticism, reduced via inclusion of more political representatives in LvO-governance	Conflicts between LvO-team and administration, resolved via introduction of sponsor system; strong personnel fluctuations	Conflicts between administrative departments, only partly resolved; Conflicts in further education consulting, not resolved	Conflicts between cities' and Kreis, only partially resolved; Conflicts about monitoring and its results partly resolved via discussion on data use
Political support	High	High	High	Initially high, lower after change of senator	High on district level, varied in districts' cities
Scope of monitoring	Broad	Comparatively small	Broad	Broad	Medium
Benefits	Concrete projects and products; Increase of knowledge via monitoring; development of new networks	Concrete projects and products; Increase of knowledge via monitoring; development of new networks	Concrete projects and products; Increase of knowledge via monitoring; topic more visible in local politics	Very positive effect on education in Gröpelingen; increase of knowledge via monitoring	Concrete projects in four cities (lighthouse projects), increase of knowledge via monitoring
Limitations	Sustainability questioned by some interviewees	No provider-neutral education consulting; Sustainability questioned by some interviewees	Little development of new networks, Sustainability questioned by some interviewees	Little city-wide effects of the programme; Sustainability highly questioned by some interviewees due to city-states financial situation	Little effect in cities without lighthouse projects; transfer as a central challenge for sustainability

Source: Authors' compilation based on interview findings reported in Chapters 4 and Annex E. For information on the LR programme see page 26.

Both LvO and the "Learning Regions" programme have been evaluated extensively (cf. for the LR programme: Fink 2011; Hebborn 2009a; Mack et al. 2006; Schäfer 2009; Tippelt et al. 2006; Tippelt and Schmidt 2007; for LvO itself: Gnahs 2010; Kann and Rentl 2011; Haugg 2012; Haller 2012; Lindner et al. 2013; Otto et al. 2012; Niedlich and Brüsemeister 2011; Niedlich et al. 2014; Stolz 2012; Täubig 2011). Taken as a whole, these studies identify a number of factors that have been found to influence the relative success of the local implementation of LR and LvO, respectively, e.g. political support from the head of the local government, the inclusion of different stakeholders in the process of goal-setting, previous experiences with educational monitoring, the availability of local resources, etc. Based on the insights of this literature and the empirical findings from the case studies, the following section will bring together and summarise the main insights from the cases, structured along five core topics: governance structures, political leadership and commitment, educational monitoring, cooperation between administration and civil society actors, and the challenge of sustainability.

Governance structures

In creating sustainable governance structures that are both inclusive and effective, the main challenge is to establish a set of institutions that allows for a broad participation of different stakeholders on the one hand, but also enables policy-makers to define and implement concrete goals effectively on the other. Ignoring minor variations, all five cases established quite similar governance structures in the implementation phase of LvO (see Chapter 4), consisting of the governing circle, the steering group and working groups.

All in all, these governance structures are both inclusive and effective. However, there are important differences across the cases. A critical question is how the LvO project team was embedded in the local administrative infrastructure. The cases followed different strategies here, each of which has advantages and disadvantages. Establishing a staff unit within the administration can help to promote goals effectively, but it can also lead to conflicts between the top and the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. It might also lead to policy solutions "detached" from the reality on the ground. Embedding project team members in individual departments increases the sensitivity for particular problems in the individual divisions, but it makes a coordinated strategy more difficult to achieve and entails the risk of project team members "going native", therefore diminishing the impetus for change.

A second issue is how the members of the LvO project team were recruited and the conditions under which they are employed. The case studies reveal a number of difficult trade-offs, for which no easy solutions exist. On the one hand, a project team consisting of highly qualified and highly paid external members can provide fresh insights and new perspectives on local education policy-making. A positive example is Freiburg, where a highly qualified and motivated head of the project team played an important role in the implementation of LvO. On the other hand, however, the lack of local connections on the part of the project team might antagonise parts of the administration, particularly in connection with conflicts about pay and employment conditions as happened in the case of Mühldorf. This can lead to the blockade of new policy initiatives by local administrations, which in turn can enhance personnel fluctuations in the project team itself.

In most cases, a critical issue in the beginning concerned conflicts between the project team and the local administration. In Leipzig and Mühldorf am Inn, mentoring systems were introduced after the initial phase, which greatly improved the cooperation between administrators and LvO personnel. Therefore, an important lesson is that the project team should consist of external and internal members. When the members of the project team are all external, they lack local connections and knowledge. However, when the project team consists of internal members only (recruited from within the administration), it is less likely that it will create the necessary impulse for change. Hence, a mix of external and internal recruits is

advisable to ensure that local knowledge is available and that the project team can promote change as a semi-external and independent actor.

Political support and leadership

All case studies, as well as the interviews with actors on the federal level, revealed the central importance of political support and leadership. Political support from the head of the local government is crucial to promote the central goals of the programme, both within the administration as well as in the broader educational landscape, and to help solve conflicts. The case of Mühldorf showed that hierarchical interventions from the top of the administration were critical to save the programme, in particular when the project team became involved in conflicts between different administrative departments. However, political leadership also matters at lower levels of the hierarchy. Freiburg and Leipzig are examples where individuals in the LvO project team or the administration acted as "policy entrepreneurs", contributing to the success of the programme because of their personal commitment and management capabilities.

On the one hand, the fact that political leadership and political support matters so much may be regarded as a problem (see below). Political support is fragile and can vanish when political majorities in local political bodies or political leadership change (as happened in Bremen). When the commitment of individuals is crucial in order to make the programme successful, this suggests a structural weakness in the design of a policy instrument that largely relies on voluntary cooperation between different stakeholders. Furthermore, it is hard to predict ex ante how strong the political commitment of particular individuals (heads of local government) will really be in the end.

On the other hand, the case studies also help to understand under which conditions the mobilisation of political support is more likely. A first advantage of LvO over the previous LR programme is that in the case of LvO, local governments had to credibly show in the application that the initiative was supported by the top of the hierarchy. The crucial instrument to mobilise political support is visibility. That local authorities had to compete for funding encouraged local policy-makers to get involved, as they could claim credit in the event that they were successful. Visibility also matters in implementation. In cases such as Mühldorf am Inn, the project team reached out to local politicians to get them involved in the process. Once concrete outputs of the programme were visible and discussed locally, stakeholders who were initially reluctant to cooperate became more interested in getting involved – a classic bandwagon effect. Educational monitoring was central here, because it created a visible output in the form of local educational reports. In addition, the case studies revealed other positive examples, e.g. the establishment of web-based education portals or local cooperation projects between individual schools, foundations and the project team (e.g. Bremen or Recklinghausen).

Educational monitoring and management

Capacity-building for educational monitoring and management were at the core of the LvO programme. As mentioned above, a weakness in the German system is the lack of transparency and coordination among the multitude of educational offers that exist at the local level. Different departments and institutions of the local administration are responsible for different sectors of the education system with little coordination and communication between them since formal responsibilities are often concentrated at the state level. A culture for evidence-based policy-making in education policy is developing slowly at the federal and the state level, but prior to LvO, local efforts in educational monitoring remained limited to a small number of local governments.

In this respect, LvO has been a great success. Even though the level of detail and sophistication of local educational reports may vary, educational monitoring has improved considerably in all of the cases included in this report. Local educational reports are concrete and visible outputs that are discussed broadly

in local political arenas. In some cases (e.g. Freiburg, Leipzig and Mühldorf), local educational reports identified specific problems in the local education system that had not been on the agenda of policy-makers before. This is a good example of how a solid evidence base leads to a shift in the focus of policy-making, exposing existing biases in the perception of local educational problems related to personal experiences or dispositions.

Capacities for educational monitoring vary, depending on structural conditions. Large cities with their own statistical offices face fewer challenges than smaller cities with more limited resources. The largest challenges in creating capacities can be found in districts, which contain a number of medium-sized cities (Recklinghausen). In these cases, the cities have some interest in developing capacities by themselves, maybe even competing with other municipalities in the district, and the district-level government has limited resources on its own. LvO provided very specific support in the field of educational monitoring to help local authorities in need: it developed a handbook for local educational monitoring and even provided an IT tool that localities could use. This support was helpful for some (e.g. middle-sized cities in the district of Recklinghausen), but it had limits, in particular in the rural districts or small cities, which simply did not have the administrative capacities to produce educational reports on the same level of sophistication as large cities. Very large cities, in contrast, had set up their own statistical infrastructure and procedures that were not necessarily compatible with the LvO guidelines. Furthermore, the support from the federal level could have been more tailored to the specific needs of localities. For example, developing an IT tool on a software platform that is rarely used in local administrations limits the effectiveness of external support.

The case studies also showed that the creation of capacities in educational monitoring needs to be accompanied by the development of a certain political discursive culture that is able to recognise the benefits and limitations of monitoring. The provision of quantitative data in the form of educational reports and such may lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. First of all, it is important to point out that quantitative data produced in educational reports should not supplant practitioner and other types of knowledge. Instead, the goal should be to combine and make use of different kinds of knowledge. Second, the case studies showed that the potential of educational monitoring to help address local educational problems was often overestimated. Lacking previous experience with educational monitoring, some expected that educational reports would provide sophisticated analyses on the causes and consequences of local educational problems, instead of collecting data on the status quo, which led to a certain disappointment. This was a challenge in cases that did not have previous experiences in educational monitoring. Sophisticated analyses on the causes of particular educational problems could only be provided in cities with experience and sufficient resources (e.g. large statistical offices or existing ties to university researchers as in Freiburg, Leipzig and Bremen). Finally, it needs to be pointed out from the beginning that educational reports can improve the empirical foundations for debates about priorities in local education policy-making, but that these reports should not and cannot replace political decision-making itself. In order to be an effective contribution to local debates, educational reports need to be accessible and understandable for the population. They should not simply be “data deserts”, i.e. mere collections of statistical data. Instead, they should adopt a problem-oriented focus, highlighting the specific challenges that local educational landscapes are facing.

With regard to improving educational management, two kinds of initiatives were most common in the cases: First, the reorganisation of the internal structure of local administrations, often by merging different departments. The merging of the department for education and youth welfare services in Leipzig is a good example. However, this was rather the exception than the rule. It was more likely in city governments rather than rural districts, where the fundamental problem is not so much the distribution of competencies between different departments, but the cleavage between the district level and individual municipalities within the district (as in Recklinghausen).

A second popular instrument for improving educational management found in almost all of the cases was the establishment of platforms documenting the multitude of educational offers (e.g. the *Freiburger Lupe*), often supported by the creation of consulting services. The crucial challenge here was to establish platforms that were provider-neutral, i.e. that did not privilege one educational provider over another. Again, this was achieved in most of the cases, but not in Recklinghausen, where the competition between existing educational providers prevented a joint approach towards provider-neutral educational consulting. In general, improving the transparency of local educational landscapes may only be a first step towards improving educational management. In none of the cases did LvO lead to a thorough reorganisation or consolidation of existing educational offers that would, however, be beneficial in order to facilitate transition processes at the intersection between different parts of the education system.

Cooperation with civil society

Besides promoting educational monitoring and management, LvO aimed at creating sustainable networks between administrative and civil society actors. Previous experiences with "Learning Regions" indicated that a broad and inclusive involvement of stakeholders in the process of defining concrete goals was beneficial for the success of the programme. The potential downside of the inclusive approach is that decision-making processes are slowed down and that policy decisions have the character of lowest-common-denominator decisions. By establishing a multi-layered governance structure from the broad and inclusive educational conferences and working groups to the more elitist governing circles, LvO managed to create an infrastructure that is both inclusive and effective.

Compared to other policy programmes, the innovative component of LvO was to involve non-profit foundations as local or thematic partners. In the initial phase of LvO, the exact role that foundations ought to play was somewhat unclear. Foundations thought of themselves as external change agents challenging and questioning established working routines in a constructive manner and providing additional expert advice to local administrators. Policy-makers and administrators, in contrast, often expected financial support from foundations and might not have taken them as seriously as those would have liked. For example, in all of the cases, representatives of foundation partners were members in the governing circle of LvO, but did not have full voting rights. It seems that other well-established local stakeholders such as chambers of industry and commerce or educational institutions had a better standing in local educational landscapes, although this did not result in open conflicts between foundations partners and established stakeholders.

Overall, the participation of foundations as new stakeholders in educational landscapes was regarded positively. However, some local authorities had previous experience with foundations, or could connect to a vibrant local foundation scene, whereas others could not be introduced to a certain bias. In Freiburg, the support of the Bertelsmann Foundation – a well-established actor in education on the national level – significantly contributed to making this case a role model for others. In other cases, local governments had a hard time identifying local partners. The *Stiftungsverbund LvO* helped to connect districts and cities to foundation partners, but these often came from a different region and thus did not have the necessary local knowledge. Alternatively, local governments partnered with quasi-public foundations (local foundations of the public savings bank were popular), which limits the extent to which foundation partners can really contribute external expert advice. Therefore, in general, the involvement of foundations had the largest positive effects in those localities that cooperated with well-endowed foundations or had previous experiences with this.

Besides foundations, LvO governance structures included other major stakeholders in local educational landscapes such as chambers of industry and commerce, employers' associations, unions, educational institutions, etc. In Mühldorf am Inn, the project team reached out to political decision-makers in order to mobilise political support for the programme. Notably absent from LvO, however, are parents,

teachers and students. It is interesting that in all of the cases, the networks that were created were primarily networks between "professionals" (administrators, policy-makers, interest group representatives, etc.). Although LvO primarily aimed to improve the structures and institutions of local educational governance, reaching out more actively to parents and students would have increased the visibility and legitimacy of local educational governance – crucial factors in mobilising political support. One reason why parents and students were not involved more systematically in LvO is the fact that the federal government does not have any legal competencies in the area of school policy, which is where parent and student involvement matters most.

Sustainability

As part of their funding applications, applicants already had to present a credible plan on how to make the structures established during the programme's duration sustainable beyond the end of the funding period. In that respect, LvO was similar to other BMBF funding programmes. This stands in contrast to the fact that the case studies revealed that sustainability continues to be a major challenge for some of the participating districts and cities. The explanation for this apparent contradiction is four-fold:

- The *Verwertungsplan* [best translated as "application plan"] submitted as part of the initial proposal grants local authorities significant de facto leeway in its implementation. For example, even if the proposal envisages the creation of permanent positions in the local administration responsible for education monitoring, the administration could simply change the work assignments of personnel that are already employed.

- Local circumstances in terms of available resources and political majorities can and do change over the course of five years.

- The funding provided by LvO was rather generous compared to the amount of resources that local governments can mobilise after the end of the funding period. For instance, LvO project teams typically consisted of about 10 to 12 persons, whereas even in the case of a large city such as Leipzig, only two persons with permanent positions will remain in charge of educational monitoring and management after the end of LvO.

- The LvO programme provides carrots in the form of additional funding for a limited period of time, but it does not have sticks to enforce initial promises and plans. In theory, the ministry can recall funding when districts and cities do not comply with the funding guidelines even after the end of the project, but this happens very rarely since it is a sensitive political issue.

Given these structural limitations, the crucial difference between LvO and other programmes (such as LR) was that LvO required a high degree of political, and also fiscal commitment from local governments throughout the entire process. In other words, the logic of LvO is to support local governments, which are already quite committed to the goals of the programme when submitting the funding application, in order to promote sustainability of the established structures in the end. There were two concrete mechanisms behind how LvO mobilised political and fiscal commitment: First, only local governments could submit funding applications (cities or districts), whereas in the LR programme, proposals could also be submitted by other educational institutions or non-profit organisations. Second, LvO required local governments to contribute own resources (e.g. equipment, office space or even personnel). Stronger commitment was rewarded in the selection process.

The large majority of the interview partners were quite aware of the ambiguity associated with the challenge of sustainability. Given the relative generosity of funding for LvO during the programme period, most localities will not be able to mobilise the same amount of resources as they had available during the

programme's duration. To some extent, this is intentional on the part of LvO, because the programme aims at providing initial support in the critical first stages of capacity-building, which naturally requires more resources. However, the case studies also showed that local background conditions play an important role here. In poorer cities and districts (e.g. Bremen, Leipzig and Recklinghausen), the danger that funds will be diverted away from educational governance to other pressing social problems is more concrete than in wealthy cities or districts (Freiburg and Mühldorf am Inn).

A negative side effect of the limited programme duration was that some stakeholders actually refrained from engaging in cooperation with the project team, because they felt it was not worth the effort due to the short time frame (as happened in Freiburg and Leipzig). A similar dynamic could have been going on in local administrations though there was only concrete evidence for this in the case of Bremen. Public employees on life-time positions may be less willing to change their established routines when they are confronted with project team members who will be gone in a couple of years.

The most durable components of LvO are most likely those related to educational monitoring, which provides concrete benefits in the form of visible outputs. Setting up the procedures and routines for local educational monitoring is costly, and in that respect LvO provided critical external support in the first stages of capacity-building. A potential future problem is that the administrative and fiscal resources available for educational monitoring vary significantly across local governments (see above).It also remains unclear whether educational monitoring and management can continue to work as effectively as before with a reduced amount of personnel resources. Besides educational monitoring, structures created in educational management and consulting are also likely to remain in place, because they too produce visible outcomes in the form of consulting services. However, the case studies showed that educational consulting could not be further developed in localities where strong competitive pressures between education providers prohibited joint solutions.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, BROADER LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided an assessment on the effectiveness of the LvO programme as an example of a policy instrument that aims to improve coordination among multiple stakeholders and different levels of government, and at promoting educational monitoring and evidence-based policy making at the local level. The previous section discussed factors that might explain the relative success of the implementation of LvO in five participating districts and cities. In the concluding section, the contribution of the LvO programme as a whole is assessed, moving beyond the concrete case of LvO by drawing broader lessons that are of relevance for other cases besides Germany. First, the **beneficial contributions of LvO** to the governance of the German education system are highlighted, followed by a discussion of potential problems and limitations. This section concludes by providing concrete recommendations, both for the further development of LvO as well as for policy-makers interested in applying policy instruments similar to LvO.

LvO is an example of a particular kind of policy instrument, which primarily aims at mobilising voluntary support and cooperation. This has to be seen in the specific context of the German system, with a high degree of decentralised competencies in education governance. In a centralised education system, the central level can resort to legal changes or even administrative orders in order to effect change on the local level. In the German system (as in many other federalist countries), the role of the central level is more limited. It can try to influence processes at the local level by making available additional funds attached to specific conditions (the "politics of the golden rein"). Whether local governments apply for funding or not is up to them. In this particular case, the LvO programme could not even be conducted on a permanent basis because of the limited formal legal competencies of the federal government in education policy, but had to be defined as a model or pilot project. LvO aimed at changing administrative structures at the local level, but it did not intend to change the distribution of formal competencies between the local and the regional levels. Furthermore, the total amount of funding available (100 million Euros) was small compared to total amount of spending by the federal government and states on education every year (about 90 billion Euros in 2012).

Despite these limitations, the programme had a significant and positive impact on improving governance structures, and creating capacities for educational monitoring and management at the local level. The programme picked up a general sentiment in the policy-making community on all levels, which was to promote the development of local educational landscapes, i.e. to improve the coordination among different stakeholders and institutions with shared and partly competing competencies in education. LvO primarily rewarded and supported those localities, which were already quite committed to, and engaged in, developing new modes of governance and steering at the local level. As a consequence, some successful districts or cities such as Freiburg might become role models for others to follow. The transfer agencies that are currently being established (see Chapter 3) are the institutions in charge of organising this transfer from role models to other districts and cities. The states as important actors in education policy are more included in the current transfer phase, which is crucial in order to build the broad political support needed to overcome the numerous formal and informal veto points in the German education system. Overall, the bottom-up strategy of creating and supporting "islands of excellency" first, i.e. role models with well-functioning local educational landscapes, and then promoting the transfer of best practice models to other local governments is likely to be more successful and sustainable in the long run compared to hierarchical top-down approaches – at least in the context of decentralised education systems such as Germany.

Another strength of the LvO programme is that it was a "learning programme". The implementation of LvO was accompanied by a large-scale scientific evaluation of its effectiveness, and there was a feedback process between the academics in charge and the policy-makers. The programme was flexible

and adjustable enough to take in new insights. A concrete example was the development of sponsorships between foundations and a larger set of cities and districts based on particular topics, rather than having only local sponsorships between one local authority and a single foundation.

However, the voluntary approach to improving the governance of complex education systems also has **limitations**. Some of these result from the distribution of competencies across different levels of government and cannot be changed in the short term. Other limitations are related to the specific approach taken in the LvO programme. Lessons learned here can be relevant for other countries with decentralised education systems. Core issues in that respect are political leadership, sustainability, the usage of different kinds of knowledge and growing disparities between local governments.

Political support and leadership

The case studies revealed the central importance of political support and leadership for the successful implementation of LvO. The fact that leadership and the contributions of individuals play such an important role demonstrates a certain fragility of the underlying structures that are created. The case studies showed that in many local governments, the distribution of responsibilities and channels of accountability were unclear at the beginning. Solving these issues took up a significant amount of time and energy in the first critical phase.

Mobilising political support for the programme is hard to do, in particular if it is mostly concerned with structural and administrative reforms. One possible solution could be to increase the visibility of programmes such as LvO. The fact that local governments had to compete for funding at the beginning of LvO already helped to address this goal. Also, LvO produced concrete and visible output such as local educational reports or educational platforms. The case studies showed that whenever concrete outputs were produced, support for the programme increased.

However, more could have been done during the implementation phase. When a policy programme is discussed intensively in the local and national media, policy-makers develop a strong interest in supporting it and making it work. Mobilising public opinion creates additional legitimacy for necessary reforms. The brief media analysis in Chapter 3 showed that LvO was not a prominent topic compared to other issues in education policy. Many of the visible changes on the local level were not necessarily attributed to the LvO programme as such. On the national level, the programme was not discussed broadly in the media at all. Even though its goal was structural reforms, a broader involvement of citizens and a mobilisation of public opinion would have increased the political support for the progamme in general. This bias in favour of education “professionals” is also exemplified by the fact that governance structures in the individual cases mostly involved organised stakeholders and representatives of civil society, but not necessarily parents as major stakeholders in the system.

Sustainability

With regard to the sustainability of the effects of the programme, the case studies showed that this remains a problem, even though this issue was an important aspect in the selection of participating local governments. The crucial distinction between LvO and other funding programmes is that LvO required districts and cities to credibly express their political (and fiscal) commitment already at the beginning of the application process. This is likely to be a more successful strategy to promote sustainability in the participating cases, compared to relying on abstract sustainability plans, which are always open to different interpretations and can be adjusted to changing local circumstances. Still, LvO could only provide carrots, but little in the way of sticks. The option to withdraw or recall funding in the case where local authorities did not keep their original promises is not feasible, not only because this is politically sensitive but also because the federal government can in effect not reclaim funds spent on pilot projects such as LvO. It

would also have punished those local governments, who are already in a weak position and therefore most in need of external support. The fact that the federal government cannot set up an immediate successor to LvO also limits the effectiveness of positive incentives, because there is no more funding available that districts and cities could apply for. The transfer agencies can only partly compensate for the lack of a successor programme.

On the local level, the voluntary approach also has limits. Given the reduced set of competencies of local governments in education policy, local governments were dependent on the voluntary cooperation of different stakeholders. Fritz Scharpf (2000) has argued that voluntary cooperation between actors can be promoted most effectively when the government can cast a "shadow of hierarchy", i.e. when it can credibly threaten to resort to hierarchical forms of government when voluntary cooperation fails. The ability of local governments to cast such a shadow of hierarchy is limited, however. Therefore, the next step – already taken to a certain extent with the transfer agencies – is to get state governments involved in the process of developing local educational landscapes in order to rethink the distribution of competencies between the local and the state level, with the goal of establishing more effective and coordinated governance structures.

Use of knowledge

Furthermore, the case studies demonstrated that capacity-building in fields such as educational monitoring needs to be accompanied by the development of a concomitant culture in the usage of different types of knowledge. The introduction of educational monitoring triggered anxieties among some stakeholders that their performance would now be judged more strictly by means of quantitative measurement. Although these anxieties may have been overstated in most cases, this example shows that a particular usage culture is also related to different cultures of accountability (Fazekas and Burns 2012). In the German education system, local stakeholders are used to a culture of vertical administrative accountability (Hooge, Burns and Wilkoszewski 2012), i.e. accountability along administrative hierarchies. In contrast, LvO promoted the development of new horizontal types of accountability between local stakeholders, including the public. Strengthening mechanisms for accountability and transparency in governance structures that lack this culture requires extraordinary political leadership. Therefore, a significant achievement of successful political leaders in the studied cases was to start developing a culture of accountability and evidence-based policy-making, by creating political legitimacy among local stakeholders and the public in support of this process. Developing this culture in turn helps to ensure the sustainability of established governance structures and processes.

Besides anxieties about individual accountability, a second problem in the usage of data were difficulties in getting access to and integrating the use of different kinds of data distributed across numerous institutions. This problem is more pronounced in (rural) districts that lack the statistical resources to compile data and in cases where the task of data collection is distributed across various institutions. LvO provided significant external support by developing a handbook and by making available an IT tool. This external support, however, was less effective in cases when the local IT infrastructure (in terms of software) or local practices of data collection were not compatible. Furthermore, when developing instruments of external support, LvO could have taken into account the different needs of large and small cities, rural and municipal districts more systematically from the beginning on. Integrating different IT infrastructures and statistical procedures into one coherent framework is a long-term process, particularly in decentralised systems such as the German one. LvO was an important first step towards the goal of developing a framework for educational monitoring from the local to the national level, and this process is likely to continue in the future.

Growing disparities between municipalities

Finally, a limitation of LvO, related to the programme design more specifically, is its limited ability to counter the trend of growing disparities between local governments. This is again a consequence of the limited formal competencies of the federal government, which cannot intervene directly on the local level. The structure of the programme already implied that some municipalities and districts would get additional funding, whereas others would not. The competition rewarded those with high-quality proposals, i.e. those that were already ahead of the curve in the process of creating capacities for educational monitoring and management. These were not necessarily the ones in greatest need of external support. The transfer agencies that are now being created can, to a certain extent, allay these disparities but it is highly unlikely that local governments who did not participate in LvO will be able to catch up to the pioneers in a short period of time. Thus, more efforts should be undertaken to support municipalities and districts where the development of local educational landscapes is just at the beginning.

A second issue is that LvO did not systematically distinguish between different kinds of local governments. This may be a specific German problem, because the political institutions of local governments vary so much. In any case, LvO was most helpful to city governments (urban districts or city-states), because in these cases the limited competencies were concentrated in one local administration. This was different in the case of rural districts (containing different municipalities) or municipalities within rural districts. Here, competencies were distributed between the district and the municipality level. Large municipalities in districts could not act independently of the district level (this was a pressing issue in the district of Recklinghausen). And rural district governments themselves had more limited resources compared to urban districts or city-states. Therefore, in designing programmes such as LvO, particular attention should be paid to the question how the programme will effect and interact with different types of local governments.

Recommendations

In concluding, a number of concrete recommendations are presented, which are of potential relevance in the design of programmes similar to LvO in other country contexts, i.e. policy programmes that adopt a voluntary approach towards improving capacities for central steering and local educational management in decentralised education systems.

Let local governments compete for funding: An open and visible competition of local governments for additional funding helps to mobilise political support at the local level and to increase the visibility of the programme as a whole. The selection criteria should be based on the quality of the funding proposal and the demonstrated willingness to create sustainable structures, but also pay attention to differences in starting conditions. Municipalities and districts with limited resources, but a high degree of political commitment, need special support in the application phase as happened to a certain extent in the case of LvO.

Create governance structures that are both inclusive and effective: It is advisable to include a broad set of stakeholders, from organised representatives of societal interests to parents and teachers, in order to develop a common culture of cooperation at the local level. At the same time, local governance structures need to be effective in making decisions about the distribution of funding and organisational restructuring. A multi-layered governance structure with a governing circle consisting of local policy-makers, major stakeholders and the project team members on the one hand and working and steering groups as well as education conferences that allow broad involvement of stakeholders on the other has proven to be effective in the case of LvO.

Clearly define responsibilities and ensure accountability to multiple stakeholders: The distribution of responsibilities needs to be clear before/at the start of the programme. The programme should also identify different stakeholders, which may hold the project team accountable. This set of stakeholders should be broad, but not necessarily all-inclusive, in order to ensure the effectiveness of decision-making. In particular, local politicians, such as experts from the municipal or district assembly, should be included in governance bodies. Furthermore, parents and teachers as important stakeholders should be included as well.

Create mixed and diverse project teams: External programmes such as LvO usually set up project teams at the local level, whose task is to guide and moderate change processes. The project team should bring together locals with strong connections to the local level as well as external hires. Ideally, the project team should consist of pairs of one internal and one external member who are both jointly responsible for a particular topic. The combination of internal and external members ensures that local knowledge and connections will be used, but also that external members bring in new ideas and perspectives.

Produce visible outputs such as educational reports and concrete projects: The development of concrete projects and outputs is crucial in order to mobilise political support for programmes such as LvO. The most visible outputs are often local educational reports, which are discussed in the local media and decision-making bodies. These reports should not be "data deserts", but accessible to a broad readership. They also need to be reflective in the sense that they do not simply produce tables and figures, but also discuss policy implications and broader topics. Results should be actively disseminated, e.g. in press conferences or educational conferences. Education reports should be complemented with concrete cooperation projects between administrative and non-state actors.

Make use of different kinds of knowledge: The publication of educational reports should not lead to the privilege of quantitative data over other types of knowledge. Instead, quantitative data, scientific and practitioner knowledge should be combined in order to make use of different kinds of expertise. Political leaders and other stakeholders should support the development of a usage culture for quantitative data, pointing out the potential contribution of evidence-based policy-making and educational monitoring to local debates about education reforms.

Finally, concrete recommendations for the specific case of Germany are:

Establish clearing offices at the state level to complement the transfer agencies: As mentioned above, different kinds of institutional actors may be in charge of the new transfer agencies, and the area of responsibilities of these agencies spans across state borders. However, administrative structures vary significantly across states. Therefore, clearing offices in the state-level administration (e.g. in the state ministries of education) should be established to act as information relays and connecting points between local governments on the one hand, and the state administration and the agencies on the other.

Create a permanent committee for education management and monitoring within the structure of the KMK: Although the KMK was an important driving force behind the development of educational monitoring at the national and state level, there is no permanent committee for these topics yet. This committee could become an important forum for information exchange on best practices and the coordination of efforts to develop a common framework for educational monitoring, from the local via the state to the national level.

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APPENDICES: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

ANNEX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Table of conducted interviews				
Interviewee code	**OrganisationOrganisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
FR1	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	29.11.2013
FR2	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	29.11.2013
FR3	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	02.12.2013
FR4	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	02.12.2013
FR5	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	03.12.2013
FR6	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	03.12.2013
FR7	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	03.12.2013
FR8	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	03.12.2013
FR9	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	04.12.2013
FR10	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	04.12.2013
FR11	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	04.12.2013
FR12	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	05.12.2013
FR13	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	06.12.2013
FR14	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	06.12.2013
FR15	Administration-external	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	07.01.2014
FR16	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	08.01.2014
FR17	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	09.01.2014
FR18	Politicians and Administration	Freiburg	Janis Vossiek	09.01.2014
HB1	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	11.12.2013

Table of conducted interviews (continued)				
Interviewee code	**Organisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
HB2	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	11.12.2013
HB3	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	13.12.2013
HB4	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	13.12.2013
HB5	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	13.12.2013
HB6	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	13.12.2013
HB7	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	13.12.2013
HB8	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	17.12.2013
HB9	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	17.12.2013
HB10	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	17.12.2013
HB11	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB12	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB13	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB14	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB15	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	19.12.2013
HB16	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	19.12.2013
HB17	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	07.01.2014
MD1	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD2	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD3	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD4	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD5	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD6	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD7	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD8	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD9	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	15.01.2014

Table of conducted interviews (continued)				
Interviewee code	**Organisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
MD10	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	15.01.2014
MD11	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD12	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD13	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD14	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	17.01.2013
LE1	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE2	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE3	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE3	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE4	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE5	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014
LE6	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014
LE7	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014
LE8	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	22.01.2014
LE9	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	22.01.2014
LE10	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE11	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE12	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE13	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	07.02.2014
HB9	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	17.12.2013
HB10	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	17.12.2013
HB11	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB12	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB13	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013
HB14	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	18.12.2013

Table of conducted interviews (continued)				
Interviewee code	**Organisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
HB15	Politicians and Administration	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	19.12.2013
HB16	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	19.12.2013
HB17	Administration-external	Bremen	Janis Vossiek	07.01.2014
MD1	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD2	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD3	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD4	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	13.01.2014
MD5	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD6	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD7	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD8	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	14.01.2014
MD9	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	15.01.2014
MD10	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	15.01.2014
MD11	Administration-external	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD12	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD13	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	16.01.2014
MD14	Politicians and Administration	Mühldorf	Janis Vossiek	17.01.2013
LE1	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE2	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE3	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE3	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE4	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	20.01.2014
LE5	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014
LE6	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014
LE7	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	21.01.2014

Table of conducted interviews (continued)				
Interviewee code	**Organisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
LE8	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	22.01.2014
LE9	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	22.01.2014
LE10	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE11	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE12	Politicians and Administration	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	23.01.2014
LE13	Administration-external	Leipzig	Janis Vossiek	07.02.2014
BU1 (group interview: 3 interviewees)	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	20.01.2014
BU2	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	20.01.2014
BU3	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	20.01.2014
BU4 (group interview: 2 interviewees)	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	20.01.2014
BU5	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	21.01.2014
BU6	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	21.01.2014
BU7	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	21.01.2014
BU8	Politicians and Administration	Bund	Marius Busemeyer	22.01.2014
RH1	Administration-external	Reckling hausen	Janis Vossiek	27.01.2014
RH2	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	27.01.2014
RH3	Administration-external	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	27.01.2014
RH4	Administration-external	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	28.01.2014
RH5	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	28.01.2014
RH6	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	28.01.2014

Table of conducted interviews (continued)				
Interviewee code	**Organisational background of interviewee**	**Case**	**Interviewer**	**Date**
RH7	**Politicians and Administration**	**Reckling-hausen**	**Janis Vossiek**	**28.01.2014**
RH8	Politicians and Administration	Reckling hausen	Janis Vossiek	28.01.2014
RH9	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	29.01.2014
RH10	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	29.01.2014
RH11	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	30.01.2014
RH12	Administration-external	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	30.01.2014
RH13	Administration-external	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	30.01.2014
RH14	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	30.01.2014
RH15	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	31.01.2014
RH16	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	31.01.2014
RH17	Politicians and Administration	Reckling-hausen	Janis Vossiek	07.02.2014

ANNEX B: INTERVIEWEE GUIDE

Draft questionnaire GCES Germany

The interviewer will inform the interviewee about the aims of the interview and the study, and how data will be used in the OECD report and journal articles. The interviewee will be informed about the expected length of the interview, use of recorder, transcription and confidentiality, and will also be given time to clarify questions. All participants will sign a letter of consent about the project.

In the first phase, we will ask questions about your involvement in LvO and your perception of the programme:

1. Can you briefly describe your background and your role in the project “Lernen vor Ort”?

2. In your view, why was the program introduced in your municipality? Why did your municipality decide to apply? Were there existing initiatives or projects before the application, and which role did they play for the application?

   → potential extension, if not covered: How were the reasons for its introduction communicated to you?

   → potential extension, if not covered: Have there been specific problems within the educational sector that triggered the application for the program? Or did external experts encourage the municipality to apply?

   [Experts: How were the participating districts and cities selected?]

3. How well is the program tailored to the educational needs of your municipality/city? What are the key goals of "Lernen vor Ort" in your municipality as you understand them? Are there tensions and conflicts between the various goals in the programme (and if so, which ones)?

   → How were the program goals communicated to you?

4. Who decided about the priority-(goal-) setting of the program in the initial phase? Were you involved? Do you think the process of goal definition was well and fairly organised?

5. What role did various forms of knowledge (e.g. research results, indicators, practitioner experience) play in the development of the program at the local level? Was the identification of gaps in knowledge a particular important reason for why you decided to apply/participate?

6. On the local level, have there been conflicts between stakeholders during the implementation of the program?

   →Who are the strongest supporters of the program, who are the most sceptical?

   [Experts/political decision makers: Were there political conflicts during the application or introduction of the programme? Did new conflicts arise during the evolution of the program? If so, which? Were they solved? How?]

In the second phase , we are going to ask you about the structures and actors which are involved in the programme and how they interact. We are also going to ask you about the resources which are devoted to the programme:

7. Which bodies and committees are locally involved in the programme? Which ones were newly established, which ones existed before? What kind of network structures did develop?

8. How are the responsibilities shared between involved bodies and committees? How are they involved in the processes of decision-making, implementation and evaluation?

9. Which actors and stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) are locally involved in the programme? Have any of these joined the programme after its launch? To what extent does the participation of new actors differ from that of established local players?

   → potential extension, if not covered: How are non-governmental actors involved in local decision-making and steering committees? Which specific functions do they have?

   → potential extension, if not covered: Did the actor composition change with time? If so, how and why? Did the actors' positions change over time?]

10. In your opinion, which effects does the involvement of non-governmental actors have on local education (policy)?

11. Could you please point to specific areas, where the cooperation between civil society and the local educational administration works very well? In contrast, are there areas where this cooperation does not work well?

12. Which resources (time, information/knowledge, budgeting, staffing, resources beyond classical government resources) were allocated to the policy programme during its various phases?

13. Who decided on resource allocation at the local level? Which criteria were used to distribute resources? Were there conflicts about resource allocation?

14. Have the resources been sufficient to meet the programme's goals? Does the programme receive additional funds from the state government? If so, for which areas of the programme?

    [Experts: Were these grants earmarked? Will the programme be supported further after the initial project phase? If so, from which resources?]

Finally, we want to ask you some questions on the general evaluation of the programme and your personal perception of it:

15. Overall, what were the effects of the program on:

    1. the quality of education at the local level,

    2. the knowledge about the state of education at the local level, and

    3. the process of educational decision-making?

16. How do the actual results and effects compare with the goals defined at the beginning? Which parts worked better than expected, which fared worse?

    → potential follow-up, if not covered: Did the programme have any unintended or unexpected effects (for example the unnecessary duplication of decision-making and steering bodies, the unintended displacement of efficient structures, etc.)?

17. A central feature of LvO is educational monitoring, i. e. the collection of relevant data on the local education system: Which data did you collect and how did it contribute to improving the local education system? What would you change if you could decide on the collection of data?

18. Which actors are/were involved in the evaluation of the programme?

19. Which type of knowledge (research, indicators, local experience) was the programme assessment based on?

20. What were the results of the evaluation and how were they perceived by stakeholders in the municipality?

    → potential follow-up, if not covered: In your opinion, is there evidence which is missing from the programme evaluation? Is any kind of information or stakeholder underrepresented in the programme evaluation?

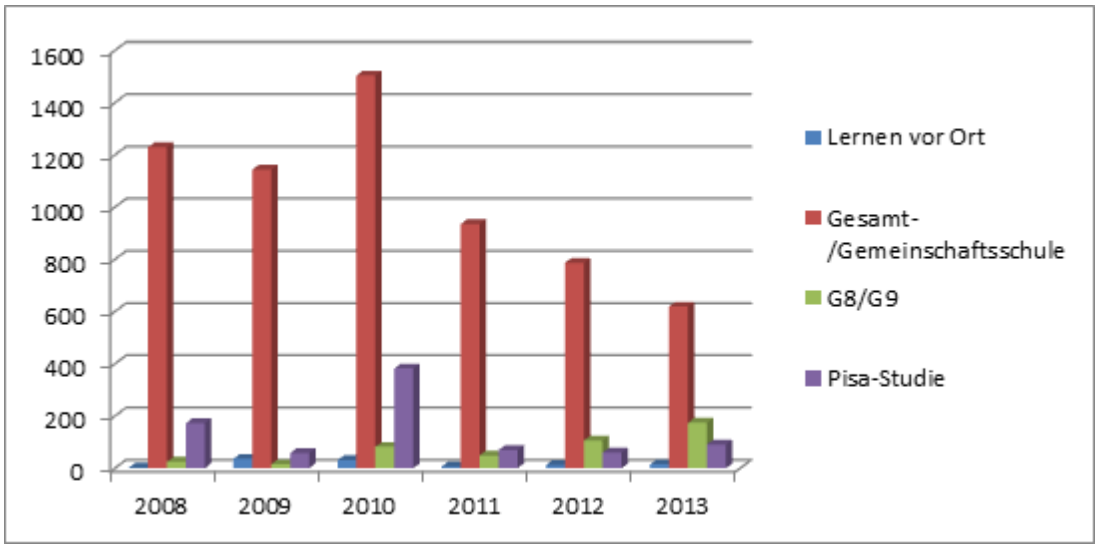
21. Do you think that the programme will change the distribution of decision-making competencies between federal, state and local level? Did you perceive any conflict between different levels of government?

22. Which parts of the program will have a sustainable and long-term effect after the program is finished? How can the experiences of LvO be used to developed general standards for quality assurance and control?

23. Looking back, if you could start all over again, would you have changed anything about the project?

ANNEX C: RESULTS FROM MEDIA ANALYSIS

Figure 1. Figure A1: Media analysis of public perception of LvO



Source: authors' analysis of major newspapers (see page 45).

ANNEX D: ADDITIONAL DATA ON INDIVIDUAL CASES.

	Population	Pupils *	Students / trainees*	Population share 65+	Population share pupils*	Unemployment**	Migration
Bremen	547.255	56.555	31.291/ 21.726	21,3%	10,3%	11,4%	149.989*** (27,4%)
Bremerhaven	114.778	13.222	3.092 / 5.666	21,2%	11,5%	18,3%	
Leipzig	515.469	35.804	28.098/ 24.910 (students at vocational schools)	22,4%	6,9%	15,5%	33.528 (6,5%)****
Mühldorf a.I.	110.248	12.282	0 / 2.913 (trainees, vocational school system, transition system)	24,8%	11,1%	4,6%	7.212 (6,5%)****
Recklinghausen	636.180	98.035		21%	15,4%	11,2%	56.605 (8,9%)****
Freiburg	219.665	22.301	25.162 / 8.800 (students at vocational schools)	16,2%	10,2%	7,1%	30.715 (14,0%)****

Sources: Bremen: Statistisches Landesamt Bremen (2014) ;Bremerhaven: Statistisches Landesamt Bremen (2014); Leipzig: Stadt Leipzig (2010, 2012) (for population), Statistisches Landesamt Sachsen (2014) (for migration, pupils, trainees, population share 65+, unemployment), Universität Leipzig (2011) (for students); Mühldorf: Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn, Lernen vor Ort (2012) (for population, pubils, students / trainees, population share 65+), Statistisches Landesamt Bayern (2014) (for unemployment, migration); Recklinghausen: Bildungsbericht (for pupils), Statistisches Landesamt Nordrhein- Westphalen (2014) (for population, population share 65+, unemployment, migration); Freiburg: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg (2013) (for population, pupils, trainees, unemployment, migration), Universität Freiburg (2014) (for students).

Notes: *School / academic year 2008/2009; **Mean 2008; share of unemployed in the civil workforce; ***Persons with migration background; ****Foreign nationality

ANNEX E: MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FIVE LOCAL CASE STUDIES

1. Freiburg im Breisgau

Governance structures

Overall, many of our interviewees in Freiburg asserted a positive effect of LvO on the governance of education in Freiburg. As a local peculiarity, the city of Freiburg developed a different logo for their version of LvO and "rebranded" it as the *Initiative LEIF –Lernen erleben in Freiburg* [Experiencing Learning in Freiburg] with its own project homepage.[18]

The governance structures were regarded as suitable for the exchange and creation of knowledge between different fields of expertise (FR-1, FR-3, FR-6, FR7, FR-9, FR-14, FR-15, FR-16, FR-18). In general, Freiburg followed a participatory approach, including many different stakeholders already during the application process (FR-5, FR-10, FR-12). When the funding was granted, the mayor for education organised a broad workshop with a large number of educational stakeholders, which fed into the development of seven educational core goals to be addressed with LvO that were decided in broad consensus in the governing circle (FR-4, FR-8).[19] Moreover, LvO was seen as a very useful complement to the RB that had been created before the start of LvO (FR-3, FR-4, FR-5, FR-8, FR-9, FR-10, FR-12, FR-13, FR-18). More generally, many interviewees stressed the strengthening of connections between different educational actors and institutions as the strategic key goal (FR-1, FR-3, FR-4, FR-5, FR-7, FR-12, FR-15, FR-18), which is indicative of a shared understanding of one of LvO's core goals.

Nevertheless LvO also faced some problems in its initial phases. First, the programme start was slow and the LvO project team needed to establish links to the administration and to familiarise itself with the particularities of the local education system and the most relevant actors (FR-6, FR-15). Here, the development of the project might have been quicker if LEIF personnel had been situated in existing institutions instead of being affiliated with the mayor (FR-12, FR-14, FR-18). Other interviewees from the local administration argued that this pointed to a general problem: Actors might fear a loss of influence when new structures and programmes are implemented (FR-1, FR-2). The size of the LvO team also triggered envy from parts of the local administration because of its large personnel resources (FR-3, FR-4).

A second source of criticism was the fact that LvO was perceived as very abstract with no clearly defined goals or output (FR-4, FR-5, FR-9, FR-13, FR-14, FR-16, FR-17). Also, some stakeholders had expected the inclusion of the LEIF employees within the responsible administrative departments or offices of external actors as well as direct funding support of concrete projects, which had been signalled from the city administration before (FR-5, FR-8 FR-10, FR-12, FR-13, FR-17). However, this was not feasible, and resulted in early disappointment of some stakeholders that nonetheless continued to cooperate with LEIF (FR-5, FR-12).

[18] http://www.leif-freiburg.de

[19] The seven key policy goals are: increasing educational opportunities for all citizens; improving educational quality and supply; developing systematic connections between formal, non-formal and informal learning; stimulating lifelong learning; broadening accountability; fostering awareness and acceptance of lifelong learning; and promoting education for sustainable development (Initiative-LEIF, 2011).

Political support and leadership

As a first aspect of support for a successful development of LvO in Freiburg, several interviewees stressed the importance of the LvO team and the leading project manager (FR-1, FR-3, FR-5, FR-12, FR-15, FR-17), whose clear and transparent communication and inclusive approach towards relevant stakeholders were central aspects for the resolution of initial conflicts. The project team was perceived as a facilitator of cooperation (FR-1, FR-6, FR-7, FR-12), but not an active "agenda-setter", and the crucial role that the active participation of different stakeholders played for success was clearly communicated (Interviews FR6, FR7, FR12). Furthermore, high-ranking persons in the administration and educational institutions were very committed to the programme and acted as policy entrepreneurs (FR 4, FR 5, FR 8).

Also, it was clearly pointed out that political support for LvO was very high. First, the commitment of the mayor for education was seen as a key factor for the successful implementation of the project (FR-1, FR-4, FR-5, FR-7, FR-11, FR-12, FR-13, FR-15, FR-16, FR-18). Her political support was also important for the provision of additional financial resources for the programme in general and concrete LvO projects in particular (FR-1, FR-3, FR-4, FR-10). Education had a central place on Freiburg's political agenda (FR-8, FR-11, FR-13), with the aim to establish Freiburg as a "city of education and knowledge" (FR13, FR14).

Educational monitoring

In Freiburg, monitoring was relatively successful as it produced a number of concrete outputs in the form of educational reports and studies, which fed back into politics and inspired new networks. The monitoring did not have to start from scratch as the first education report, which was jointly prepared by the DIPF and the RB, was already published in 2008 – one year before the start of LvO. One of its central findings was that pupils with a migration background had a much lower transition rate to the *Gymnasium* and more often left school without graduating than pupils without a migration background (DIPF/RB Freiburg 2008). This finding came as a surprise to many stakeholders in local education policy (FR-12), and became a central focus of educational monitoring since.

However, LvO provided more resources for the effective use of different informational resources (FR-14). A first example was the next education report prepared jointly with the RB and published in 2010 with a focus on the topic of educational inequality in the context of migration and social inequality (RB-Freiburg 2010). Second, in 2010, following a joint initiative of LvO and the local educational authority, "migration and integration" and "education" were for the first time included as topics in a citizen survey (cf. Feßler et al., 2011), which had already been conducted since 1999 in a two-year cycle by the local statistical office. Third, and maybe most important, educational monitoring was further developed to become a "bridge" between different sources of knowledge. On the basis of the unexpected results regarding the link between education and migration background, the working group on educational monitoring prepared a *workshop report on education and migration*, which brought together various existing and new sources of information (Initiative-LEIF 2012). Considering the former, it made use of the findings of the education reports 2008 and 2010, the citizen survey 2010 and the social report (Stadt Freiburg i.B. 2011), but also complemented these with new quantitative data (analyses of social spaces) and qualitative interviews with teenagers in the so-called *Übergangssystem* [transition system] in vocational training (FR-1, FR-2, FR-9). The monitoring results, together with other LvO activities, inspired the establishment of the *Netzwerk Bildung und Migration* [Network education and migration], jointly coordinated by LEIF, the RB and the office for migration and integration with financial support from the city council (FR-1, FR-3, FR-5, FR-9, FR-14).

Many of our interviewees ascribed an important role to educational monitoring for the increase of knowledge about the local education system (FR-1, FR-4, FR-5, FR-8, FR-9, FR-10, FR-12, FR-13). LvO contributed to a quality increase in monitoring and education reporting (FR-5, FR-8, FR-11, FR-12, FR-17,

FR-18), in particular with regard to the degree of coverage of the different sectors of the education system. However, it was also argued that educational monitoring still had limitations because of its quantitative approach (FR-10, FR-11, FR-15): Data on transitions differentiated by individual aspects such as gender, migration and social background are not available because of data protection restrictions (FR-2, FR-11) and data are sparse on non-formal education (FR-10). Furthermore, educational monitoring can only prepare and support decision-making; many decisions remain fundamentally political (FR-8, FR-14, FR-15), which is indicative of the fact that the purpose of monitoring seems not to be always clear at the local level.

Cooperation between civil society and administration

Freiburg offers some interesting examples of successful concrete LvO projects in the field of educational consulting. Many actors were already active in this field, which presented a challenge to the working group in the field of educational consulting, because educational providers were in competition with each other and feared a loss of influence due to LvO (FR-1, FR-4, FR-5, FR-12). In this context, explicit communication by the project team that provider-neutral consultation was the goal and that joint decisions about the design of its new structures with all involved actors proved essential to keep those actors on board and engaged in the respective working group (FR-12).

Despite initial difficulties, the working group (consisting of LvO personnel, small education providers and the chambers, the adult education centre and the university) developed the *Freiburger Lupe* [Freiburger magnifier]. This is an online tool that increases the transparency of education offers in different stages of the lifecycle.[20] The tool in turn helped the working group to establish a neutral consulting institution that provides information for consumers of educational services (*Wegweiser Bildung* [signpost for education]). This example is interesting as it shows that while communication, inclusion of major stakeholders and the development of common goals were success factors, they cannot eliminate conflicts, which emerge especially when it comes to the distribution of resources (FR-1, FR-3, FR-4, FR-5, FR-18).

Another example of the positive impact of LvO was the development of *Green-Tech* Berufe [Green Tech Jobs], which is a joint project between the craft chamber, an institution for ecological education and representatives of children- and youth-work (FR-1, FR-6). This programme was developed with the aid of LvO, but is financed outside LvO and supported by the *Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt* [German Federal Environmental Foundation]. It offers an example, where LvO played a key role in facilitation cooperation and coordination between different stakeholders (FR-1, FR-4, FR-6, FR-7, FR-12, FR-17). What is more, financial and expert support for cooperation projects was provided by the *Bertelsmann Stiftung* [Bertelsmann Foundation] – the local basic foundation partner of Freiburg – as well as a local association of foundations.[21] Freiburg is therefore also a positive example of how to get foundations involved in LvO.

Sustainability

Freiburg was generally regarded to have good preconditions for the sustainable development of a local approach to education management. The educational office was complemented by LEIF/LvO and was perceived as the central future institution for local education management after the end of the funding period. It will receive additional funding to continue with education management and monitoring (FR-1, FR-3, FR-4, FR-7, FR-8, FR-18). The provider-neutral education consulting platform will also be continued (the *Wegweiser Bildung*) (FR-3, FR-4, FR-7, FR-12, FR-13) and the newly created networks between different stakeholders were expected to be sustainable (FR-1, FR-3, FR-11, FR-12, FR-15, FR-17). More generally, the existence of many foundations (FR-5), very good educational standards (FR-7,

[20] see http://www.leif-freiburg.de

[21] For the associations' members see: http://www.leif-freiburg.de/ueber-leif/stiftungen/

FR-16) and good experiences with cooperation in networks in education policy (FR-4, FR-8, FR-14) offered a good basis for sustainability.

However, there also were critical remarks. Several interviewees, especially from civil society, were critical about the short duration of the BMBF programme (FR-1, FR-3, FR-5, FR-10, FR-13). In their view, the time frame was too short to effect structural changes in local education policy making (FR-1, FR-5, FR-10) or to develop a holistic approach to lifelong learning beyond the early stages of learning (FR-1, FR-5, FR-13). Moreover, due to the importance of individual persons, several of our interviewees mentioned the end of the project funding in the middle of 2014 as the main challenge for the project (FR-5, FR-6, FR-7, FR-13, FR-15, FR-18). Here, the central concern was the potential loss of the coordination function of the project team and governance bodies and an unclear funding future for on-going projects (FR-6, FR-13, FR-14).

2. Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn

Governance structures

Similar to Freiburg, Mühldorf chose to make the team directly accountable to the district's chief executive (the *Landrat*) as a staff unit. Nevertheless the perceptions of governance are different from Freiburg, especially in terms of the cooperation culture and responsibilities of the governing circle and the steering group. The latter only consisted of the *Landrat* as the head of the local administration, three managing directors of operational divisions and the members of the project team, the latter formally in a consultative role. In this regard, many interviewees stated that the primary function of the governing circle was the exchange of information, the presentation of results and the legitimation of implementation steps (MD-1, MD-5, MD-6, MD-10), while agenda-setting was mainly driven by the *Landrat* and the LvO-team (MD-1, MD-2, MD-7, MD-8, MD-13, MD-14). Moreover, some members of the governance bodies claimed that they were not involved in goal- and priority setting (MD-2, MD-7, MD-8), while others argued that decisions were heavily driven by the *Landrat* (MD-1, MD-8, MD-11). However, others argued that decision-making structures were fair and equitable (MD-3, MD-4, MD-9, MD-13, MD-14).

In the course of programme development, LvO in Mühldorf faced two central challenges in terms of governance and support by local stakeholders. When the programme started, there were conflicts between the project team and other actors as well as between the district government and the municipalities. First, the programme's goals were regarded to be too imprecise and abstract by many stakeholders (MD-1, MD-7, MD-11, MD-12, MD-13). Moreover the core goals of the project were not well understood within the local administration (MD-1, MD-14). Divisions within the local administration feared a loss of influence due to LvO and thus initially refrained from supporting the project team (MD-1), which was aggravated by envy for the relatively high salary of the LvO employees (MD-1, MD-10, MD-11). The composition of the project team was another critical point: The new personnel hired for LvO did not have any previous connections to the district and its educational networks (MD-3, MD-9, MD-14), which proved to be an obstacle not only for the cooperation with the local administration but also in working with external practitioners, who were irritated by the rather scientific approach of the project team (MD-3, MD-14).

Additional problems arose due to the administrative structures of a rural district. Politically, the 31 municipalities that belong to the district are independent legal entities with own competences for education policy (i.e. outer school affairs, youth and childcare), while the district is responsible for more general tasks (general administration, social assistance and elections). This fuelled discussion about the critical issue of additional finance that the district provided for LvO as a structural programme (MD-4, MD-8, MD-11, MD-14). Municipalities were critical towards the programme at first, because they perceived it as an additional burden (MD-12) with concrete costs and diffuse benefits (MD-6, MD-9, MD-12, MD-13).

Cumulatively, these aspects led to dissatisfaction with the project and prompted a significant redesign of the programme during the implementation phase, in which the *Landrat* played a key role (see section below). Additionally, the development of concrete projects such as further education offers for (childcare) workers and delivery of concrete products as the education reports also proved helpful to mitigate the initial reservation towards LvO.

Perception of political support and leadership

Concerning political support, more than two thirds of our local interviewees stressed the commitment of the *Landrat* as a key factor for the successful implementation of the project (MD-1, MD-2, MD-4, MD-7, MD-8, MD-9, MD-11, MD-12, MD-13, MD-14). For the resolution of the conflicts described above, two of his decisions were seen as critical (MD-1, MD-14).

First, he used his leverage over the local administration to facilitate cooperation between the local administration and the project team and introduced a *Patensystem* [mentor system] between administrational divisions and the LvO employees (MD-1, MD-14), under which the heads of divisions were given responsibility for one particular field of activity of LvO to be jointly developed with the corresponding LvO employee(s). Additionally, he clearly communicated LvO was not responsible for regular tasks of the local administration (MD-1, MD-14). The introduction of the mentor system was perceived as a key aspect in the further implementation of the programme as it clarified the roles and functions of the project team and the administration and created accountability (MD 1, MD-13, MD-14). Moreover, it was found to be very effective in providing a door-opener function for the cooperation between the LvO team and practitioners, because the *mentors* had easier access to local politicians and practitioner networks and were respected in the district (MD-3, MD-12, MD-13).

The second crucial decision of the *Landrat* was that he invited the heads of political fractions in the *Kreistag* into the GC in order to increase the programme's connection to local politics (MD 1, MD-6, MD-11, MD-13). This further increased the exchange of information and the political accountability of LvO towards local education management (MD-14). In order to increase the political support among individual mayors, investments in education were framed as preventing subsequent costs in mitigating social problems (MD-6), which resonated well with the long-term, preventive approach followed in the department for youth and family (MD-12). Additionally, LvO prompted the *Jugendhilfeausschuss* [committee for youth welfare] to address the topics of education and social networks, which contributed to the exchange of knowledge between formerly disparate areas (Interviews MD 1, MD-3, MD-12) and granted educational actors access to political representatives of the *Kreistag* (MD-3, MD-12).

Finally, some participating educational institutions had strong individual characters that acted as policy entrepreneurs and were important cooperation partners to move the programme forward (MD-1, MD-3, MD-4, MD-7, MD-8, MD-10, MD-12). Additional financial input of cooperating foundations also contributed to the success of the programme (MD-7).

Educational monitoring

With regard to educational monitoring, Mühldorf faced an additional challenge compared to urban districts, as it did not have a statistical unit to collect and process data (MD-3, MD-4, MD-6). Hence, statistical data were scattered among a wide number of institutions (MD-5), could only be made available to the district in a highly aggregated manner (MD-1, MD-3, MD-6) or displayed time lags of two to three years (MD-4, MD-10). These problems were further exacerbated by frequent personnel changes in the monitoring team with a concomitant loss of information (MD-6, MD-10).

The first education report was published in 2012 and covers the following areas: regional conditions, early education and childcare, schools, vocational and higher education, family education and educational consulting. The latter two areas were based on local surveys that were conducted by LvO (Landkreis Mühldorf am Inn/Lernen vor Ort 2012).

The case of Mühldorf is representative for a large number of rural districts where monitoring usually is not a regular task of the local administration.

For example, when Mühldorf started to implement educational monitoring under LvO, this led to initial irritations as institutions were afraid of being judged in the light of their performance and that they would have to justify themselves (MD-3, MD-4, MD-12). The LvO team had to clarify for which purposes the data would be used (MD-3). Despite these efforts, getting access to data from the administration was often a complicated and time-intensive process (MD-1) and departments were sometimes not allowed or did not want to disclose data (MD-1, MD-4, MD-6).

Despite these problems many of our interviewees regarded monitoring as very important for the increase of knowledge about the local education system (MD-1, MD-3, MD-7, MD-8, MD-9, MD-10, MD-13). Local politicians displayed a great interest in monitoring results as basis for political decision-making (MD-1, MD-3, MD-6, MD-9). One concrete finding was that a high rate of school-leavers quit school without a degree. In this case, educational monitoring helped to clarify that many of those still manage to directly start an apprenticeship or to start working (MD-9). This was a very important finding, because older analyses had already shown that the number of school-leavers without degree was significantly higher than in other Bavarian districts (MD-3, MD-8), but educational monitoring could help to understand what happened to these young people after school.

Yet, there were different views on the goals of monitoring. Here, one interviewee stated that the monitoring was rather descriptive and that causal analyses were needed but sparse (MD-7), while another argued that it was unclear if causal analyses were part of the monitorers' tasks (MD-10). A third opinion was that monitoring and the stocktaking of educational offers of LvO do not automatically deliver solutions, which is still the task of the local administration (MD-2). These different views on monitoring are indicative of the fact that monitoring was a new task for the district and that a culture of how to make use of this new type of knowledge has yet to be developed.

Cooperation between civil society and administration

For cooperation between civil society and the administration, our interviewees stated that the programme could build upon existing networks in education policy (in particular between schools and economic actors and in the field of vocational education and training), but also stressed an added benefit of LvO (MD-3, MD-5, MD-7, MD-9, MD-10, MD-11, MD-12, MD-13). LvO's working groups in particular were seen a fruitful means for promoting cooperation, because practitioners could jointly develop goals and concrete projects (MD-5, MD-8, MD-12).

An initial motivation for the district's application for LvO funding was to retain and attract qualified youth in order to prevent skill shortages. It was believed that promoting educational reforms at the earlier stages of the lifecycle would partly compensate for the lack of a higher education institution in the district (MD-7, MD-8, MD-10). The administration and non-state actors worked jointly on developing concrete projects.

Examples are the *Bildungsportal* [education portal], which is a website that presents the educational offers in the district (MD-5, MD-9, MD-10, MD-12); the joint training of childcare workers (MD-4, MD-10, MD-12) and the upgrading of childcare facilities towards family centers (MD-10); and the cooperation

between the chambers, a semi-public foundation and regional higher education institutions (MD-7, MD-10).

Sustainability

Overall the programme was seen in very positive light as it gave education policy a different place on the political agenda and increased the local politicians' and stakeholders' perception of education as local and joint responsibility (MD-3, MD-4, MD-6, MD-8, MD-9, MD-11, MD-12). Moreover, the introduction of the mentor system, the reaching out to local politicians and the development of concrete projects with non-state actors were successful in boosting local support for LvO. As a result of these efforts, the number of critics dwindled and the programme gained higher acceptance (MD-4, MD-5, MD-7). This can be explained as a positive "contagion effect": when the programme gained a more positive reputation, stakeholders wanted to avoid exclusion from LvO (MD-12).

However, the end of project funding in the middle of 2014 is regarded as a significant challenge (MD 1, MD-4, MD-6, MD-7, MD-8, MD-10), and there is a continued need for an institution responsible for education management (MD-7, MD-12, MD-14). Here, several interviewees expected that the main activities of the programme will be continued (MD-9, MD-10, MD-12, MD-13, MD-14), in particular in the fields of education management (MD-1, MD-10) and educational monitoring (MD-4, MD-13). Several interview partners were also convinced that the network structures will be sustainable (MD-6, MD-7, MD-9, MD-13) and that future cooperation will be easier via these networks (MD-12).However, these rather positive expectations might have to be taken with a grain of salt as sustainability is highly dependent on political decisions (MD-1, MD-7, MD-8) and some members of the district council still have reservations towards the programme, as education policy is regarded as a responsibility of either the state or the federal government (Interviews MD-3, MD-14).

3. Leipzig

Governance structures

Leipzig provides an interesting contrast to the former two cases. First, being a major city, its administration is much larger and the governance structures were thus more focussed on the inclusion of different administrative departments. Second, in contrast to centralised approach of the former two cases, Leipzig had opted for a hybrid approach in the allocation of LvO personnel, which offers an interesting comparative perspective in terms of programme governance.

Given the prominence of administrative actors in the governance of LvO in Leipzig, it is not surprising that the application for LvO was developed by a working group consisting of different administrative departments (LE-1, LE-2, LE-12), which were subsequently represented in the governing circle (LE-1, LE-6). This helped to develop a consistent approach from application to implementation (LE-1, LE-6), but civil society actors criticised that the application had not been discussed with external actors (LE-13). More generally, it was remarked that governance structures were biased towards administrative interests (LE-2, LE-3 LE-6, LE-11) and decisions were often based on administrative logics and hierarchies rather than on real educational demands (LE-3, LE-11, LE-13). However, it was also argued that the focus on the administration and political actors had been necessary in order to make binding and authoritative decisions (LE-6) and to reduce transaction and decision-making costs (LE-6). Interview partners from the administration stated that LvO had a beneficial effect on cooperation between departments and divisions within the administration (LE-1, LE-8, LE-10) and helped to create new knowledge as they had had little prior knowledge of each other's tasks in education before (LE-1).

Regarding the cooperation between the LvO team and the local administration, similar problems as in Freiburg and Mühldorf occurred initially despite of the hybrid approach of central and decentralised personnel allocation. First, to some stakeholders, the goals of the programme were not sufficiently clear (LE-1). Second, some employees of the administration expected a further increase of their workload and thus were, at first, reluctant to cooperate with the project team (LE-1, LE-2, LE-7), and experienced administration employees feared a loss of influence (LE-9). Third, the LvO team tried to develop projects quickly, but the administration was perceived to be heavily compartmentalised, which impeded fast programme development and initially complicated the establishment of working routines between the LvO team and the administration (LE-1, LE-3). In order to mediate between the LvO project team and the local administration, Leipzig also instituted a mentor system, where the LvO employees received guidance from higher administration officers that had already been involved in the programme application. This decreased the conflict potential within the administration and enabled a quicker development of working relationships (LE-1, LE-2, LE-3, LE-6, LE-12).

Political support and leadership

Several interviewees mentioned that the programme had strong political support from the Lord Mayor (LE-1, LE-2, LE-6, LE-8, LE-12) and the deputy mayor for education (LE-2, LE-5, LE-6). Also, the former chief officer of the department for education was an important policy entrepreneur in the application and the implementation of the LvO programme (LE-1, LE-2, LE-3, LE-6, LE-7, LE-9, LE-12). His initiative led to a merger of the departments for school and welfare, which facilitated the coordination of local education (LE-2). Moreover, he lobbied for the inclusion of LvO employees in existing working groups and panels (LE-2).

LvO also created positive feedback effects that further increased political support:

In 2012, the governing circle decided on seven key goals for education policy,[22] confirmed by the city council in 2013. This was mainly attributed to the influence of LvO (LE-6). Since 2011, the city council holds a yearly meeting on education and the fractions of the city council have nominated speakers for education, which is important to keep the topic in the political discourse (LE-1, LE-3, LE-6, LE-9). More generally, LvO also raised the awareness of education as important topic for local politics (Interviews LE-1, LE-6).

Educational monitoring

Similar to Mühldorf am Inn, Leipzig did not have prior experiences with educational monitoring (LE-1). Therefore, the cooperation with the DIPF and the provision of monitoring guidelines by the PT-DLR was perceived as very helpful, although these guidelines had to be adapted to local circumstances (LE-2). The central outputs were an educational report structured along the lines of educational biographies and differentiated by various learning sites. The first report was published in 2010 and a second followed in 2012 (Stadt Leipzig 2010, 2012). Educational reporting has produced additional analyses that take a closer look at selected aspects of the local education system. For example, two reports on school-development were published in 2010 and 2011. Additionally, there were six “special studies”, which were published between 2011 and 2013.[23] This impressive scope of monitoring can be attributed to the fact that Leipzig

[22] The goals are: to support and strengthen citizens in all education-phases, to respect differences and foster diversity, to increase educational opportunities for all citizens, to make use of different types and offers of education, to appreciate families as education partners, to develop a long-term perspective of education as a responsibility of local politics, and jointly accountability for education (Stadt Leipzig 2013).

[23] For the central publictions in the field of monitoring see: http://www.leipzig.de/jugend-familie-und-soziales/schulen-und-bildung/bildungsmanagement/lernen-vor-ort/bildungsmonitoring/

invested substantial personnel resources of the LvO funds into monitoring with further support from its foundation sponsor – the Schader Foundation.

Yet, despite the substantial amount of studies produced, this did not occur without problems. The city of Leipzig has no central database, which complicated data collection (LE-1, LE-6). In the collection of data, the cooperation with some departments and education providers was perceived as cumbersome (LE-2, LE-3) and these problems could not be solved so far (LE-2, LE-3). For example, a major problem is that data collected by different institutions often gave different values for the same indicator (LE-2). Moreover longitudinal data are often not available (LE-2).

The educational reports are examples of a concrete and visible output of the programme, which increased political support for LvO (LE-1). Many of our interviewees attributed a positive effect of educational monitoring on the creation of knowledge (LE-1, LE-2, LE-3, LE-5, LE-6, LE-9, LE-10, LE-11, LE-12, LE-13). Educational monitoring also might increase the political accountability of local actors for education policy (LE-3) and can become an important basis for decision-making by defining and identifying problems (LE-1, LE-2). One concrete example of feedback of monitoring into policy-making is that the focus of LvO was redirected from transitions between childcare facilities to primary schools to the topic of school drop-outs. This was put on the agenda of LvO, and politics more generally, as the first education report of 2010 had identified this as a central challenge (LE-2, LE-6).

Cooperation between civil society and administration

Because of the inclusion into existing administrative structures, the LvO team could not engage extensively in the creation of new networks. Therefore, the LvO team participated in or started to chair working groups and networks that had already existed prior to the start of the programme (LE-2, LE-6). While the programme itself did not initiate new networks, it was found to increase the quality of cooperation and knowledge exchange in existing networks (LE-1, LE-3, LE-5, LE-9, LE-11, LE-13). Despite the main role that administrative actors played in governance, the inclusion of civil societal associations and other external actors was stronger in the development and implementation of concrete projects within working groups (LE-2, LE-3) and, naturally, the educational conference, which increased the visibility of LvO activities for a broader audience (LE-6, LE-12). Generally, where civil society actors were included this was found to increase the transparency of decision-making and the legitimacy of decisions (LE-3, LE-8, LE-9).

A first example for a successful cooperation between the administration and civil society actors was the development of a registry of offers in cultural education (LE-6, LE-8, LE-9), where the cooperation between LvO, the responsible department and cultural institutions had functioned very well. A second success was the cooperation between LvO, a school in a "problem area", social workers and the *Christlicher Verein Junger Menschen* [CVJM – Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)] in the field of educational transitions (LE-3, LE-4, LE-11). In order to strengthen the awareness of the role of parents in education, LvO and the CVJM developed a pilot project called *Aufsuchende Elternarbeit* [Out-seeking parental work]. This project implemented by the social workers of the participating school facilitated successful transitions of children from socially disadvantaged families from primary to further schooling and is now continued by the school (LE-4). A third positive example is the creation of provider-neutral education consulting (LE-1, LE-5, LE-6, LE-10), which helped to overcome competitive pressures between different providers (LE-1).

Sustainability

Despite the beneficial effects that LvO had in the implementation of concrete projects and in promoting cooperation between different administrative departments, there were remaining concerns about the sustainability of the programme's effects. LvO's character as a pilot-programme raised concerns about its financial sustainability, in particular against the background of the dire financial situation of Leipzig (LE-4) as well as pressing needs to invest in school infrastructure and to provide for a growing number of social assistance recipients (LE-5). Even with the additional support it provided, the programme had limitations: Some external actors could not overcome rivalries despite support for cooperation, especially in the field of educational consulting for the elderly, while others refrained from cooperation due to the limited duration of the programme, since they did not see a benefit in "short-time" cooperation (LE-1). Moreover, high personnel fluctuations in the LvO project team (LE-3, LE-7, LE-9) and personnel changes within the administration and in cooperating organisations (LE-5) were regarded as a central obstacle towards developing the programme in certain activity fields. Some even argued that the programme only had little impact on the quality of education (LE-1 LE-2). Critically, the programme was said to have a limited effect on improving access to education for socially disadvantaged groups (LE-3, LE-5).

A further concern was who should in be charge of developing local education management and LvO's other thematic fields in the future (LE-1, LE-2, LE-6). It was questioned whether the tasks taken over by LvO can be implemented within the regular administrative structures and without external resources (LE-2, LE-3). Administrative actors may have become used to the fact that LvO deals with certain topics and were not aware of the additional tasks that had to be carried out after the end of the programme funding (LE-6). On the positive side, several interviewees expressed positive expectations that some components of the programme will be sustainable, in particular education management (LE-1, LE-3, LE-6, LE-12), monitoring (LE-1, LE-2, LE-3, LE-4, LE-8, LE-10, LE-12) and provider-neutral educational consulting (Interviews LE-1, LE-2, LE-3, LE-6, LE-8, LE-10, LE-12, LE-13). Moreover, the fact that LvO made use of existing network structures was seen as positive for sustainability, because these structures will not cease to exist once the programme funding ends (LE-1, LE-5). It was also expected that – supported by the educational conferences and the discussions on education in the city council – the topic of education will remain a priority on the political agenda (LE-6).

4. Bremen

Governance structures

Our interviews in Bremen revealed some findings similar to the other cases for the perception of governance structures. First, there also were initial problems between the project team and the administration. For example, several interviewees mentioned difficulties for the LvO personnel to "get access" to the administration (HB-4, HB-12, HB-13, HB-14). In Bremerhaven, this process was aided by relocating the LvO personnel into those administrative divisions, which were responsible for particular fields of activity, in the second phase of the programme (HB-12, HB-13, HB-14). Initially, the cooperation between the LvO-personnel and administrative staff was strained by limited personnel resources on part of the administration (HB- 4, HB-12, HB-13), which experienced the start of the project as additional workload (HB-4). Secondly, some administrative actors and external cooperation partners criticised the strong focus of LvO on financial means for education management and would have preferred more resources for concrete projects instead (HB-1, HB-4, HB-6, HB-9, HB-10, HB-15).

Moreover, a specific aspect in the case of Bremen was the division of governance between four different bodies, which was perceived to make coordination and steering very time-intensive (HB-4, HB-9, HB-12, HB-16, HB-17).

Although the application was mainly drafted by actors who were already involved in *"Learning Regions"* (HB-4, HB-15, HB-16) and the core of the administration (HB-5), interviewees from within and external to the administration argued that they did not perceive clear goal- or priority-setting in the overall project (HB-1, HB-10, HB-13, HB-14). To some, it remained unclear on which basis decisions were made (HB-1, HB-8, HB-14). Another point of contention was the lack of involvement of external stakeholders in the application process (HB-1, HB-10, HB-14).

While the improvement of cooperation with external actors (HB-5, HB-7, HB-9, HB-13, HB-14) was regarded as a core goal of the programme by some interview partners, others stressed the aim of achieving better cooperation between different administrative departments (HB-3, HB-5, HB-7, HB-13, HB-14, HB-15, HB-16). The latter was seen as a crucial aspect, because many interviewees reported tensions between different administrative departments (HB-6, HB-8, HB-14, HB-15, HB-16), unclear definitions of responsibilities (HB-1, HB-14) and varying commitment towards LvO (HB-5, HB-14). Some interviewees argued that the governance structures were dominated by the education department, which created obstacles to cooperation between different departments (HB-6, HB-15, HB-16) when a traditional focus on schools conflicted with a more holistic approach to education as lifelong-learning (HB-15). Inter-departmental cooperation was also found to be difficult due to the limited fiscal resources in Bremen (HB-15, HB-16). As in the othre three cases, conflicts could be reduced when and where the programme had a visible output and resulted in concrete projects (HB-11, HB-13, HB-16), for example with monitoring or projects in the neighbourhood of Gröpelingen (HB-5, HB-7, HB-9, HB-10, HB-15, HB-16, see examples below).

Political support and leadership

Bremen is a very instructive case for the role of political leadership for LvO. First of all, conflicts between different administrative departments could not be resolved by political decree by the Lord Mayor, because he has no guideline competence to authoritatively issue orders to the other members of the executive. Thus a top-down approach, that might have facilitated inter-departmental cooperation, was not feasible (HB-6, HB-15, HB-16).

Secondly, our interviews directly pointed to the relevance of individual politicians for the success of the programme. Several interviewees stressed the political support of the education senator as crucial for the programme's introduction and success (HB-2, HB-4, HB-15, HB-17). It was mainly her support that promoted the topic of integration and diversity. Against the background of strong inequalities between and within different quarters in Bremen, she commissioned a study on migration and education (HB-2). The study carried out by researchers at the University Bremen and published in 2011 made more than 40 recommendations to increase educational quality and access under the conditions of increasing heterogeneity in the population of pupils and parents (Karakaşoğlu et al., 2011). One of the central recommendations was the implementation of a quality assurance and support programme for education facilities in areas with a high share of migrants. After the publication of the report, the QUIMS [*Qualität in multikulturellen Schulen und Stadtteilen* – Quality in multicultural schools and city districts] programme was set upt in the quarter of Gröpelingen (HB-2, HB-4). The basic goal of QUIMS is to develop a comprehensive approach to increase educational quality and improve access, which was perceived to be very successful (see below).

The political support for LvO decreased when a new education senator took office (HB-2, HB-4, HB-5, HB-6, HB-9, HB-15, HB-16). This was attributed to the fact that the new senator quickly came under political pressure to invest in teachers and to reduce the outage of classes (HB-6, HB-9). Linked to this, some interviewees perceived a general slowing down of governance processes after responsible key supporters of the programme left their positions (HB-7, HB-9, HB-14).

Educational monitoring

Bremen had good preconditions for monitoring as the state government has its own statistical office (HB-4, HB-9, HB-15). Nonetheless, LvO provided additional resources to develop new indicators (HB-4, HB-12) and to establish education reporting (HB-9, HB-15, HB-17). Influenced by the expert study on migration and education cited above, the first educational report was prepared with a special focus on the impact of migratory and socio-economic background (Autorenteam Bildungsberichterstattung Bremen und Bremerhaven 2012), increasing the knowledge about the association between socio-economic background and educational success in Bremen (HB-9, HB-15). Two additional studies on school graduates in Bremerhaven were published in 2011 and 2012. They were perceived to have had a positive effect (HB-13, HB-14), as they stressed the necessity to provide more training places for school graduates, which fuelled a discussion between local politics and the chambers (HB-14).

Generally and as in the other cases, the development of education monitoring under LvO was regarded as very important for the increase of knowledge about the state of local education (HB-9, HB-14, HB-15, HB-16, HB-17) and as an important basis for political decision-making (HB-3, HB-6, HB-11, HB-13, HB-17). It connects practitioner knowledge with quantitative indicators, and arguments are generally more trusted when they can be based on solid data (HB-15). Monitoring was also the area in which cooperation between different departments functioned best compared to other thematic fields (HB-16). Still, evidence-based steering seems to be the exception rather than the rule (HB-4, HB-6). Although education monitoring and reporting increased the transparency of education and the accessibility of educational data (HB-6), data availability is still limited for small and local areas (HB-8) also due to privacy laws and regulations (HB-13, HB-16). In addition, monitoring was not effective in collecting data on the field of further and adult education (HB-4).

Cooperation between civil society and administration

The cooperation between the administration and civil society actors under LvO varied in success. For example the development of a common approach to education consulting did not work, because the participating stakeholders in the respective working group could not agree on a common concept (HB-1, HB-4). Similar to other cases, education consulting in Bremen was a field, in which a lot of actors (education providers) are involved, who could not overcome competition among themselves (HB-1, HB-10, HB-13). The development of an integration concept in Bremerhaven is a second example of the potential limits of LvO when actors are unwilling to cooperate. In Bremerhaven, the cooperation between a broad range of civil society stakeholders in workshops and conferences (HB-11, HB-12, HB-14) resulted in the development of an integration concept. However, further steps were blocked by the local administration, where the proponents of the concept did not occupy decision-making positions (HB-11).

A success story of LvO in Bremen is the establishment of an educational centre in the city quarter of Gröpelingen (HB-2, HB-4, HB-6, HB-7, HB-8, HB-10, HB-16, HB-17). Its focus on the cross-cutting topic of education was argued to have facilitated cooperation between local actors with different backgrounds (HB-6, HB-8, HB-10, HB-16). Here, especially two examples were given. First, QUIMS was perceived as very beneficial for the cooperation between different actors (HB-2, HB-7, HB-9, HB-16). While the local project team of LvO facilitated the coordination between participating institutions, it also offered training for QUIMS – consultancy for teachers and workers of education institutions (HB-2, HB-7). LvO also inspired discussions fruitful for knowledge exchange (HB-2) and sponsored topical workshops intended to facilitate cooperation with parents and pupils.

The second example was the joint planning of a new school, the *Campus Ohlenhof*. Here, LvO facilitated the cooperation between different administrative departments and local stakeholders, such as a recreational youth centre, a childcare institution and a school (HB-2, HB-3, HB-7, HB-8). Communication

and cooperation were supported by joint workshops organised by LvO, presentations of best-practise models and input from scientific publications (HB-3). In this example, LvO was successful in pointing out joint benefits and mediating between actors that were afraid to loose influence (HB-3, HB-7, HB-10, HB-15). New cooperation developed between schools and youth centres that had formerly communicated very little (HB-2, HB-3, HB-15).

While the last two examples are success stories of LvO in concrete projects in Gröpelingen, a general problem was that concrete projects could not always be expanded to cover the whole city (HB-4, HB-10, HB-15). For example, there is no local educational office (HB-15).

Sustainability

Compared to the former cases, many of our interviewees had a critical perception of the sustainability of LvO's results in Bremen, independent of whether they were representatives of the administration or the civil society. The dire financial situation of Bremen was often mentioned as a central challenge (HB-2, HB-3, HB-4, HB-6, HB-11, HB-14, HB-16). Here, additional resources provided by LvO were seen as necessary, and implementation would not have been feasible within the normal budget (HB-6, HB-9). Thus, even if the programme's components such as monitoring and education management will be continued, it is an open question if the programme will have lasting effects. As individual persons within the project team were important for the success, the loss of personnel capacities was seen as endangering the routines in coordination and communication that had been established under LvO between the different stakeholders (HB-3, HB-4, HB-8). Similarly, it was argued that programme duration was too short, because many processes are still ongoing and would need time to bring about sustainable results (HB-4, HB-5, HB-6, HB-12, HB-15, HB-17). Finally, even the future of successful programmes such as QUIMS is strongly dependent on Bremen's fiscal state and related political decisions (HB-7).

5. Kreis Recklinghausen

Governance structures

In contrast to our other cases, Recklinghausen constitutes an interesting special case, which became obvious already during the application phase. The initiative to apply for LvO came from four cities within the district, which wanted to shore up existing or implement already planned projects (RH-1, RH-5, RH-8, RH-9, RH-10, RH-15, RH-16, RH-17), but needed the formal support of the district government in order to be eligible for participation in the LvO programme (RH-1, RH-5, RH-10, RH-16). When the application was approved by the BMBF, a part of LvO's project team was directly situated in the so-called *Leuchtturmprojekte* [lighthouse projects] in the four cities.[24] In this regard, some interviewees in the administration mentioned that the application process had neither been transparent nor clearly communicated (RH-2, RH-4, RH-11). Others stressed that the goals of LvO had not been made transparent enough (RH-4, RH-11, RH-12, RH-14). Many interviewees were unsure on which basis priority- and goal-setting within the governance structures occurred (RH-3, RH-6, RH-11, RH-12, RH-13, RH-14).

Once the programme was approved, the special design of LvO in Recklinghausen initially led to tensions between the cities with and those without lighthouse projects. Within the main governance bodies,

[24] Of the six lighthouse projects, two were implemented in Herten (House of job-preparation – *Haus der Berufsvorbereitung;* A square kilometer of education – *Ein Quadratkilometer Bildung*) and two were situated in Gladbeck (local educational office – *Kommunales Bildungsbüro*; Education-house Albert-Schweizer - *Bildungshaus Albert-Schweizer*). Moreover, Castrop-Rauxel (Foster kids – Strenghten parents – *Kinder fördern – Eltern stärken*) and Recklinghausen (Educational agreement on language - *Bildungspakt Sprache*) each had one lighthouse project (cf. Kreis Recklinghausen 2012b).

there were debates about the allocation of LvO personnel to the lighthouse cities (RH-1, RH-2, RH-11, RH-15). These cities were envied the additional resources due to the fiscally strained state of the local governments (RH-2, RH-15). Also, the allocation of most of the LvO personnel to the four cities led to conflicts about the use of LvO resources for regular administrative tasks (RH-2, RH-3, RH-9, RH-11). Regarding the resolution of this basic conflict, our interviews had different perceptions. While one interviewee claimed that conflicts were not resolved within the governance bodies (RH-3), others stated that conflicts were allayed by district-wide development workshops and the perspective of policy transfer towards the end of the programme (RH-1, RH-5, RH-10, RH-15, RH-17).

Similar to our other cases, LvO in Recklinghausen also faced initial obstacles due to its focus on institutionalising education management at the district level. Here, some administrative actors and external cooperation partners questioned the focus of the LvO budget on personnel and would have preferred more financial resources for concrete projects (RH-2, RH-4, RH-8, RH-9, RH-12, RH-15). More generally, the role of the district in education management was questioned as it has little formal education policy competences (RH-5, RH-17). The municipalities were sceptical about interference in education by the district, because they feared that it would usurp their competencies (RH-1, RH-2, RH-3, RH-8, RH-9, RH-15). These conflicts were not finally resolved, but political commitment mattered for their mediation (see below).

Political support and leadership

As concerns political commitment in the district, many interviewees alluded to a basic conflict between the district level and the cities, which made political agreement difficult (RH-2, RH-4, RH-8, RH-14, RH-15). As the district government has little formal competencies in education policy-making, individual mayors were decisive for their municipalities' commitment to the programme (RH-1, RH-3, RH-8, RH-9, RH-11, RH-12, RH-13, RH-15, RH-16). Moreover, the political support of the *Landrat* was found to have been very important for the success of LvO (RH-5, RH-12, RH-15), in particular his connections to individual mayors (RH-9).

In this context, LvO pointed out the structural challenges of education policy-making in the district, but did not necessarily resolve fundamental coordination problems or increase the limited steering capacity of the district government (RH-8). Political differences impeded a binding decision on common goals and approaches in the main governance bodies, because some members were unsure if these goals would be supported politically by their municipalities (RH-1). One interviewee even went as far as claiming that LvO was not well-suited to the complex political structure of the district (RH-14). However, where political commitment was high, it facilitated access of the LvO personnel to the respective administrations (RH-2, RH-11, RH-14, RH-15).

Educational monitoring

Similar to Mühldorf am Inn, the *Kreis* Recklinghausen had no previous experience with educational monitoring (RH-5). The data collection was initially very cumbersome because of the distribution of statistical resources for data collection across the district's cities (RH-6, RH-16) and the reluctance of some cities to participate in data provision (RH-7, RH-9). Also, foundations and school authorities were quite sceptical about the added value of education monitoring at first (RH-1, RH-6, RH-12). In this respect, many interviewees pointed out that little knowledge about the aims of educational monitoring existed (RH-1, RH-2, RH-12, RH-14, RH-15).

In order to increase the quality of monitoring, LvO organised a joint workshop for educational monitoring with city representatives, chambers and educational institutions, but some actors did not participate due to a lack of personnel resources or interest (RH-6, RH-14). The first education report

published in 2011 was developed along the lines of the scientific recommendations of the DIPF and its monitoring guidelines, which were found to be very helpful (RH-7). It covered three educational areas: early childhood education, education in schools and vocational training. One central finding was that the district had already reached its goals to increase the share of school graduates with an *Abitur* [university entrance qualification] and to reduce the number of school-drop outs without a certificate (RH-1, RH-6, RH-11), which disconfirmed former analyses that had not taken the *Berufskollegs* [vocational colleges] in the district into account (RH-1, cf. Kreis Recklinghausen 2011).

After the publication of the report, discussions on the use of indicators emerged (RH-2, RH-6, RH-7). Some cities complained about a seemingly worse performance in the provision of childcare, which was not supported by their own data (RH-6, RH-7, RH-14). This inspired a discussion between the municipalities and LvO (RH-6, RH-14), subsequently leading to the development of a common data mask for the ten cities in the district. However, it was not possible to implement an obligatory data collection (RH-2, RH-6, RH-7), which would have required additional monitoring resources on the part of LvO and the local governments (RH-2, RH-15) or a transfer of the formal responsibility for education monitoring from the cities to the district level (RH-8). On a more positive note, monitoring has become highly accepted in the course of LvO (RH-5, RH-6, RH-7, RH-11), also because it produced concrete and visible results (RH-7) and now constitutes an important basis for political decision-making (RH-5, RH-6, RH-7, RH-9).

Cooperation between civil society and administration

Compared to the other cases, administration-external actors had a very limited role in the governance structures (RH-1, RH-2, RH-5, RH-9, RH-15), which was criticized heavily by representatives of the administration and civil society alike (RH-4, RH-9). Moreover, the lack of involvement by civil society actors meant that governance bodies remained focused on the representation of school matters (RH-2, RH-12, RH-14).

In terms of concrete project examples, LvO had limited district-wide effects besides monitoring. For example, efforts to improve the management of school-to-work transitions were stifled by different existing structures and concepts across the municipalities (RH-2, RH-14), which also competed for skilled youth (RH-2). The LvO personnel depended on voluntary cooperation of potential partners, which was especially limited among schools (RH-13, RH-16). These problems, however, were expected to decrease under a new initiative of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia that is intended to support the development of a “new transition-system” (RH-4, RH-13). Further problems became apparent in the development of education consulting, where many actors feared a loss of influence (RH-2). Furthermore, the municipalities were quite reluctant to develop a joint concept for education consulting and preferred to develop and rely on their own approaches (RH-14, RH-15). Although a workshop for the development of local education consulting involving all major stakeholders (RH-2, RH-14, RH-16) took place, decisions remained dependent on individual municipalities (RH-14). While the project resulted in the publication of a document that compiles many educational offers in the district (Kreis Recklinghausen, 2012a), it did not lead to the establishment of local provider-neutral consultation offices.

In general, the programme was regarded to be more effective in the lighthouse projects (RH-3, RH-8, RH-9, RH-11, RH-12, RH-13, RH-14, RH-17), because they improved the transparency of and access to educational offers in the respective cities (RH-12, RH-15, RH-17), increased the participation of citizens in formal and non-formal education (RH-8) and could well be adapted to local circumstances and demands (RH-3, RH-17). Here, the joint development of projects between administrative and civil society actors was said to have functioned comparatively well (RH-3, RH-8, RH-15, RH-17). While the impact of LvO on these projects cannot be directly assessed – since some of them had already existed prior to LvO –, it was argued that the additional funding was very beneficial for these projects (RH-8, RH-9). A further sign

of the relative success of the lighthouse projects is that some projects are already being transferred within and between cities (RH-8, RH-12, RH-15).[25]

Sustainability

The sustainability of the projects and structures of LvO was questioned by many of our interview partners in Recklinghausen. In general, the additional resources provided by LvO were perceived as very beneficial for the development of a regional education landscape (RH-5), but their sustainability after the end of LvO funding remained unclear (RH-14, RH-15). Some related this to a lack of fiscal resources and claimed that additional funding would be necessary in order to continue with reforms (RH-2, RH-8, RH-9, RH-10, RH-15). Others argued that the transfer of the lighthouse projects from the original four municipalities to others was the central current challenge. Here, being able to keep the experienced personnel was seen as a necessary condition for a successful adaptation of projects to local circumstances (RH-2, RH-3, Rh-11, RH-14). However, a successful transfer was also seen to be only feasible with a continuing provision of additional resources (RH-1, RH-9, RH-11).

On a more positive note, it was expected that the development of transfer handbooks would prove very helpful for a future policy transfer (RH-1, RH-13). The lighthouse projects (RH-1, RH-5, RH-11), education management (RH-1, RH-2, RH-5, RH-9) and monitoring were expected to continue after the end of the LvO programme (RH-1, RH-2, RH-3, RH-6, RH-7, RH-9, RH-10). Nevertheless, the amount of financial support for these projects was still unclear and believed to be very dependent on the results of the next election in the middle of 2014 (RH-1, RH-5, RH-7, RH-9).

[25] For the development of project transfer, see: Kreis Recklinghausen (various): Bildungsblick Recklinghausen.