

Lorenz, Jennifer (2017). *Soziale Chancengerechtigkeit durch Gesamtschulen. Können Gesamtschulen dazu beitragen sekundäre Herkunftseffekte am Übergang nach der Sekundarstufe I zu reduzieren?* Göttingen: eDiss SUB

Equal opportunities through comprehensive schools. Can comprehensive schools reduce secondary effects of social origin at the transition after secondary school?

Table of contents

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Comprehensive schools in Germany**
 - 2.1 Cooperative and integrative comprehensive schools
 - 2.2 Introduction of comprehensive schools in Germany
 - 2.3 Evaluation of pilot projects with comprehensive schools with regard to equal opportunities
 - 2.4 Comprehensive schools in today's education system
- 3 Theoretical background**
 - 3.1 Educational decisions as rational choices influenced by students' social origin
 - 3.2 The influence of psychological factors on educational decisions
 - 3.3 The influence of social networks on educational decisions
 - 3.4 The influence of institutional structures on educational decisions
- 4 Development of a theoretical model for educational decisions**
- 5 State of research**
 - 5.1 Educational participation rates in Germany
 - 5.2 Changes in educational participation rates in Germany
 - 5.3 Educational decisions after primary school
 - 5.4 Opening up of the German education system in secondary school
 - 5.5 Secondary schools as differential learning and development environments
 - 5.6 Selective and non-selective education systems
 - 5.7 Integrative comprehensive schools
- 6 Research questions and hypotheses**
- 7 Data and methods**
 - 7.1 The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS)
 - 7.2 Stage 4: From Lower to Upper Secondary School
 - 7.3 Data preparation
 - 7.4 Operationalization
 - 7.5 Analytical methods
 - 7.6 Analysis procedures and software
- 8 Empirical analyses**
 - 8.1 Sample
 - 8.2 Social origin

- 8.3 Psychological factors
- 8.4 Significant others' attitudes and expectations
- 8.5 Significant others' experiences / Knowledge about the education system
- 8.6 Institutional context factors
- 8.7 Selection of students at the entry to secondary schools
- 8.8 Gender and migration history
- 8.9 Model for the educational decision
- 8.10 Model for the educational decision at different types of schools
- 8.11 Value-Expectation-Theory
- 8.12 Model for the educational decision taking into account the Value-Expectation-Theory
- 8.13 Model for the educational decision taking into account the Value-Expectation-Theory at different types of schools

9 Summary and discussion

- 9.1 Factors influencing the educational decision
- 9.2 Empirical applicability of the Value-Expectation-Theory
- 9.3 Relevance of integrative comprehensive schools for equal opportunities
- 9.4 Implications for the current German education system
- 9.5 Research desiderata

10 Appendices

- 10.1 Literature
- 10.2 Figures
- 10.3 Tables

Summary

The German education system is currently changing from a multi-track to a two-track school system, where after primary school – at the age of 10 – students are sorted onto two different types of schools according to their ability: a comprehensive school or a *Gymnasium*, the latter being the most academically oriented of the previously existing range of school types. The reorganization of the German education system stems from a political compromise. Whereas political parties of some German states (*Länder*) were trying to introduce a single-track school system, where all student would go to the same school until the end of secondary school (10th grade), especially parents opposed this idea and successfully pled for keeping the *Gymnasium*. Considering the fact that the new two-track school system is a political compromise and taking into account several international studies showing that education in heterogeneous classes has positive effects on students' opportunities, the question arises whether this compromise will achieve equality of educational opportunity or if the originally politically desired single-track system would be the better option? As the German school system is currently still diverse with several co-existing types of secondary school, there is no easy answer to this question. There is, however, a particular type of comprehensive school, introduced in the 1970s in addition to the traditional school system, that has many similarities to secondary schools in the single-track education systems of other countries: the *integrierte Gesamtschule*. These similarities include that students are not sorted into different school

tracks according to their ability immediately after primary school, but are educated in heterogeneous classes. If such characteristics were positively linked to equal opportunities, students' backgrounds should not have the same impact on the choice of educational paths after secondary school at the *integrierte Gesamtschule* as it does at other types of school. Consequently, there should be fewer secondary effects of social origin on these decisions at the *integrierte Gesamtschule* than, for example, at the *Gymnasium*.

The analyses conducted for this dissertation show that in general there are considerable secondary effects of social origin on the transition after secondary school in Germany: students from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to continue their education in upper secondary school and more often leave school at this point. A comparison of different types of secondary school reveals that this does only hold true for traditional school types like the *Gymnasium* or the more practically-oriented *Realschule*. At the *integrierte Gesamtschule* no effects of social origin on the decision to stay in general education and go on to upper secondary school can be found. The fact that the *integrierte Gesamtschule* is currently only one of several different secondary school types makes this effect even more significant. It is this coexistence and competition with other schooling options which leads to a less favorable composition of the student body at the *integrierte Gesamtschule* which would be expected to foster effects of social origin rather than to reduce them. As the new type of comprehensive school which is currently developed for the two-track education system will be very similar to the *integrierte Gesamtschule*, it can be expected that this new type of school will also contribute to the equalization of students' opportunities. However, the findings of this dissertation also indicate that the two-track education system will not suffice to reach the goal of equal opportunities for all students irrespective of their social background. The analyses show that, even though the transition to upper secondary school is independent of students' social origin at the *integrierte Gesamtschule*, at the *Gymnasium* it is not. Therefore a two-track school system cannot be the final step on the way to equal opportunities for all students. Provided that equality of opportunity remains a shared goal across German society and the political spectrum, a political initiative for a unified school system in which all students attend the same school until the end of secondary education is indispensable.