
Theory and Evidence on Governance: Conceptual and Empirical Strategies of Research on Governance in Education

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1 What Do We Mean by “Governance”?

There is no word such as “governance” or an equivalent to it in German everyday language. However, since the late 1980s “governance” has been used as a technical term in political and social sciences for conceptualising phenomena which before then were called “regieren” (to govern) or “steuern” (to steer) (see Schneider and Kenis 1996; Brand 2004; Benz 2004, p. 15; Schimank 2007a). Like the concept of New Public Management which emerged at the same time, the governance perspective reflects “the rise of a profound scepticism about the possibilities of hierarchical control of complex social systems” (de Boer et al. 2007, p. 137). However, New Public Management is “a normative program for practical policy-making”,

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while the governance perspective aspires to remain “analytically open” (ibid.) and to offer an analytic tool for analysing states of governance and their transformation.

“The governance perspective provides a general analytical framework for studying all kinds of coordination problems among actors” (ibid., p. 138). The regulation of systems and the production of system-specific performance are conceived as arising from the *coordination of the independent actions of social actors* (see Benz 2004, p. 17). This seemingly abstract definition – “coordination of actors” – invites us to spell out what exactly is happening when we consider social processes to be “governed”, “regulated”, or “steered”.

During the last five years the concept of “governance” has been introduced into educational research in order to study the changes in the regulation of school systems which German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, Liechtenstein) have seen since the beginning of the 1990s (see Altrichter et al. 2007). Under the name of “Governance Perspective”, “Governance Research” or “Governance Studies” a body of work has evolved which aims to understand these changes by concentrating on the question, how regulation and performance of school systems is achieved, sustained and transformed under the perspective of coordination of action between various social actors in complex multilevel systems (see Schimank 2007a; Altrichter and Heinrich 2007; Kussau and Brüsemeister 2007).

Presently, there is quite a vivid conceptual discussion in educational governance research. The following passages will explain some features of the category “governance” which have been put forward in this debate. This is to give an idea of the specific foci of attention of this research approach and to distinguish this technical term from connotations which might be valid in other contexts.

1.1 Multitude of Actors

The term “governance” firstly indicates that we assume that school systems – and their reform – are not shaped by a single dominant actor, e.g. by the government and its administrative staff. More actors are involved in the formation of a system. In order to make innovations work, teachers and school leaders must take innovative ideas on board, and they must translate them into actions and organisational arrangements. Students must understand the innovation and reshape at least partially their actions (and they may need some support and the understanding of their parents). Intermediary institutions, such as the inspectorate, textbook publishers, professional development institutions must act in some accordance. Although many actors have some influence, usually they do not have equal chances of participation and support (see Altrichter and Salzgeber 2000).

1.2 Coordination of Action

We tend to consider something to be “regulated” if the relevant system actors “coordinate” their action. The governance perspective uses a non-evaluative concept of “coordination” to analyse the way and functionality of the actors’ combined action. Several instruments are available to analyse modes of coordination. Lange and Schimank (2004, p. 20) distinguish three basic *governance mechanisms* which may be used to analyse modes of coordination on a micro-level:

- Firstly, there are *constellations of observation*, in which coordination of social action is achieved by unilateral or mutual adaptation to what has been observed of the others’ action.
- In *constellations of influence* coordination is achieved by targeted use of means of potential influence, such as power, money, knowledge, emotions, moral authority, etc. “Observation” is a precondition for “influence”.
- In *constellations of negotiation* social coordination is based on bilaterally elaborating arrangements which may display their binding effects also without the exercise of power. “Observation” and “influence” are preconditions for “negotiation”.

Another analytic strategy uses “*classical models of societal coordination*”, such as the traditional macro-distinction between bureaucracy (or hierarchy), market, community, networks (see Dupriez and Maroy 2003, p. 379; Lange and Schimank 2004, p. 22; Benz et al. 2007). It is a strength of these concepts that persons can intuitively connect with them, thus allowing an easy first step into analysis. The weakness is that they seem to imply more homogeneous conditions than can be found in reality. Governances in reality are usually very specific combinations of such ideal types.

Another – “medium-level” – instrument has been developed by the German sociologist Uwe Schimank (2007b) using leads from Burton Clark (1997) in order to analyse changes specific for the contemporary university system and variations between countries. The claim is that there are at least five specific dimensions which may be used to trace characteristic changes during the contemporary transformation of education systems. These dimensions are as follows (in Fig. 1 they are organised as a “governance equalizer”; see de Boer et al. 2007, p. 138):

- The dimension *state regulation* denotes the traditional regulation of public systems by the top-down authority of the state using legal measures, directives and distribution of earmarked resources aiming to prescribe in detail the behaviour of subsystems.

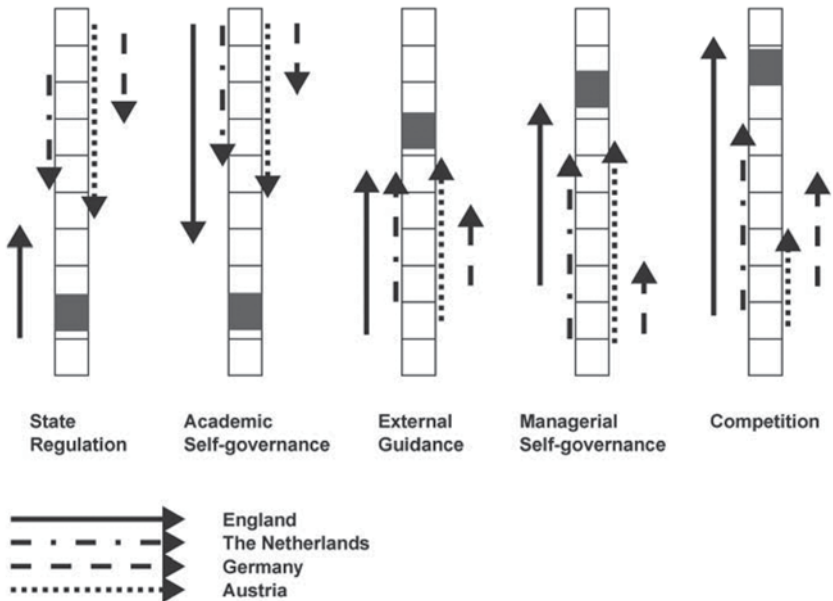
- The dimension *external guidance by the state or other stakeholders* describes regulatory activities that direct other systems and institutions through goal setting, advice and evaluation usually exerted by the government or other stakeholders.
- The dimension *academic self-governance* refers to the professionals' power in decision making, e.g. "institutionalized in collegial decision-making within universities and the peer review-based self-steering of academic communities" (ibid., p. 139).
- The dimension *managerial self-governance* refers to the regulatory power of the internal hierarchies in organisations such as schools, universities or hospitals and to their leadership's power in internal goal setting, distribution of funds and decision making.
- The dimension *competition for scarce resources* (such as money, personnel and prestige) refers to system coordination by market or "quasi-market" processes.

This rationale was used to analyse both specific changes in university systems (see, for example, Schiene and Schimank 2007) and more general transformations and differences between European university systems. Figure 1 summarises the findings of de Boer et al. (2007, p. 140) with respect to changes in university governance in England, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany over the last 20 years: in all countries there have been changes in all five dimensions; however, the degree of change varies between countries and dimensions. The most common feature seems to be that academic self-governance is the main loser, while external guidance by performance targets, the powers of managerial self-governance and competition between the actors of the university systems have increased in all countries studied; however, to quite different degrees.

Schimank's "governance equalizer" has obviously some "heuristic value" for analysing the transformation within systems and differences between systems. We found this approach also useful for analysing changes in school systems over time (see Altrichter et al. 2005b) and in the working conditions of different actors in the school system (see, for example, Altrichter 2010).

1.3 Rights of Disposal and Regulation Structures

It is not the erratic or accidental actions which are interesting for governance analysis but the structured and structuring actions. Agency and structure are considered as related and are analysed in their relationship. Action is structured; structures become socially relevant when they are taken up by actors. The capability to act in



The "grey boxes" refer to the NPM standard.

Fig. 1 Shifts in university governance of the four countries compared. (Source: © de Boer et al. 2007, p. 149)

social systems is based on structural elements, on a structure of regulation which organises rights and competences of disposal in a way which is specific for the particular system (see Braun 2001, p. 247; Kussau and Brüsemeister 2007, p. 21). Thus, governance analyses are looking for rules and resources (see Giddens 1992) which are already existent in a system, and also for those which are additionally provided by the promoters of a reform and which are to be taken up by other actors in order to push forward, transform or hinder the reform policy taking root in a system.

1.4 Multilevel Systems

Another characteristic of the governance perspective is that complex social systems such as the school system are considered to be multilevel phenomena. This notion makes clear that not all actors interact with all other actors in the same way,

but that there are typical constellations of actors, typical “levels” with special principles of action which may be very different from the logic of action on another level.

The concept of “multilevel systems” draws our attention to questions of *cross-border coordination* between system levels which appear to be among the most crucial problems of system development. It has been argued that governance research must not limit itself to the systemic and organisational questions on macro- and meso-levels *before* classroom learning happens. The central concept of “action coordination” is also relevant for the micro-level. Classroom teaching and learning may also be understood as an effort of coordination which contributes to the specific performance of a multilevel system: a number of learners and teachers must coordinate their individual actions in such a way that individual and social functions are fulfilled.

1.5 Intentional Action and Partially Transintentional Results

The intentionality of actors is an important factor for understanding processes in schools. Actors have goals when they contribute to transactions in schools: Students want to pass the grade or understand a subject or prove themselves. Teachers want to do good classroom work, fulfil the idea of “Bildung” or preserve or improve their working conditions, etc. Although actors want to steer the system according to their intentions, and the “Gestalt” of the school and of the school system may be seen as a product of an “intentional struggle” of different actors (see Schimank 2007a), many important dynamics and results of this struggle are, however, “transintentional” when actions produce, for example, non-intended results, unexpected ripple effects or unforeseen distant effects which governance analyses must attend to (see Sydow and Windeler 2000, p. 9).

The conceptual devices proposed by the German governance researchers come very close to the *model of social regulation* developed by Christian Maroy from Leuven and colleagues: Maroy and van Zanten (2009, p. e69) define school regulation as “multiple, contradictory and sometimes conflicting processes for orienting the behaviours of actors and defining the rules of the game in a social system”. “Regulation is always multiregulation” (ibid.) as there are more sources for rules than the traditional institutions, and more actors than the government (see Dupriez and Maroy 2003, p. 379). Like the German governance researchers, this research group expects “transintentional” results (Maroy and van Zanten 2009, p. e72) and tries to attend to both structural and action aspects of social processes, and to the specific ways they unfold: “Regulation is considered as a composite, the partial

and fragile inter-articulation of various forms of institutional co-ordination in the framework in which actors' games take place" (Dupriez and Maroy 2003, p. 379). Thus, it is no surprise that these two strands of research also turn to similar research areas.

2 Governance Studies as a Research Programme

How to research these complex phenomena called "governance"? There is a recent and ongoing debate about research strategies and methods for this type of studies. Most governance researchers would subscribe to the following claims (for a more detailed account see Altrichter and Maag Merki 2010, p. 27):

1. Governance Studies do *not aim to arrive at a single unified theory*, but understand themselves as a "perspective" which is open for various theories of social science. Like Ball (2006a [1997]), German governance researchers argued that the complexity of governance phenomena discourages explanations which are based exclusively on a single theory: "What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories" (ibid., p. 43).
2. Governance Studies must *attend to both the level of political proclamation and legitimation and to the level of action and its results, and it must relate these levels*. Both talk and action (see Brunsson 1989) are relevant objects of analysis in the field of Governance Studies.
3. Governance Studies must not choose too narrow a focus, but must *study policies in their context* (see Ball 2006b [1997], p. 19). They must build on a sense of *time and history*. Even if a study focuses on present political changes, these are rooted in a pre-history which in itself was not uniform, but influenced by various internal dynamics. And Governance Studies need some sense of *place*: innovation is situated in specific local conditions; however, there are more often than not relevant relationships to other systems (see Ozga and Jones 2006).
4. Governance Studies do *not aim to promote a specific governance model*, e.g. some variation of New Public Management. Contrary to that, Governance Studies as a primarily *analytic enterprise* (see Benz 2004, p. 25) aim to understand and explain the logic, the workings and the effects of various governance constellations. However, questions of value and development are not excluded. On the one hand, it is a task of Governance Studies to unpack the "normative packages" which governance models usually are in order to clarify both proclaimed and implicit values, to compare them with various competing social goals and to evaluate their effects with respect to their goals. Such a *critique* of

ideology, implementation and effect is part of the task of Governance Studies. On the other hand, Governance Studies aspire to produce enough knowledge about societal processes of coordination and formation to allow justified *proposals for further system development* (see Schimank 2007a, p. 29). However, it is not expected that such proposals will be concisely organised around a few “mega factors”, the manipulation of which will profoundly change systems and their performance. Rather, the aspiration is to distinguish more promising from less promising governance “configurations” in specific cultural contexts (e.g. Schümer and Weiss 2008, p. 22).

The internal performance assessment studies have shown that very different configurations may produce very good results [...]. The best configuration will be difficult to identify. It is more promising to search for specific “mal-configurations” and weak points in development strategies”. (Fend 2008, p. 114)¹

5. Governance Studies aim at an empirically founded multi-perspective understanding of the formation and the performance of schooling. It follows from the range of objects and perspectives that different research strategies and methods are necessary. Analyses of political and law texts, historical and cultural accounts, interviews with participants, observation of processes and measurement of effects, quantitative and qualitative approaches, all of them seem to have value for the further development of Governance Studies.
6. As was indicated above, many characteristics of this research endeavour closely resemble typical features of “policy studies” in the anglophone world. And this is exactly my argument: With the programme of “Governance Studies” a type of policy studies eventually emerges which until now did not have much of a tradition in German educational research.

The aspiration to capture and analyse complex multilevel processes of social regulation is quite demanding, as is the list of proposed features of Governance Studies. However, it would be an unhealthy demand on oneself or on others to fulfil all these criteria in a single study. In my view, these demands are not to be met by each and every individual study. Rather, it is the task of a broader *governance discourse* to build relationships between different approaches and studies. Theoretical and methodological work is necessary to explicate central concepts which may be used as “bridge concepts”, by the help of which these relationships may be established.

¹ Quotations from German sources have been translated by the author.

3 Evidence on Governance

In this section I will present some examples from German governance research. They are selectively chosen to illuminate one of the issues presently under research – i.e. the policy of schools autonomy – and to demonstrate the range of methodological strategies presently used.

3.1 Paths of Innovation in German School Systems

School systems in German-speaking countries – as in many other continental European states (see Maroy 2009, p. 72) – were traditionally characterised by “*dual regulation*” (Brüsemeister 2004): On the one hand, regulation is based on a state-led administrative hierarchy with general bureaucratic rules; on the other hand, there is considerable individual and group-related autonomy for the teaching profession when it comes to implementing these rules. After the “strangely motionless time” (Fend 2006, p. 225) of the 1980s we see increased reform activities coming from school administration from the first half of the 1990s. The first of these successive waves of “modernization” (Brüsemeister and Eubel 2003) promised to give more “autonomy” to individual schools, which should help them to be more responsive to the needs of their constituencies and to use local knowledge and resources to work towards enhanced school quality.

What are “school autonomy” reforms really made of, how are they pursued, and how may they be interpreted? On an international level the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Eurydice have tried to compare levels of autonomy of schools (Eurydice 2007; OECD 2008) and of individual teachers (Eurydice 2008). One of the most interesting studies tackling these questions for German-speaking countries was published by Matthias Rürup (2007). His work includes a content analysis of major changes in legal regulations for schools (such as laws, circulars, syllabi of maths and German; 3051 texts were analysed) of all 16 German federal states (Bundesländer) between October 1990 and February 2008. Focusing on “governance-related changes”, the author inductively developed his categories and distinguished 82 measures and instruments which he grouped according to different criteria. Figure 2 displays one of his charts: in the left-hand column three broad “topical strings” of reform (on three levels) are distinguished which relate to the “classical models of societal coordination” outlined in Sect. 1.

		content	structures	procedures
optimisation (45)	system-wide (8)	deregulation & standardisation (2)	centralisation & new structures (2**)	output regulation (4)
	regional (5)	new definition of tasks (1)	re-structuring (2)	regulation from a distance (2)
	school (32)	self-organisation (23)	in-school management (5)	school development (4)
competition (10)	system-wide (5)	deregulation & standardisation (1)	privatisation (outsourcing) (2)	standard-focussed accreditation (2)
	regional (2)	free choice (1)	education market (outsourcing) (1)	vouchers (0)
	school (3)	school profiles (1)	public relation (outsourcing) (0)	selection of applicants (2)
participation (17)	system-wide (3)	civil society participation (0)	participation councils & foundations (3)	procedures of participation (0)
	regional (6)	opening up schools (1)	advisory bodies & networks (3)	cross-school collaboration (2)
	school (8)	democracy & autonomous learning (1)	participatory structures (4)	in-school participation (2)

Fig. 2 Measures of governance reforms in German “Bundesländer”. (Source: Translated from © Altrichter and Rürup 2010, p. 131)

- Under the category of “optimisation” the author collects measures which delegate some decision making and responsibility to individual schools in order to optimise a bureaucratic system of administration which is still considered to be primarily state responsibility.
- The category “competition” includes measures which aim to strengthen the influence of non-state actors on schooling by increasing alternatives and opening up opportunities for alternative provision in an education market.
- The category “participation” also indicates measures to increase the influence of non-state actors; however, not by alternative provision at a system level. Rather influence *within* schools on in-school decision making is the focus. Measures of this group might open up options for influence for students, parents, but also for representatives of the economy, science, churches, etc.

Fig. 2 shows the emphases of the legal reform measures in German “Bundesländer”. Grey boxes are areas where there have been only few changes between 1990 and 2004; these may be read as signalling neglected fields of school reform. The black box indicates the area where there have been most reform measures, thus,

the core element of school modernisation in German school systems: even by 2004 schools have been put in a position to decide on many content-related issues (e.g. in-school curricula, school profiles). *Italic print indicates those areas in which German school systems have been particularly active in introducing new governance procedures between 2004 and 2008, thus, pointing to recent areas of reform.* The findings displayed in Fig. 2 may be summarised as follows (see Altrichter and Heinrich 2007 for a similar argument with respect to Austria):

1. Within the last 20 years there has been a multitude of governance-related reforms, most of which seem to aim for “optimising” the administration of a state-run system. There are fewer reform elements which aspire to increase “competition” or local “participation”. Neither the idea of the state’s overarching responsibility for education (“staatliche Gesamtverantwortung”) nor the fixed position of individual schools in a formal administrative hierarchy are seriously challenged.
2. Most recent reform activities (2004–2008) include further measures of “optimisation”. This might indicate that there are still options for deregulation at the school level and that previous reform steps are increasingly complemented by measures at the system level (e.g. performance standards, standard-related tests and new types of school inspection) which aim to coordinate and control more autonomous schools. However, most recently we also see increasing activities enhancing “competition” in school systems. These include building public information systems on school quality, making vocational schools legally independent entities, and increasing the opportunities for school choice by abolishing school districts (e.g. in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2008/2009). With few exceptions “participation” of local actors is still not in the focus of German school reforms.

German education policy’s liking for a strategy of “optimisation” might well be echoed by sentiments in the teaching force: When re-analysing a Swiss attempt to reform school governance we found strong reservations of teachers about increasing participation of parents and students in in-school decision making (see Altrichter and Heinrich 2005). Interview studies in Austria revealed that most teachers rejected measures of increasing “competition” between schools. This was true even for those teachers who contributed to “competition between schools” by actively engaging in school development towards more attractive and competitive “profiles” of their school (for a similar observation in Belgium see Dupriez and Maroy 2003, p. 385).

3.2 Processes of School Development

Legal measures of reform as analysed by Rürup (2007) reflect the intentions of the social actor “education policy”. In the governance perspectives government measures represent just one set of “structural offers”, of rules and resources, which are inserted in a system. In order to become social reality in schools they have to be taken up by other actors, such as teachers and students, management teams, but also by, for example, in-service providers and the inspectorate. Which “autonomy” is eventually implemented in schools may be different from school to school and region to region. For example, Maag Merki and Steinert (2006, p. 119) found that there was “considerable variation between schools” in the implementation of identical autonomy measures in the comparatively small system of Zurich gymnasium-type secondary schools. Thus, a second line of work is necessary which concentrates on what is happening when reform proposals are implemented in regions, schools and classrooms. It aims to understand the fate of reforms and those being reformed, the micro-logic of reforms and the macro-meaning resulting from it.

In two consecutive projects we studied how schools understood, interpreted and used the new Austrian “autonomy” legislation to develop specific in-school curricula and, based on them, so-called “Schulprofile” (“school profiles”). These “school profiles” (e.g. “eco-school” or “school with an emphasis in practical computing”) are usually packages of specific curricular elements (characterised by a thematic and/or methodical speciality) often complemented by some additional features (such as extra-curricular learning opportunities, special features with respect to school culture, specific services). Both projects used a case-study approach and built their database from document analysis and interview data with 10–15 members of each school representing different functions and epistemological perspectives.

The first study (see Altrichter et al. 2005) chose three cases of secondary schools which were selected for being in the vanguard of developing “school profiles” in new information and communication technologies (ICT). In a second study (see Altrichter et al. 2011) eight case studies were written about secondary school profiles in different “thematic areas” for which we expected different trajectories of transformation (foreign languages, social competence, integration/inclusion of handicapped students, and arts/creativity). As a result of a cross-case analysis we formulated the following hypotheses about mechanisms of coordination between and within schools during processes of developing school profiles (see Altrichter et al. 2014). These results reflect very much the findings of Maroy and van Zanten’s (2009) study about recent governance transformations in six urban school regions in France, Belgium, Portugal, England and Hungary:

- *Competition* is an important mechanism of coordination which increasingly regulates the relationships between schools. This development is obviously independent of the administration's intention to enhance competition or not (see *ibid.*, p. e70).
- There are also other reasons than competition to trigger first steps towards *developing a specific profile*, e.g. internal normative ideas and ideals of teachers (mostly educational ideas) or an internal problem analysis.
- However, for *establishing the profile*, success in competition seems to be indispensable both because of external reasons (securing sufficient student numbers) and/or internal reasons (success, silences, sceptical colleagues). If a profile is not successful it is replaced or complemented by a more attractive profile.
- The "*key resource*" schools compete for *students* (see also *ibid.*, p. e71). Obviously, the appropriation of the autonomy legislation by the schools has not only produced (moderate) differences between schools but also new status hierarchies between schools or classes. Schools use their profiles to attract a large number of students and, as a consequence, to be able to select among these students the "good ones" (with respect to performance, social origin, and also gender). Thus, "autonomy" legislation seems to have increased not only the parents' and students' power to choose between different scholastic opportunities, but, more so, some (successful) schools' power to choose between different applicants. In these processes we see a diminishing sensitiveness towards problems of social selection: schools are deliberately using social biases in selection processes to "improve" their student force. Thus, within the cases studied, the schools' *function of selection is reinforced in a socially selective way*.
- *Composition and special characteristics of the student body* are among the most important influences on image and performance of the school, and, consequently, on work conditions and job satisfaction of teachers (see Gewirtz et al. 1995). Additionally, these factors provide a powerful competitive argument, since they are – as "visible, physical markers" – more easily understood by parents than more comprehensive arguments about quality of work at schools or about quantitative performance indicators (see Maroy and van Zanten 2009, p. e72).
- *Internal coordination of teachers' work* remains virtually unchanged in some schools, particularly in such places where the process of profile development is pushed forward by the head teacher or a special project coordinator. In other schools we find increased teamwork of those teachers active in the new profile. If we see continuous staff collaboration, it is usually close to classrooms and based on normative consonance and personal relationships between individual teachers. Many schools and teachers still seem to shy away from *more institutionalised forms of coordination* (such as fixed meetings of class teachers,

formally appointed coordinators of the profiles) which have little tradition in Austrian schools. *New instruments of in-school coordination* (such as school programmes, self-evaluation, and quality management) which had been propagated by the Ministry of Education do not play an important role in school life, even in quite active schools. In some cases internal evaluation is used for justifying development against internal criticism by other teachers; however, it is discontinued after sufficient agreement is secured.

- New profiles are not necessarily accompanied by *changes with respect to classroom teaching*. Some profile themes (e.g. social competence in our cases) seem to be firmly based on innovative ideas of teaching, and other themes (e.g. ICT in our cases) obviously develop some attractiveness for parents without necessitating changes in classroom teaching.

3.3 Performance and Experiences of Students in More Autonomous Schools

What are the effects of developing school profiles for student learning and performance? This question asks for other types of studies than the interview and case studies reported in the previous section. Ferdinand Eder (2011) explored whether or not processes of differentiation – which until now have been discussed mainly from the perspectives of law-makers and teachers – make a difference for students. In 20 randomly selected secondary schools he compared 20 classes which had long-established profiles in music with 20 “normal classes”. His data was collected by competence tests in mathematics (Eder et al. 2002) and reading (Auer et al. 2004) and a test for general cognitive performance (Oswald and Roth 1987). Students were also asked in questionnaires for aspects of their emotional experience and well-being in school (Eder and Schmich 2006). Additionally, data about the socio-economic background, migrant status, and other family variables (composition of the family, educational style) were available.

Eder (2011) showed that there is significantly better student performance in music profile classes than in “normal classes” and that students also report that they experience higher process quality. But he also found that these differences may be attributed nearly exclusively to the entry selection of students. Students in music classes differ from their colleagues in normal classes with respect to initial cognitive performance and with respect to family aspects. Students in music classes more rarely come from “incomplete families” and more frequently from families with better educated parents who attribute more value to schooling; also migrant status is less frequent (see *ibid.*, p. 171).

If we summarise these findings reported so far, a sketchy image unfolds which may be used as a hypothesis for further research:

1. The *policy of school autonomy* gave some leeway to individual schools, which many schools (see Bachmann et al. 1996) used for developing special educational profiles. These changes aimed to satisfy anticipated parents' and students' needs, but were usually not directly negotiated with them.
2. These changes resulted in *processes of differentiation and hierarchisation* (see Altrichter et al. 2014; Maroy and van Zanten 2009) *between* and *within* schools, e.g. in "profile schools/classes" and "normal schools/classes" which cater for student groups with distinctly different features. As a result, social selectivity increases.
3. Thereby, an element of *competition* between schools is established, the primary orientation of which is increasing numbers of "good students", not necessarily enhancing educational quality. Rürup (2007) claimed that German legislators did not promote "competition"-oriented reforms at least until 2004. If this analysis is also true for Austria (as we assume), then our findings point to another case of a reform producing "transintentional results".
4. While most schools seem to be subjected to increased competition and react with efforts to make their offers more attractive, there are still *different strategies* for how this is done in practice. While some schools concentrate on developing educational processes, others include new and "attractive" subjects in their "profile", and still others improve equipment and extra-curricular services. Maroy and van Zanten (2009, p. e72) found, for example, strategies of conquest, profiting from the status quo, diversification, and adaptation in the face of an increasingly competitive school context.
5. While it is true that there is more coordination through competition than before,² the traditional "bureaucratic-professional model" of school governance has not been fully replaced. Rather, *post-bureaucratic school governance is characterised by hybrid models* in which a different logic of action, and different norms and practices exist side by side (see Maroy 2009, p. 78). It is "a composite in which several forms of co-ordination occur, none of which is sufficiently powerful to determine in a meaningful and lasting way the overall orientation of action in the school context" (Dupriez and Maroy 2003, p. 386).

² Maroy (2009) argued that the traditional bureaucratic-professional model is challenged by two alternatives, the model of quasi-markets and the model of the "evaluative state". Our data seems to indicate that market considerations are presently of overwhelming importance in the perception of the participants. As "evidence-based policies" (such as performance standards and standard-related tests) become gradually implemented in the school systems of German-speaking countries, we expect that "evaluative state" perceptions will rise in importance.

4 Conclusion

Let me summarise what I wanted to communicate in this article: I have explained some of the common theoretical themes of governance research in German-speaking countries. In Sect. 2 I outlined some methodological features of this evolving research field. Finally, I reported on the design and the findings of three studies researching changes of governance. These studies used different methodologies – content analysis, case studies based on qualitative interviews, and a quantitative study using performance tests and questionnaires. And they tackled their topic from very different standpoints and perspectives, addressing different aspects of educational processes.

The message seems to be: governance reforms are so complex that one cannot hope to cope with all relevant aspects of the topic in an individual study. Thus, the most important element in a strategy of Governance Studies is the *discourse* in the community of researchers which relates and assembles different lines of arguments in order to – hopefully – arrive step by step at a broader image of these changes in the governance of school systems we find ourselves in at the moment in German-speaking countries and elsewhere.

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