

## **Conference on Educational Leadership in Latin Europe: Autonomy, Identity, Responsibilities**

Rome, 5-7 December 2013

### **Critical analysis of output-oriented performance management systems in schools**

In the Swiss Canton of Zurich, public schools have been run by principals only since 2008/2009. This newly established function encompasses the management of the individual schools in close collaboration with their teachers and the local school board (German: *Schulpflege*). This development in the state elementary education system is rooted in reforms in the wake of New Public Management which eventually led to a new legislation in 2005 (see a. o. Buschor 1993; Böttcher, 2002; Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2007; Bellmann & Weiss, 2009; Altrichter, 2005; Buer, 2007; Altrichter & Maag Merki 2010). Since then, public school management is based on a so-called school programme which is to be worked out by the principal together with the teaching staff, and to be authorised by the local school board. Each school programme sets out the pedagogical emphasis, strategic goals as well as aspects of implementation, and illustrates the related evaluation process (see Buer & Hallmann, 2007; Bauer, 2008; Buer & Köller, 2007; Wenzel, 2008).

Based on an explorative, qualitative multi-case study in five schools of the Canton of Zurich (Kohlstock, 2013), school management and the respective school programmes are documented and analysed for the first time ever. The study reveals a wide range of formats and content-related aspects in the individual school programmes and the resulting management processes. Schools have difficulties formulating appropriate goals, finding corresponding indicators, managing implementation and defining adequate evaluation processes. It is for these reasons that an output-oriented approach mainly based on formal elements, such as the school programme, is considered to be problematic in the context of educational governance. In spite of these deficiencies, school programmes still seem to help structure and support the management process.

The findings with respect to the implementation of school programmes in the Canton of Zurich call for a holistic approach to educational governance which is not only goal-oriented but focuses on the complete management process and considers informal elements in addition to formal mechanisms (see Cardinal, Sitkin & Long, 2010). Possible alternative frameworks are provided (Lindblom 1959; Kay, 2011; Simon, 1957; Ouchi, 1977). Consequences for public school management will be shown and discussed.

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