



School Quality in the Free State of Saxony: Criteria Description



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Contents

Introduction	3
Framework model of school quality	5
Overview of all areas, features and criteria of school quality	6
Quality area: Results	8
Quality feature: Fulfilment of educational mission	8
Quality feature: Educational and training success	11
Quality feature: School satisfaction	12
Quality area: Teaching and learning	13
Quality feature: Teaching and learning organisation	13
Quality feature: Teaching and learning processes	14
Quality area: School culture	18
Quality feature: Values and standards of the school	18
Quality feature: School climate	19
Quality feature: Individual support	20
Quality area: Development of professionalism	22
Quality feature: Systematic cooperation with the teaching staff	22
Quality feature: Lifelong learning	23
Quality area: Management and leadership	24
Quality feature: Administration and resource management	24
Quality feature: Leadership	25
Quality feature: Quality assurance and quality improvement	26
Quality feature: Personnel development	27
Quality feature: Selection of personnel	28
Quality area: Cooperation	29
Quality feature: Student and parent participation	29
Quality feature: National and international cooperation	30

Note:

Students, teachers, head teachers, staff, etc. are always understood to be both male and female throughout this entire paper.

Introduction

There is a consensus that the school quality in the Free State of Saxony should be further developed in a sustainable manner. The demand for quality improvement applies to both individual schools and the education system as a whole. Measures for quality improvement are enshrined in the Saxon Education Act. In addition to the requirement to provide a school programme, the performance of an internal and external evaluation as well as the provision of a personnel development and further education concept for the schools is mandatory.

School quality improvement in the Free State of Saxony

In order to achieve its educational mission, the school develops its own educational concept and plans and designs the lesson and its organisation based on the curricula under its own responsibility. The school defines educational, didactic and organisational principles to fulfil the educational mission within the limit of available resources in a school programme. On the basis of the school programme, the school and the school supervisory authorities evaluate the result of educational work at regular intervals (par. 1 Education Act). The head teacher also bears responsibility for staff development and the further education concept for teachers of his/her school (par. 42 Education Act). Section 59a states that the result of educational and training activities and the implementation of the school programme are to be reviewed regularly. Major points of reference for reviewing student performances and teaching quality are the educational standards. School and school supervisory authorities are supported here by the Saxon Educational Institution (SBI) that develops and performs procedures for determining the quality of schooling.

Legal basis

An important basis for specifying targets and measures for quality improvement at schools and in the school system is a consensus on the definition of school quality in the Free State of Saxony. The quality of a result or process is considered to be sufficient if it meets the requirements and expectations. Requirements and expectations in the form of the values and goals of all groups interested in education are considered in the definition of school quality. School quality is thus defined in a political negotiation process. The requirements and expectations of the results of school work are fixed by law in the educational mission. The requirements for the processes that lead to successful fulfilment of the educational mission within schools can be derived from scientific knowledge. The following description of the criteria of school quality is used to establish this consensus that is to be the basis of quality improvement in the future. This criteria description provisionally concludes the discussion process and declares a defined understanding of quality as mandatory.

Definition of school quality

Criteria description for school quality in the Free State of Saxony

In the criteria description, school quality with regard to content is described. The quality areas of teaching and learning, school culture, management and leadership, cooperation and development of professionalism refer here to the processes taking place in the school. The results area focuses on the quality of results that arise from these processes. The different quality areas are divided into quality features that take up a regulatory function for the quality criteria and that ultimately specifically describe how school quality is characterised on the process and result level. The description of the criteria is oriented towards the latest relevant research on the success factors of school activity. The selected criteria are established from educational and learning theory and their relevance has been shown in practical scientific studies.

Functions of the criteria description

As well as establishing a consensus, the criteria description fulfils different functions:

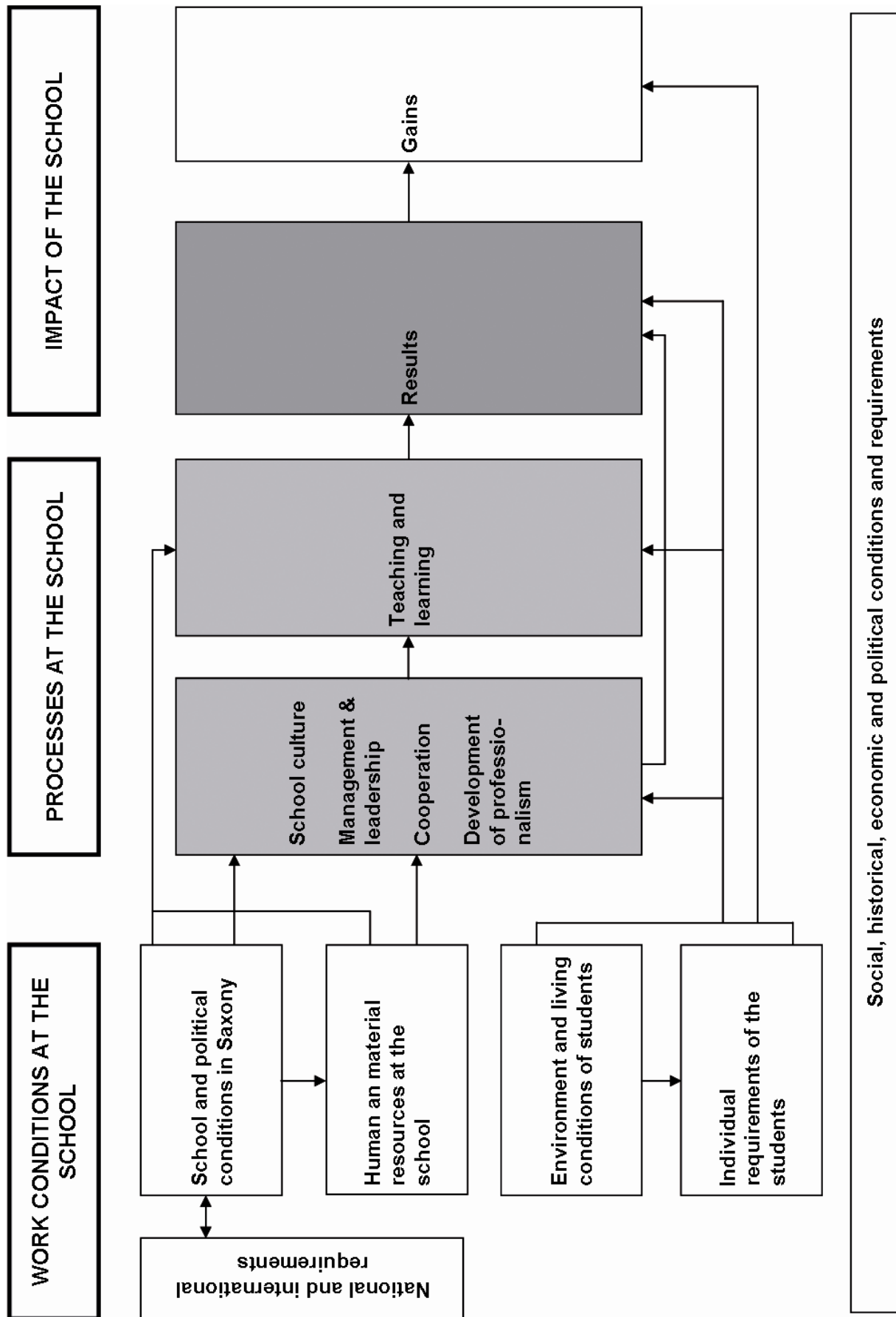
- It states the school objectives and content-related orientation according to which school work and therefore school quality improvement can be oriented.
- It includes areas, features and criteria of school quality from which indicators for the internal evaluation of schools can be derived.
- It forms the frame of reference for the assessment of an individual school by external evaluation.
- It represents the frame of reference for the analysis and evaluation of the education system in Saxony.
- It provides an orientation for support and advice for schools.

Scope of a comprehensive model of school quality

According to these functions, the criteria description exclusively represents the part of educational quality that involves the work at the schools as the immediate environment for the education of students and is thus within the area of responsibility of action at the individual school.

To fully represent and examine educational quality, the Condition/Process/Impact model shown in figure 1 must be considered. In the figure, adopted interactions are represented by arrows. The interactions represented here are significantly limited for the emergence of school quality. It is clear that the processes and results in schools are not to be considered detached from the conditions under which schools operate. Both the quality of teaching and learning as well as the performance results of students are naturally code-determined by the requirements of the students and the support from parents. This applies equally to the composition of the teaching staff and the material resources available. The conditions under which school quality develops represent a central component of the study of education systems. The same applies to the output of school work, e.g. in terms of training, study, professional activity and lifestyle.

Figure 1: Framework Model of School Quality



Quality areas	Quality features	Quality criteria
Results	Fulfilment of educational mission *	Intelligent and application-oriented knowledge
		Learning skills
		Methodological skills
		Social skills
		Value orientation
	Fulfilment of educational mission **	Expertise
		Human competence
		Social skills
	Educational and training success	Educational and vocational qualifications
		Students repeating a year
		Examination results
		Changes
	School satisfaction	Student satisfaction
Teacher satisfaction		
Parent satisfaction *		
Training partner satisfaction **		
Teaching and learning	Teaching and learning organisation	Variety of lessons
		Education outside of lesson
		Integration of training at school and in company learning locations/learning collaborations
	Teaching and learning processes	Remaining attentive: <i>Appreciative behaviour, classroom management, student participation, flexibility, variability</i>
		Advancement of understanding: <i>Structure, clarity, cross-linking, critical testing, consolidation, differentiation, review</i>
		Advancement of application relevance: <i>Establishment of application relevance *</i> <i>Relation to vocational activities **</i>
		Advancement of intrinsic motivation: <i>Arousing interest, stimulation, strengthening self-image, autonomy support, involvement</i>
School culture	Values and standards of school	Common educational goals and visions
		Rules of conduct
		Performance-related expectations
	School climate	Social quality of school
		Spatial design
		Well-being of students
	Individual support	Advancement of high-achieving and low-achieving students
		Special educational support
		Gender-based support
		Support based on social and cultural background

Quality areas	Quality features	Quality criteria
Development of professionalism	Systematic cooperation with teaching staff	Communication with teaching staff
		Joint action of teachers
	Lifelong learning	Learning during the work process
		Training
		Further education
Management and leadership	Administration and resource management	Management of administrative tasks
		Proper use of resources
		Acquisition and control of financial resources
	Leadership	Management of educational processes
		Motivational leadership
		Public relations
	Quality assurance and quality improvement	School programme work
		Internal evaluation
		Efficiency orientation
	Personnel development	Personnel development plan
		Training concept
	Selection of personnel	Selection criteria
	Cooperation	Student and parent participation
Parent participation		
National and international cooperation		Cooperation with school authorities and supporting institutions
		Cooperation with other educational institutions
		Cooperation with companies and other educational partners
		Cooperation with associations, clubs and other public institutions

* for general education schools and vocational school types that lead to an educational qualification

** for vocational school types that lead to a vocational qualification

The quality areas, quality features and quality criteria are described in the following. Not all criteria are assessed during a school visit within the scope of the external evaluation. The criteria that are provided for evaluation in a given school year can be found in the current edition of "Guidelines for Performing an External Evaluation" for the relevant school type.

Quality area: Results

The results quality area describes the direct effects of school work. The results represent a significant and superordinate area for the evaluation of school quality. The aim is to ensure the academic and educational success of all students and to make a noticeable contribution to their personal development so that they can successfully cope with everyday and professional life, learn throughout the course of life and be able to develop social processes of change.

Quality feature: Fulfilment of educational mission

(for general education schools and vocational school types that lead to an educational qualification)

The educational mission focuses on the formation and development of key components of the personality of students, knowledge, skills and values. Its fulfilment should enable students to see themselves in the future as social individuals capable of active discussion within their social environment.

Intelligent and application-oriented knowledge

The intelligent knowledge to be conveyed to students comprises significant and meaningful associations between concepts, ideas and factual information and can be described as organised knowledge that can be used in a flexible manner and is reflexively accessible. It facilitates learning in the future in similar content areas. This knowledge must be applicable for successful engagement with the world, i.e. it must be possible to apply it to actions in situations.

Learning skills

Learning skills are a necessary prerequisite for self-determined learning. It is very important as a superordinate key qualification for building up knowledge and developing skills. Learners must be able to prepare learning, perform the learning activities, regulate learning, assess learning results and remain attentive. A high level of learning skills, as the result of learning to learn, is then achieved when these learning strategies are used and learners are motivated intrinsically, i.e. self-determined motivation, as much as possible and have positive self-related perceptions.

Methodological skills

While learning skills in the strict sense incorporate the acquisition of content, method skills broadly relate to the management of tasks and requirements. Methodological skills allow existing knowledge to be used in a flexible manner. On the specific action level, the planning of work steps covers the substantive use of techniques and procedures, information gathering and assessment, mastering hermeneutic and formal strategic procedures for knowledge acquisition and problem-solving as well as a capability for presentation, e.g. in the form of essays or reports.

Quality area: Results

Quality feature: Fulfilment of educational mission

Social skills

Appropriate social behaviour is characterised by both realising personal goals and simultaneously acting in a socially acceptable manner in a specific situation. The task of the school is to support general social skills that are needed in the community. These include the responsible use of freedom, the ability to adopt other perspectives and to empathise, conflict resolution strategies, reasoning with integrity and the ability to make moral judgements. These skills allow students to successfully resolve the conflict between conformity and assertion.

Value orientation

School education should contribute to the development of the personality of students within society. This requires orientation towards common accepted values. Value orientation is of central importance in terms of the teaching of individual and basic democratic values. A distinction can be made between personal, social and cultural values. Personal values include the ability and willingness to act autonomously, reliably and with a sense of responsibility. Social values include the acceptance of other people and other cultures, tolerance, an ability and readiness for participation as well as basic democratic values. Cultural values in the strict sense represent traditional social and religious values.

Quality feature: Fulfilment of educational mission

(for vocational school types that lead to a vocational qualification)

The educational mission focuses on the emergence and development of skills concerning decision-making and responsibility. These are understood here as the willingness and ability of individuals to conduct themselves in vocational, social and personal situations in a proper and reasoned manner and to behave in an individual and socially responsible way. Skills concerning decision-making and responsibility cover the areas of expertise, human competence and social skills. Components of expertise, human competence and social skills are methodological skills, communication skills and learning skills.

Expertise

Expertise describes the willingness and ability to complete tasks and solve problems in a goal-oriented, appropriate, method-driven and independent manner based on expert knowledge and ability and to assess the results.

Human competence

Human competence describes the willingness and ability to resolve, think through and judge the development opportunities, requirements and limitations in family, work and public life as an individual personality, to develop personal talents as well as to adopt and further develop life plans. It includes characteristics such as independence, critical awareness, confidence, dependability, responsibility and a sense of duty. It also includes the development of reasoned moral concepts and the self-determined commitment to values. Value orientation is of central importance both in terms of the teaching of individual and basic democratic values.

Social skills

Social skills describe the willingness and ability to live and shape social relations, to understand cares and tensions as well as to rationally and responsibly deal with and communicate with others. This includes the development of social responsibility and solidarity in particular.

Quality area: Results

Quality feature: Educational and training success

Educational and training success includes formal educational goals. The goal is to qualify students as much as possible according to their requirements and capabilities. The school makes sure that every student can succeed in structuring his/her educational biography. This means that all students leave the school without delay if possible with the best possible qualification or the best possible education.

Educational and vocational qualifications

To participate in today's knowledge society, the highest possible educational or vocational qualification is of increasing importance. As access to the educational and vocational system is to a great extent dependent on the quality of the qualification, a good school is characterised by a low number of students who have not achieved their desired qualification.

Students repeating a year

Repeat classes lead to a delayed school career and are assessed differentially in terms of their pedagogical effects. To achieve learning objectives, individual support must be ensured, i.e. according to the requirements of the student. Accordingly, good schools are characterised by low rates of students repeating a year and efforts to reduce the number of students repeating a year.

Examination results

The work of schools is reflected in examination results. Nationally standardised final examinations offer a good opportunity to assess the quality of schools. While the examination results are used primarily for the assessment of knowledge and subject-related skills, the relationship between preliminary performances and performances in the final examinations is relevant for the assessment of school success.

Changes

The proportion of upward and downward changes in the course of school and education refers to the permeability and connectivity in the education system. Students are to be supported as best as possible according to their abilities. An appropriate and timely diagnostic analysis from teachers is required for the decision on the course of further education after primary school. Generally, a school is characterised in a positive way when it can achieve a high level of permeability and connectivity and can maintain a low number of students repeating a year as a result of adequate support measures.

Quality area: Results

Quality feature: School satisfaction

The requirements and expectations of those directly involved in the school are considered in the definition of school quality. Satisfaction is the result of a target/performance comparison. Here subjective expectations of school work are correlated with actual school experiences. School satisfaction in this sense can be seen as an indicator of school quality.

Student satisfaction

Student satisfaction is a criterion that indicates how well the processes at the school are oriented towards the students. For a results-based consideration of student satisfaction, it is important whether the students find that their expectations have been met in terms of the processes experienced and the result of school work.

Teacher satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction is another criterion of the result-based assessment of a school. The satisfaction of staff has an influence on their subjective well-being and professional action, which in turn has an impact on the desired quality of the school.

Parent satisfaction

Educational work is especially effective when it is related to both environments of the student (school and family). It is assumed that the educational missions of the school and parents are matched to each other when the parents accept and, if necessary, support the concepts of the school. This acceptance can be determined in the form of feedback with regard to school satisfaction and the fulfilment of subjective expectations.

Training partner satisfaction

The satisfaction of the training partner with school work is a criterion of the result-based assessment at vocational schools. At vocational schools, cooperation between the school and the training partners is of central importance. When training partners accept and, if necessary, support the work of schools, it is conducive to the educational and training success of the students.

Quality area: Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning, particularly in lessons, is the core business of the school. The school ensures that learning opportunities and environments are organised so that all students can enjoy learning successfully and experience the individual support and appreciation necessary for this.

Quality feature: Teaching and learning organisation

In order to achieve the educational mission, schools should provide a variety of methodological lessons as well as opportunities for learning and experience within the scope of the teaching and learning organisation. The lessons must be adapted to the needs of a changing world. In response to social transformations, the students should be given opportunities for identification, orientation, support and security. In order to meet the demands of individual support, the lessons are to be oriented towards the diverse interests and learning requirements of the students.

Variety of lessons

As students have different learning requirements and learning styles, these differences must always be taken into account to support the learning processes by diverse and appropriate forms of teaching. This requires appropriate changes in the educational process, i.e. the multi-methodical composition of the lessons. Optional and elective subjects should be oriented towards the diverse interests and abilities of the students. The task of the school is to offer lessons that are as wide-ranging as possible and according to needs using the available resources.

Education outside of the lesson

The main educational tasks of the school should not in the strict sense only be achieved in lessons. Education outside of the classroom provides opportunities for encounters between students and teachers that are conducive to the development of social skills and value orientations of students. This is more possible in such learning environments as opposed to during the lesson. School traditions such as school festivals, first-day-at-school/graduation ceremonies and sports competitions with other schools are included here. These events help students to identify more strongly with the school. In addition, they offer (with the inclusion of parents) the possibility to establish a bond between parents and the school. By merging the school and family learning environments of the students, the educational effectiveness of the school is supported.

Integration of training at school and in-company learning locations/learning collaborations

The integration of education at school and in-company learning locations supports the application of knowledge in all types of schools. Job-oriented and project-oriented vocational tasks contribute to the acquisition of skills concerning decision-making and responsibility. In order to enable students to independently plan, implement and evaluate such work tasks, cooperation with other places of learning (e.g. work tasks/work partners from vocational schools, companies and on-the-job training and industrial placements) and the use of practical experiences of the students is essential.

Quality area: Teaching and learning

Quality feature: Teaching and learning processes

The subject of the teaching and learning processes feature teaching and learning in the classroom. The basis for understanding school teaching and learning processes is a theoretically sound model of good teaching. From the model, relevant and effective teaching aspects were derived that are reflected in the quality criteria.

Remaining attentive:

Attention is a requirement for students to be able to assimilate and process information. Students must turn their attention to the information as well as concentrate and pay attention to the learning content. Teachers can facilitate this process by trying to keep the attention of the students using the following procedures and teaching strategies:

Appreciative behaviour: The creation of a positive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom and a teacher behaviour that focuses on working with each individual student and that is fair leads to a stimulating learning environment.

Classroom management: Effective leadership of the class or study group leads to better learning results. The guidance, monitoring, organisation and control of events are necessary to emphasise an independent approach for effective learning.

Student participation: New ideas and experiences can be introduced by the students as a result of student participation in the lessons. This means that students discuss issues and must recall their own knowledge.

Flexibility: The lesson should be flexibly structured by considering previous knowledge and the interests of the students. The self-determined behaviour of the students should be supported and enabled by responding to suggestions or ideas from the students.

Variability: Variability of the learning style can have a positive influence on the attentional processes of the students. This concerns the choice of different teaching elements or type of presentation.

Quality area: Teaching and learning

Quality feature: Teaching and learning processes

Advancement of understanding

A requirement for organised knowledge that can be used flexibly is the understanding of facts. Active understanding is achieved when the students not only decipher a message but also (re)construct certain facts, terms or phenomena. The task of the teacher is to facilitate the processes of understanding. This can be safeguarded by the following aspects:

Structure: Structure is an essential element of good teaching. The content should be sensibly structured and a central theme should be recognised in the lesson. The respective information can be structured, for example, by highlighting important points or using visualisations.

Clarity: Difficult concepts and relationships should be clarified, new or specialist terms explained and precise formulations should be ensured. A presentation that is too complex or disordered means that students can no longer follow the lesson.

Cross-linking: Cross-linking may be achieved by meaning enrichment of information. Facts that are presented in an elaborate manner – for example, when different content is linked to each other and examples are cited – can be better understood and retained.

Critical testing: A special form of in-depth information processing is a critical analysis of the curriculum. This can occur by clarifying the advantages and disadvantages of different views, for example.

Consolidation: Repetition and practice support memory performance, the acquirement and automation of skills and the development of complex abilities. The efficiency of repetition and practice can be increased when it is organised in a different form and temporal sequence.

Differentiation: The presentation of the curriculum should be matched to the requirements with regard to content. It is also important to take into account the different requirements of each student appropriately. Requirements and teaching methods should vary accordingly.

Review: It should be ensured that the material covered was understood. Students should be able to sum up important content. In this way, it is possible to determine the level of performance. Missing or incorrect knowledge should be supplemented or corrected in the lesson.

Quality area: Teaching and learning

Quality feature: Teaching and learning processes

Advancement of application relevance

In addition to understanding, the application relevance of knowledge is relevant for knowledge transfer that can be used flexibly. The learning environments designed for this purpose should be characterised by authenticity, interesting contexts and multiple perspectives for students. Authenticity means that realistic tasks are used and not ones that are artificially simplified for didactic reasons. This does not mean that a lesson can do without didactic reduction. Didactic reductions are relevant for the advancement of understanding. They are represented by the criteria of the 'advancement of understanding' sub-feature. The acquisition of knowledge should be anchored in a context designed as interesting as possible and that gives it added significance. Multiple perspectives are achieved when the students can perform different roles to experience different perspectives of a problem.

Establishment of application relevance: To establish application relevance, the students should be aware of authenticity, interesting contexts and multiple perspectives in the structure of the learning environment. This involves emphasising the importance of learning content, taking descriptive problems as a starting point and embedding learning in specific application situations.

To achieve knowledge transfer that can be used flexibly for vocational school types, a reference to specific vocational activities in the future is necessary.

Relation to vocational actions: In the area of vocational training, the application reference in the lesson is to be primarily established by the inclusion of vocational practice. This means that action-oriented teaching and learning processes are achieved whose starting point originates from the respective vocational activity. The vocational activities are the basis of the learning situations developed for the vocations. This form of lesson structure allows and requires the students to transfer between acquired knowledge and practical application. The learning environment should simulate the specific characteristics of the vocational situation.

Quality area: Teaching and learning

Quality feature: Teaching and learning processes

Advancement of intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is a key component of self-determined learning. Intrinsic motivation exists when students want or intend to carry out a learning activity because the activity seems to be interesting, exciting or challenging. In contrast, extrinsic learning motivation can be defined as the desire or intention to carry out a learning activity because gratification associated with successful learning can be obtained or negative consequences can be avoided. In view of learning success, the advantages of intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation are proven. The advancement of intrinsic motivation can be achieved using the following teaching strategies:

Arousing interest: The formation of intrinsic motivation is usually associated with an interest in the content. Interest may be promoted by formulating the desired learning objectives or showing links and relationships to knowledge acquired in other subjects.

Stimulation: Stimulation refers to the direct support of self-determination in open learning environments. Its flexible application is increased by promoting cooperation with other students or motivating students to engage themselves independently with the material outside of the lesson.

Strengthening self-image: Intrinsic motivation and the ability for self-control when learning can be increased by strengthening self-image. Praise, recognition, constructive criticism and the identification of possibilities for the students to improve should enable them to be self-directed and self-determined when learning and working.

Autonomy support: In order for students to be able to develop the ability for self-determined learning, the opportunity for independent problem-solving must be available. Student autonomy must be ensured. For example, students must be able to complete demanding work responsibly or be given the opportunity to explore new content areas independently. Students should be given support here to plan and assess the learning or work steps themselves.

Involvement: When teachers express enthusiasm for their work and the content being taught, show personal interest in the material and joy when teaching, this can capture the imagination of the students in terms of intrinsic learning motivation.

Quality area: School culture

School culture describes the ideas and values, behaviour configurations and symbolic values at the school. Its design and lasting influence is a complex process that is affected by developments around the school, particularly by those involved in school life such as the head teacher, teachers, parents and students. Each school should have values and standards that demonstrate the rules of conduct, educational goals and expectations to the students. Values and standards are based on appropriate social interaction and are reflected in a holistic impression of those involved in the school. They should also be expressed by individual support in relation to the different initial situations of the students.

Quality feature: Values and standards of school

Complex social communities are characterised by a value and standard structure. They are based on generalised values that are shared to different degrees among members. Children and youth within the social unit of a school also orientate themselves towards the school's objectives and standards that may differ from those in other environments of the student. The core of school culture is addressed with school rules, value systems and standards of behaviour that are also referred to as the school ethos. Among other factors, the expectations, role models and feedback conveyed by teachers influence how the behaviour and attitudes of the students develop within a particular school.

Common educational goals and visions

A consensus among the school management and teachers of a school concerning the objectives, means and methods of pedagogic school culture is essential for successful school work. It ensures the consistency of events at school. Students should not have the feeling of being exposed to different expectations and rules from teacher to teacher. The school is regarded in this sense as an educational unit. Leeway in the style of teaching is indeed necessary when schools are to meet the individual needs and dispositions of teachers and students. However, agreement on the objectives is a prerequisite for an effective school.

Rules of conduct

The school as a place where students spend much of their day, are in constant interaction with each other and are with teachers requires rules of conduct that are shared by all. The school must define deviant behaviour as such, report it and apply sanctions if necessary. The knowledge and acceptance of consensual, generally accepted standards by the students govern their compliance. It is important that teachers exemplify the values and standards for this.

Performance-related expectations

The expectations of academic performances that are placed on students by teachers are particularly effective when they are supported by all teachers and when the students know and accept these expectations. It is crucial to apply the expectations to the respective proficiency level of students to prevent too many or a lack of challenges. Any improvements in the performances (grades, for example) of each student are to be recognised and appreciated to promote achievement motivation and learning success.

Quality area: School culture

Quality feature: School climate

The impression that teachers and students have about the school and human relationships in particular can be referred to as the school climate. This does not involve the current condition ("weather") that can change from day to day but the long-term view ("climate") of the atmosphere that emerges in the school. The subjective perceptions of students depend on whether they develop a positive sense of belonging to the school and their class or whether they experience rejection and distance. A positive school climate is therefore seen as an important determinant for the development of students and learning effectiveness. The perceived climate depends on interpersonal relationships in the school and the spatial conditions as well as the possibility to influence them.

Social quality of school

The social quality of schools describes the perceived quality of relations between participants at the school (student-student, student-teacher and teacher-teacher relationships) that should be characterised by mutual respect, trust and appreciation. In this sense, teachers, students and other school employees should feel involved in the school.

Spatial design

High-quality rooms (attractiveness, functionality), socio-spatial quality of residence and use (the possibility for the use of common areas, recreational areas) and in particular the possibility for the students to shape and use other rooms has a positive influence on the school climate and thereby promotes successful learning.

Well-being of students

The well-being of students in schools includes the reaction of students to the state of the school culture and the corresponding plans of action that are prevalent in the respective school. They are dependent on both individual characteristics and school processes. Perceived work pressure, perceived disciplinary pressure, perceived usefulness of learning, school enjoyment and fear of school/examinations can promote or undermine well-being.

Quality area: School culture

Quality feature: Individual support

Students come to school with different requirements. The recognition of differences, differentiation of school work and ability for students to use their own learning potentials are vital for successfully fulfilling the educational mission. With individual support, social requirements are controlled according to two goals. The first goal concerns the establishment of equal opportunity in enabling life chances as a result of educational achievements. It is one of the most important educational goals of democratic societies to offer adolescents the same good educational opportunities. For this reason, individual optimum support and a reduction of social and cultural disparities in educational participation and educational achievement as well as the realisation of special educational needs must be strived for. The second goal concerns teaching tolerance and acceptance with respect to social pluralism, i.e. recognition of individuals as unique and distinct. Modern societies feature a wide range of diversity and individuality. The recognition and acceptance of diversity is a prerequisite for democratic coexistence in view of increasing intercultural contact.

Advancement of high-achieving and low-achieving students

The fulfilment of the educational mission for all students means applying teaching and learning over the entire range of performance of the student body. Individual advancement of high-achieving and low-achieving students is therefore essential. The advancement of students growing up with two or more languages should also be considered here.

Special educational support

Students with physical or psychological impairments need special needs education as this is their educational right. For such students in the Free State of Saxony, different forms and locations of support are offered including schools for children with learning difficulties and integrated education. The procedure for determining special educational needs is formulated under consideration of the individual circumstances of the student with a report on support proposals and recommendations for a further course of education so that the learning success of the student and his/her personality development is safeguarded optimally. The process-immanent diagnostic analysis that accompanies the lesson determines the way forward for individual support of the student using a continually developed educational plan. The educational plan as a common basis should allow all those participating in the education of the student to manage and safeguard special needs education. The student should play an active part in the support plan. The educational plan must determine the initial situation of the student, identify special needs and include main areas and objectives as well as the necessary support measures with a corresponding timeline.

Gender-based support

Boys and girls differ in part when discussing various academic content areas and this can be reflected in the associated performances. This must be considered, for example, as an element in the methodological-didactical structure of the lesson.

Quality area: School culture

Quality feature: Individual support

Support based on social and cultural background

Schools can not change the different socio-economic and cultural conditions of students but they can try to harmonise them through individual support and recognition of different origins and ways of life. Offsetting disadvantages related to social background includes the integration of migrants. This also includes promoting the willingness to actively support integration processes for students without a migration background.

Quality area: Development of professionalism

Professional teaching is the result of a professional work organisation and professional skills. Working professionally involves working independently and responsibly while considering the legal framework and work based on scientifically verifiable knowledge and professional experience with coordination and control amongst colleagues according to requirements. As a school always encounters new problems due to social changes and requires innovations and contemporary accents for education, teachers must constantly expand their knowledge, reorganise their activities and coordinate them with each other. Coordination between colleagues is to be safeguarded by the systematic cooperation of teachers. The expansion of knowledge can be covered under the requirement of lifelong learning. This is a requirement for both the students and teachers alike.

Quality feature: Systematic cooperation with teaching staff

As with any other organisation, school organisational development requires a culture of cooperation, i.e. systematic cooperation among members. Quality at individual schools develops when members of staff jointly draw up (development) concepts that are implemented in a coordinated fashion and the effects are systematically observed, evaluated and reported back to each other. With regard to the content of interdisciplinary work, it must be noted that many social aspects are based on complex reality and effect interrelationships that can not be inferred from one (specialist) approach.

Communication with teaching staff

The basis of systematic cooperation is the exchange of information between staff members (teachers and classroom assistants). It forms the basis for professional learning opportunities. Those involved can benefit from it for their own educational work. Individual experiences in terms of a culture of mutual learning are identified, reflected on, and assessed, e.g. teaching material that is developed is made available to staff or different teaching and learning methods are discussed. Teaching staff communicate in specialised, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts. In the vocational school types, dealing with the objective formulation of the areas of learning and the resulting lesson plan is a focus of communication. Content must also be coordinated with communication between the teachers from the vocation-related and interdisciplinary vocational areas.

Joint action of teachers

Joint action occurs when the target achievement of one involved party simultaneously promotes or enables the target achievement of another involved party. Cooperation among teaching staff is based on common principles. The respective cooperation is characterised by coordinated action. Measures that are found to achieve these goals are planned together and the measures carried out are assessed. The members of staff work together in a specialised, interdisciplinary and professional manner. Joint action in terms of team work, e.g. when developing internal school curricula, is essential in the structured lessons of vocational types of schools. To implement the objectives and content of learning areas, all teachers involved should interact and cooperate when developing different skills.

Quality area: Development of professionalism

Quality feature: Lifelong learning

Schools must be organised so that they can respond to changes quickly and appropriately. As a learning organisation, schools must establish a relationship of learning content and learning methods with current and foreseeable requirements in the future in view of the changing student body. The close relationship between sustainability and learning capability in a knowledge society requires individuals to be able to learn purposefully, actively and for life. This is particularly true for teachers as they must adequately prepare the students for the demands that are placed on them in the future. This requirement profile for the teaching profession is to be met with a professional attitude that is characterised by a willingness to expand knowledge and skills according to their own needs and respond flexibly to new developments and changes.

Learning during the work process

Learning during the work process can occur individually as well as with the systematic cooperation of teachers. For individual development, the focus is on the systematic acquisition, testing and monitoring of new forms and/or the content of teaching and learning. To achieve self-directed learning processes for students, the consideration of new forms of organisation for learning may be required. A systematic development of their own knowledge and own skills can only happen if it is targeted and result-oriented.

Training

Training focuses on the qualification within one's own profession and the acquisition of typical professional skills. It is used to adapt to changing social and economic conditions, changing educational content, new scientific knowledge and individual changes in functions and tasks in schools. There is a close relationship between the quality of teacher training and the quality of the school. Systematic training measures build on the development of individual teachers, consider the level of their qualification and give them the opportunity for targeted and structured further development. In addition to individual training needs, the orientation is aligned towards the systemic training needs of the school as a whole. The effectiveness of training is demonstrated when the acquired knowledge and skills are transferred to the school routine and lead to an improvement in teaching.

Further education

Further education focuses on change and reorientation. It is oriented towards qualification in new areas and the acquisition of professional skills in the general, professional, political, cultural and scientific fields. In this way, additional teaching capabilities can be acquired. Further education generally takes a long time and its objective is an academic qualification. Qualifications that are acquired as part-time education safeguard a professional application range and can provide individual teachers with career advancement opportunities. The qualifications acquired should be used in the schools.

Quality area: Management and leadership

Management and leadership are the duties of the head teacher. School management includes the implementation of plans and regulatory compliance as well as effective cooperation with the faculty while leadership refers to the development of goals and tasks and the motivation of teachers. The head teacher is responsible for the school. He or she is responsible for compliance with the curricula, the applicable regulations and representation of the school to the outside world. The head teacher is entitled to issue instructions to the teaching staff and non-teaching staff of the school. A central task of the head teacher is the safeguarding and development of school quality.

Quality feature: Administration and resource management

School management in the strict sense refers to the management of school operations, i.e. human, infrastructural and financial resources. The smooth running of school activities and the best use of teachers allows the focus to be on the core business of teaching and learning.

Management of administrative tasks

A major task of the head teacher is the effective, efficient and transparent management of the school. This mainly concerns the internal organisation of the school, e.g. the observance of laws and administrative regulations, house rules and conference decisions as well as the supervision of facilities, buildings and objects.

Proper use of resources

An effectively working head teacher is characterised by successfully fulfilling the educational mission with the human, infrastructural and material resources available. This includes tasks such as the deployment of personnel (e.g. distribution of teaching assignments, preparation of timetables) and the assignment of infrastructural resources (e.g. rooms, materials).

Acquisition and control of financial resources

Financial management is increasingly becoming the responsibility of the head teacher. As part of wider financial autonomy with budget responsibilities, tasks such as business management, budgeting and monitoring are also included. Regardless of whether there is the available means or partial or full budgetary management of the school, controlling is an important criterion for the assessment of resource management. The head teacher ensures that the latest reliable and regular data on the state of financial management is available, existing scope for action is recognised and gauged, target/performance deviations are stated and corrected if necessary and budgetary planning is introduced for the operation of the school.

Quality area: Management and leadership

Quality feature: Leadership

An important task of the head teacher is to shape and design the lessons and education at the school and to represent this concept to the outside world, i.e. to give the school a face both internally and externally. The control of educational work is reflected by emphasising the (educational) features with regard to content and by how the head teacher achieves this from the teachers. The latter concerns the extent to which the head teacher manages to motivate teachers and involve them in the process of school design and development.

Management of educational processes

The management of educational processes by the head teacher includes a clear task definition and control of educational work. For example, this means the head teacher must actively participate in the development and monitoring of educational activities and curricular processes, clarify the intent of the curriculum and provide feedback and criticism to control performances in and outside of the lesson.

Motivational leadership

An important task of the head teacher is to motivate teachers and involve them in the process of school organisation and development. A participatory and collaborative management style has shown to be beneficial here. A participatory and collaborative management style when dealing with the staff of the school is reflected by the head teacher granting leeway for decisions on interim targets, guidelines and forms of implementation, planning projects together with staff in team meetings, agreeing on tasks and thus winning the trust of staff. In this way, the head teacher motivates and enables teachers and non-teaching staff to act themselves. This approach allows employees to identify with the goals of the school.

Public relations

An effective part of school development is public relations. It is the task of the head teacher to represent the school to the outside world, i.e. it is his/her responsibility to shape the understanding of identity to the public in the form of a coherent overall appearance of the school and present it to various groups, e.g. parents, the community, other educational institutions and businesses. This can arouse positive expectations from the public and a keen interest in school work. This can also lead to the active participation of parents at the school as well as collaborations, e.g. with businesses and other educational institutions.

Quality area: Management and leadership

Quality feature: Quality assurance and quality improvement

Quality assurance and quality improvement refer to the cycle of quality management at the school in which self-monitoring, targets and action planning are related to each other. In a learning organisation, the quality of work should be constantly monitored, safeguarded and improved. Quality monitoring (internal evaluation) and quality control (school programme work) have therefore become central concepts of school development. Work on this quality should always be oriented towards the results (as a measure of the evaluation (effectiveness orientation)).

School programme work

The school programme should include educational, didactical and school organisational principles to fulfil the educational mission. In order for school programmes to support development, there must be a broad consensus in the school and sufficient structural and content requirements. All stages of organisational development should be run through and documented with the determination of the initial situation, objectives, measures and procedures for review. Timelines and responsibilities should be determined. The quality of preparation with regard to content and text should safeguard the success of school development. This requires an internal consistency, i.e. a relationship between diagnostic analysis and development planning, a high level of specification and a (didactic and educational) conceptual foundation.

Internal evaluation

During the process of internal evaluation, the school makes independent investigations from which insights can be learned about the school. Through internal evaluation, the effectiveness of the measures introduced for quality development is assessed. For any form of internal evaluation, it is assumed that it should be conducted systematically and associated with the school programme or educational development projects. In addition, appropriate methods and instruments are to be chosen.

Efficiency orientation

Efficiency orientation ensures that the learning progress of students is systematically observed on the school level. A common culture of assessments of the learning results of the school is an important condition for quality work. This ensures that the high-quality work at the school is oriented towards the learning success of the students.

Quality area: Management and leadership

Quality feature: Personnel development

Systematic personnel development is another important component of the range of tasks for the head teacher. The aim of personnel development is the best use of human resources in compliance with organisational objectives and staffing needs while taking account individual professional expectations and individual skills. Systematic supervision and support of teachers by the head teacher has a positive effect on the fulfilment of the educational mission.

Personnel development plan

Measures for personnel development are used to improve the quality of each individual school. They are also used so that management personnel can be developed for other schools and staff for cross-school activities (such as consultants). In the concept, the strengths and weaknesses of individual persons and the needs of the school in comparison with the targets set in the school programme are to be considered. Here the head teacher uses the means of personnel development that is systematically adapted to the tasks and goals of the school. He/she can fall back on various measures for this, e.g. staff/management discussions with target agreements, an assessment system, coaching, employee surveys and training. This also includes measures for training and supervising new teachers.

Training concept

The development of a sustainable training concept for teachers is an essential instrument for personnel development. To implement the training concept, the head teacher should work together with teachers and develop individual training plans together that aim to build on the strengths of individuals and overcome their weaknesses. External training can also be beneficial when experiences are passed on to staff, e.g. in the form of in-school training. The sustainability of training measures should be reviewed and documented.

Quality area: Management and leadership

Quality feature: Selection of personnel

The head teacher has an influence on personnel decisions according to the Education Act. The school teacher can also develop job profiles that describe the skills, experiences, etc. of personnel required at the school in the future. These profiles are presented for consideration to staff responsible for personnel (human resources department of the school supervising authority).

Selection criteria

In addition to the special needs of an individual school, there are general criteria that can be observed for the selection of personnel for a school. A good professional qualification, willingness to integrate, understanding of the objectives of the school, a high level of self-motivation, creativity, empathy, cultural interests and moral concepts that fit with the overall concept of the school can be cited as requirements. In addition, it must be considered that the personnel selection process is ideally a two-way selection process. Here the job seekers should be familiar with the requirements of the school and see if these requirements match their own capabilities, goals and needs.

Quality area: Cooperation

The quality area of cooperation is a process feature of school work that focuses on the joint management of the educational mission while considering the participants within and outside of the school. The development of school quality and the achievement of good student performances also require a culture of cooperation within the school, among other schools and with the school supervising authority, the support system and partners outside of the school. The school should shape the educational mission in a constructive dialogue with the parents and students and encourage them to exercise their right to participate in the development of school life. At the same time, the school should work together with social and state institutions and partners in the interests of children and youth.

Quality feature: Student and parent participation

Cooperation within the school and the relationship between the various groups involved directly in school matters (students, teachers and parents) has a positive impact on the process of teaching and learning when it is characterised by participation and mutual recognition. Participation in a school should be ensured by an appropriate amount of opportunities to express views and a direct influence on decisions.

Student participation

By taking part in the shaping of school life in a democratic participation process, students experience recognition and acceptance even in situations of conflict. This is achieved both in the bodies of participation and in daily interaction. Head teachers and teachers support and facilitate participation. Within the participation process in school life, democratic rules are implemented in active actions. Tolerance and social rules and therefore social skills are taught.

Parent participation

The right of parents to determine the education of their children is the foundation of education and schooling. To encourage students to develop and promote personal initiative, the parental and educational mission must be meaningfully related to each other. This can be achieved by the participation of parents in school life and by corresponding participation rights. The school combines its work with the demands and expectations of parents and encourages parents to accept and support the educational concept of the school. Support for assistance from the head teacher and teachers is also required here.

Quality area: Cooperation

Quality feature: National and international cooperation

School networking with national and international educational and non-educational partners tends to open up a school. Two aspects of the effect of this are relevant here: Firstly, it is important for achieving a good performance and developing student skills in order to fulfil the educational mission. Secondly, it is an important stimulus for school development and the self-image of the school as an effective learning organisation.

Cooperation with school authorities and supporting institutions

Institutions can be differentiated according to their function. Firstly, schools work together with institutions that have a control and supervisory function on the school system. Secondly, services are obtained from institutions with a support and/or advisory function for the school system. In addition, there is cooperation with authorities or institutions that have a support function for the school and are responsible for equipping the school with spatial, material and, if necessary, financial resources.

Cooperation with other educational institutions

When cooperating with schools of the same school type in a national context, the exchange of ideas with regard to content in terms of professionally broadening horizons is of prime importance. Cooperation with subordinate or superordinate institutions strives for a seamless transition between school types. Cooperation with schools in an international context is aimed at learning languages, the promotion of intercultural skills of students and the consideration of other forms of teaching and learning.

Cooperation with companies and other education partners

On this level, the professional and economic orientation of individual schools is considered. This can also occur in both a national and international context. As a result of the schools cooperating with companies and other educational partners, the students learn the social demands of the job market and can therefore find their interests on the job market. Key partners of vocational schools types are training establishments, responsible authorities as well as companies and institutions where practical training or work experience are completed. The vocational school types and education partners fulfil a common educational mission with vocational training. As the job market is becoming increasingly globalised and adolescents are confronted with a demand for mobility when choosing a job, an international view must be considered.

Cooperation with associations, clubs and other public institutions

Cooperation with other public institutions such as cultural, sports and youth associations or the German Federal Employment Agency can support the effectiveness of the school. For example, full-day schooling can be realised as a cooperation model between schools and children and youth services based on a common concept.

**Publisher and Editor:**

Sächsisches Bildungsinstitut
Dresdner Straße 78 c
01445 Radebeul
Telefon: +49 351 8324 451
www.saechsisches-bildungsinstitut.de

Layout:

Sächsisches Bildungsinstitut

Photo:

www.punchstock.com

Translation:

Lingua-World Dresden

Print:

Union Druckerei Dresden GmbH

Copy date:

July 2010

Circulation:

1,000 copies, 2nd revised edition

Price:

free

Sächsisches Bildungsinstitut

online version: www.saechsisches-bildungsinstitut.de/publikationen

Distribution note

This publication was issued as part of public relations from the Saxon Educational Institute (SBI). It may not be used by parties or their candidates or supporters during a period of six months before an election for the purpose of campaigning. This applies to all elections.