

Consequences of the G8 reform: An interdisciplinary perspective

Final report

On March 30th and 31st, 2017, the workshop “Consequences of the G8 reform: An interdisciplinary perspective”, brought together education researchers from different disciplines with practitioners from politics, schools, and businesses to discuss empirical findings on the effects of the German G8 reform, which is one of the most controversially discussed education reforms of the past decades in Germany.¹

The two-day workshop consisted of four thematic blocks of presentations, which were followed by a final panel discussion. Besides presentations by junior and senior researchers the thematic blocks also included brief statements by various practitioners. An overall introduction was delivered up front by Marko Neumann from the German Institute for International Education Research (DIPF), who focused on the historical development of the duration of the academic track school in Germany. The first block then dealt with consequences of the G8 reform for the performance of pupils. In this block, Mathias Huebener (DIW Berlin), Ulrich Trautwein (Universität Tübingen), Stephan L. Thomsen (Universität Hannover), and CIDER fellow Jan Marcus presented findings of their research; CIDER fellow Susanne Kuger (DIPF Frankfurt) moderated this session. The second thematic block went one step further in terms of the age of the pupils and presented studies on the impact of the G8 reform on pupils’ decisions regarding higher education and the labor market. Ulrike Dannhäuser from the Employment Agency in Fürth opened this block, granting insights on her experiences in consulting G8 and G9 students regarding their respective job and study plans. Tobias Meyer (Universität Hannover), Vaishali Zambre (DIW Berlin), and Verena Lauber (Universität Heidelberg) presented in this block, which was moderated by Silke Anger (Institute for Employment Research and Universität Bamberg).

The second day started with the third block that was moderated by Michael Dörsam (Universität Konstanz). Wolfgang Seelbach (Head of the Parents’ Association in Brandenburg), Stephan L. Thomsen (Universität Hannover), Silke Anger (Institute for Employment Research and Universität Bamberg), and Tobias Meyer (Universität Hannover) discussed consequences of the G8 reform for the pupils’ personality and leisure time. The fourth block dealt with the impact of the G8 reform on the pupils’ health and happiness. This block started with a statement of Metin Fischer, 12th grade pupil at Neues Gymnasium in Glienicke/Nordbahn, who described his own first-hand experiences with the G8 reform. This statement was followed by presentations by Johanna Quis (Universität Bamberg), Simon Reif (Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Sarah Hofmann (WifOR Darmstadt), and Franz Westermaier (Universität Wuppertal). Nicolas Hübner (Universität Tübingen) was the moderator of this block.

¹ This reform reduced the years of schooling required to earn the general university entrance qualification “Abitur” from 13 to 12. While in the first years of the new millennium, most German states introduced this reform, recently (in the last years and months) several states have announced the intention to (at least partly) reverse the reform and return to the previous regime of 13 years of schooling.

The final panel discussion was a particular highlight of the workshop. For this panel discussion, we managed to bring together Sylvia Löhrmann (Education Minister of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, at the time of the workshop), Heinz-Peter Meidinger (head of the German teacher association *Philologenverband*), Ulrich Trautwein (Universität Tübingen), Donata Kluxen-Pyta (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, BDA) and Wolfgang Seelbach (Head of the Parents' Association in Brandenburg). With Mareike Knoke we also had a professional moderator for this discussion.

In general, the findings presented at this workshop showed that the G8 reform had largely no or only minor negative effects on the pupils' school performance, their study intentions, as well as their personality traits and health. Any found negative impacts are so small, that the overwhelming majority of the almost 40 participants did not recommend switching back to the previous G9 system.

We would like to thank CIDER for funding this workshop. As CIDER funded the participants' costs for travel and accommodation, we basically only had to organize funding for meals, snacks, and coffee for the participants. Therefore, we teamed up with Silke Anger from the Institute for Employment Research (IAB Nuremberg). Thanks to additional funding by the IAB, we could also cover the costs for small snacks and lunches during the conference, an honorary for the moderator of the panel discussion, and the rent for the rooms at Hertie School of Governance. Additionally, we acquired funding from the economic postdoc network BERA (Berlin Economic Research Associates) for the conference dinner. However, without the generous funding of CIDER this workshop would not have been possible!

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