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Kommunen auf dem Weg zur Bildungslandschaft

Ein Handbuch für kommunale Akteure

| **Verlag BertelsmannStiftung**

Abstract

Everyone needs a good education. This basic statement is bound to shape the development of education in German schools, municipalities, administrative districts and entire federal states. Education is no longer the responsibility of a single or even a few institutions. The quality of education must no longer depend solely on the authority and power of a few, but derive instead from a broad sense of shared responsibility. The guidebook presented here shows how municipalities and regions across Germany can achieve coherency in education management and establish regional education networks.

No longer a matter of will, the creation of regional education networks is today a must. Providing educational opportunities and educational justice for individuals across Germany are at stake here, as is the survival of small municipalities and administrative districts. The challenges faced are too daunting for any single educational institution to address on its own. Declining numbers of school-goers as a result of demographic change, managing the transition to full-day schools or ensuring educational inclusion are just a few of the major issues schools must address, and in addition to carrying out their core tasks.

Modern conceptions of education are far too holistic to warrant a continued reliance on narrow definitions of educational institutions and learners, often categorized in terms of specific life phases. What does or does not take place in our early experience with education has considerable influence on how we engage with learning for the rest of our lives. Indeed, how we experience schools and education as children sets the course of education for an entire life. It is therefore imperative that good educational opportunities suited to a variety of learners be provided, and that this be driven by a broad-based sense of responsibility for just educational access. In the end, everyone – businesses, companies, municipalities, administrative districts, the federal government and states – benefits from education. Perceived in this way, we all have an obligation to contribute to the development of regional educational networks.

“Establishing Education Networks: A Guide for Municipalities” is divided into three sections. The first section (A) provides basic information on how regional edu-

cation networks can be developed. The second section (B) draws on actual case studies to illustrate what successful regional education management looks like. The third section (C) addresses the biggest challenges in education facing municipalities today, providing a summary of each.

- In chapter 1 we show how the idea of a regional education network became a policy requirement with the capacity to determine the future of an entire region. Here, a renowned education expert's assessment of this is provided, as are the key positions of municipal associations and organizations as well as representatives from civil society.
- In chapter 2 we explore the question of how municipalities can develop and steer education toward success. What are the first steps to be taken when establishing an education network? What needs to be in place from the start? What are the key factors and hurdles to success? Here, we consider key instruments, such as education monitoring, regional education reports or regional education conferences. In addition, we show how participation – as an essential aspect of successful education networks – can be generated and fostered.
- In chapter 3 we look at the most important aspect of education development: objectives. Here, we show how education objectives specific to a region can be identified and targeted, what role a municipality's mission statement might play, and how this can be developed if not already present. Drawing on concrete practical cases, we show how education partners can, on-site, identify relevant action areas, develop impact-oriented measures and determine specific competencies, both in terms of steering and implementing policy.

Section B of the guidebook focuses on education development in practice. With the examples of the “On-Site Learning” initiative that was implemented across Germany and the “Educational Region of East-Westphalia Lippe,” we present effective processes, structural elements and instruments already developed by municipalities in Germany within the framework of their regional education management system. These examples are intended not only to inspire, but also to be applied and adapted for use in other regions.

Section C identifies the central challenges faced by municipalities in education development. These include demographic change, educational inclusion, early childhood education, full-day schools, school education, continuing education and life-long learning – issues affecting every community, without exception. “Establishing Educational Networks: a Guide for Municipalities” provides readers a concise and accessible overview of the current state of affairs.