

# ***“Creating attractive schools”***

*Key constituents of schooling and leadership practices in schools facing challenging circumstances*

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# Project

## Main objectives:

- Reconstructions towards practices of school development within schools facing challenging circumstances
- Focus on:
  - School development
  - School culture
  - Practices of educational integration

## Research design and methodology:

- Two qualitative case studies (schools in segregated areas)
- Documentary method
- Statistical data about those districts under research

## Duration:

9/2010-9/2012

## Team:

Prof. Dr. Nicolle Pfaff  
(project director)  
Laura Fölker,  
Thorsten Hertel (research  
assistants)

## Further information:

<http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/196240.html>

# Focus

The focus of today's dominant habitual orientations of:

- school leaders,
- teachers ,
- additional pedagogical staff

...regarding **learning, teaching** and **leadership** practices within our **second case study**.

- 1 Successful pedagogical practices as described by teachers and social education workers
- 2 Impact of leadership practices on school development under challenging Circumstances referring to the school leaders' perspective

# Case Study II

## Located in a segregated urban surrounding:

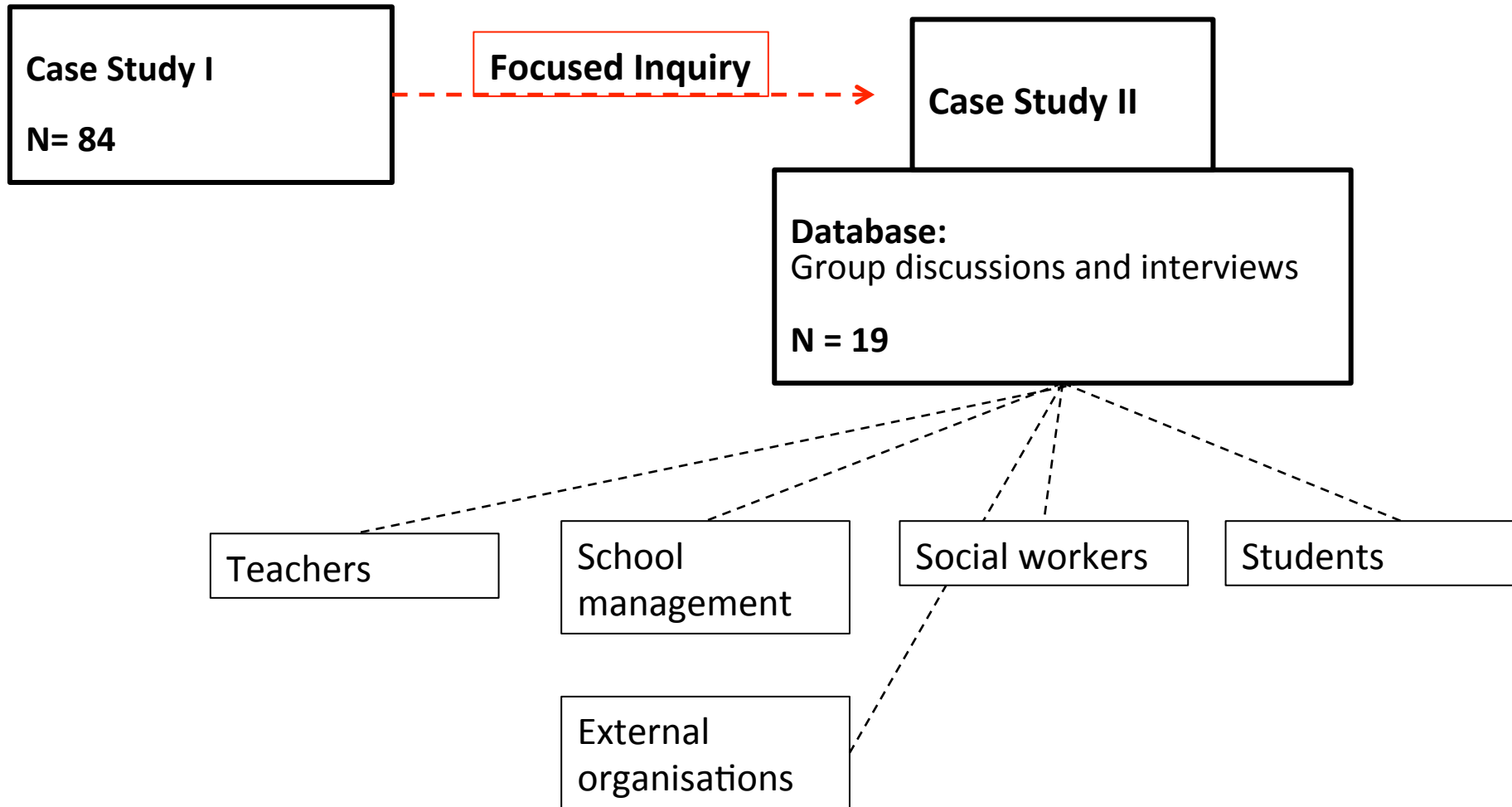
- German major city
- 16% of inhabitants receiving aid money
- 40% of inhabitants with a migration background

→ ***a socio-economically deprived urban area***

## The school:

- Integrated school structure: Result of a recent school reform aiming at breaking down the inequalities caused by the “traditional” tripartite German school system
- 700-800 students
- Two school leaders

# Case Study II



# Teachers and social education workers

Pedagogical principles of their daily work:

*“Basically spoken we, of course, work with our students in a manner that we try to find a way of “bringing them on board”, so that they will take over responsibility for themselves, then secondly for the group and finally for their school”*

*(GD\_Teachers, CSII, 5/2011, I. 146-149)*

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- “bringing them on board” → metaphoric expression for integration and cooperation
- Responsibility for themselves and for others → importance of social learning  
*One major focus of the school’s work*

# Teachers and social education workers

## Social learning...

*“is actually an absolutely crucial point. Given that we live in a socially deprived area and that the socio-emotional skills are in some cases very limited, the children carry a big “backpack full of problems”, therefore we have to support this aspect in particular. One of the most important pillars of our school is the encouragement of social competence, which already starts by looking at minor things. Meaning that we firstly have to have a look at how our students arrive at school in the morning afterwards we decide what to do and how we deal with it”*

*(Interview\_Teachers, CSII, 5/2011, I. 149-155)*



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- Social learning as a “crucial point” → institutionalization of social learning
- Perception of their students: carrying “a backpack full of problems”

# Teachers and social education workers

Cooperation: Social education workers and their relation to the staff:

*„[...] our door is always open and the teachers' lounge is a place for everybody, for us as well as for the teachers. The school management is very close to us [...], we actually have a very intimate communication on a regular basis”*

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- *Basic perception: cooperative climate and practice at school*
- A very „intimate“ communication with the school management on a „regular basis“ → underlining the steady and well elaborated cooperation with the school leaders

# Teachers and social education workers

## Summary (1):

- A school culture adjusted to the individual needs and problems of the students
- School as an institution meant to compensate local disadvantages which are affecting the students
- Cooperation between different professions as one crucial aspect for their daily work

# Leadership practices

- In critical times both, the principle and his associate admitted to have adopted a rather task focused leadership approach.
- They both agreed that this leadership approach was least likely to lead to sustained school improvement.
- Finally they chose a form of leadership to move the school forward.

# Leadership practices

*„then we said (.) try to write down what moves everyone of you (.) what focus areas or strengths do we have (.) then we summed up and wrote everything down(.) afterwards we were able to actually look at our construction zones, because there were some colleagues who said (.) well we are doing all sorts of things it's way too much (.) thereof our four pillars originated and we realized that it actually is a lot but it is also already bundled (.) everything concentrates on these four pillars and then it was the first time when we had the feeling to have taken everybody along (.) finally this created a light bulb moment for some of us”*

- communication and collaboration practices between the school management and the teaching staff is illustrated.
- disposition of sharing the responsibility to lead with others.
- a consistent and shared identity can be developed.

# Leadership practices

*“Well I think the most important part for us was that we found an identity some sort of line (.) at one point there was a model consisting out of four pillars where we listed all the activities we did and at some point we asked ourselves how all these activities belong together. What exactly is the whole picture of what we are doing here? To write down all these things and to release those for the public via internet on a homepage didn’t only have effect on the outside but also on the inside because colleagues started to address themselves to this model”*

- School identity was developed through relationships with the teaching staff.
- a climate of collaboration and a commitment to work together originated out of the communication process regarding the most important pillars of the school.

# Leadership practices

## Summary (2)

- Working basis of the school lies within an exceedingly difficult student body.
- School management created a general framework which made communication and collaboration possible.
- School management practices can be characterized as a moderation process concerning school development.
- Thereupon the specific school cultural “habitus” to cope with the individual problems of the students has been developed.



# Conclusion

- Having found a consistent and shared identity for the entire school represents the most crucial point within the process of school development.
- It is the schools' mandatory framework for pedagogical practices of teachers, social workers, and other pedagogical actors within the process of educating children who are “twice as negatively affected” by socio-economic disadvantages.

# Conclusion

Dynamics of school development processes

- (1) practices which prove to be successful can be integrated within the pedagogical concept.
- (2) new ideas may be generated from the interprofessional cooperation of the teaching staff.

Thank you for your attention

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