



Framework for Orientation

School Quality for „democratic schools“

– Quality domains, Concepts and Criteria for Democratic School Improvement –

Imprint

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Introduction

At present school improvement is highly important in Germany. Not least driven by the results of international surveys a wide range of standards have been defined to identify objectives and benchmarks of "quality" education and schools. So, models for education and competency both for subject areas and for multidisciplinary domains have been developed (for the domain of education for democracy see www.blk-demokratie.de). In addition there are different types of quality criteria for whole schools as learning organisations. The latter deal with the quality of "good schools" in general or with specific profile-oriented "school qualities". Accordingly, quality criteria were developed for the "good and healthy school", for the "school oriented toward sustainability" or – as proposed below – for the democratic school.

The aim of this catalogue of criteria is to offer schools a practical tool for systematic quality development and improvement.

On the one hand it addresses schools that aim at

- strengthening education for democracy and civic participation
- developing a democratic culture of learning and a democratic school culture.

On the other hand it does not exclusively address schools which design their profile towards education for democracy, but it also addresses schools which look for an access to systematic school improvement and which want to concentrate only on one specific section of the comprehensive "quality catalogues" of the Federal States (Länder). The frameworks for school quality of the Federal States also comprise criteria with regard to democracy, which are compatible with the catalogue presented here (cf. fig. 1). Last but not least school development in terms of fostering democracy is of central importance for any comprehensive school. This has been emphasised by OECD which has declared democracy, the human rights, and sustainability overall aims of education within its international framework of reference for the definition of (key) competencies (cf. OECD 2005). Democracy has thus gained central significance also in connection with the definition and assessment of competencies. The framework was developed irrespective of school type or class level. Therefore in its basic concept – it is open to adaptations or extensions due to the specificity of schools.

The criteria of democratic school quality are organised in the following quality domains:

1. Competencies
2. Learning group & class
3. Culture of learning
4. School culture
5. Opening the school
6. Human resource development
7. School management
8. School programme & development.

Besides the demand to incorporate relevant areas for democratic development the selection of quality domains is meant to be both compatible with the quality frameworks under development by the Federal States and to incorporate recognised models of quality management such as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The structure of the quality domains in this framework takes inspiration from the "logic" of the EFQM-model (cf. fig. 2) as well as from criteria focussing on democracy and participation.

Quality domains in "schools in democracy"	Criteria according to European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)	Quality domains according to Orientation Framework Berlin, Brandenburg, Lower Saxonie	Quality domains according to Orientation Framework Hamburg	Quality domains according to Framework of Reference Hessen	"Areas" in the Tool for Quality Assurance of EDC in Schools
Competencies	Key performance results (9) & results with respect to society (8), staff (7) and customers (6)	Results & achievements of the school (1)	Effects & results (3)	Results & effects (7)	I. Curriculum, teaching & learning Evidence of students and teachers acquiring understanding of EDC principles in their everyday practice in school and classrooms (2) Design and practice of assessment within the school consonant with EDC (3)
Learning group & form	Processes (5)	Culture of learning (2) + subitem school culture: social climate (3.1) & classroom as living space (3.2)	Education & socialisation (2)	Teaching & learning (6)	II. School ethos & climate School ethos reflects EDC principles (4)
Culture of learning		School culture (3)			
School culture				School culture (5)	
Opening schools	Partnership & resources (4)	<i>Subitem school culture (3): opening schools & cooperations with partners in the community (3.4)</i>	<i>No separate section, instead included in all three sections</i>	<i>subitem school culture 5.4.: cooperation & communication outwards</i>	<i>No separate section</i>
Human resource development	Staff (3)	Professionalisation of teachers & human resource development (5)	<i>No separate section</i>	Professionalism (4)	III. Management & development
School management	Leadership (1)	School management (4)	Leadership & management (1)	Leadership & management (3)	
School programme & development	Policy & strategy (2)	Objectives and strategies of quality development (6)	Part of leadership & planning (1) & education & socialisation (2)	Objectives for development & strategies (2) Requirements & conditions (1)	I. Curriculum, teaching & learning Evidence of an adequate place for EDC in the school goals, policies & curriculum plans (1) III. Management & development Development: plan reflects EDC principles (6)

Fig. 1: Comparison of quality domains according to different approaches for quality management

In the context of a framework for orientation focussed on democracy the participation of all groups involved in school life is essential. Equally important, as far as the pupils are concerned, are the processes and results of education for democracy. Therefore this concept is conceived so as to ensure a close connection between the development of a school programme, the competencies that have to be acquired and the quality domains essential for both.

Each of the eight quality domains is structured as follows:

1. **Name** of the particular quality domain
2. **Explanation**
A short explanation outlines which issues are linked to the particular quality domain
3. **Head note**
A head note indicates what quality development is aiming for within the particular domain. It expresses an overall vision for the direction of development in terms of education for democracy.
4. **Criteria**
The head note for the particular domain is differentiated and specified by a (varying) number of criteria (for each domain). These indicate what should have been achieved if both the head note is successfully implemented in practice in a school, and the school has reached high standards within the particular quality domains in terms of education for democracy.
5. **Possible evidence**
Assessment of the developmental stage of a school within one quality domain can take place in several ways that differ in complexity. In connection with this framework for orientation and tools for self-evaluation the assessment will be based on both subjective appraisal and democratic negotiation. As the assessment should both be understandable and transparent for third parties sufficient evidence is required. This can be different kinds of documentation of certain activities or results of simple surveys.
6. **Arrangements for learning, methods and activities**
In the third column different kinds of strategies are specified to foster quality development in the particular quality domain. Depending on the specific field of quality and the head note, this can be arrangements for learning and methods of education for democracy which may be conducive to the development of a democratic culture of learning and competencies amongst pupils. Or this can be about specific activities contributing to human resource development or development of the school programme in terms of education for democracy.

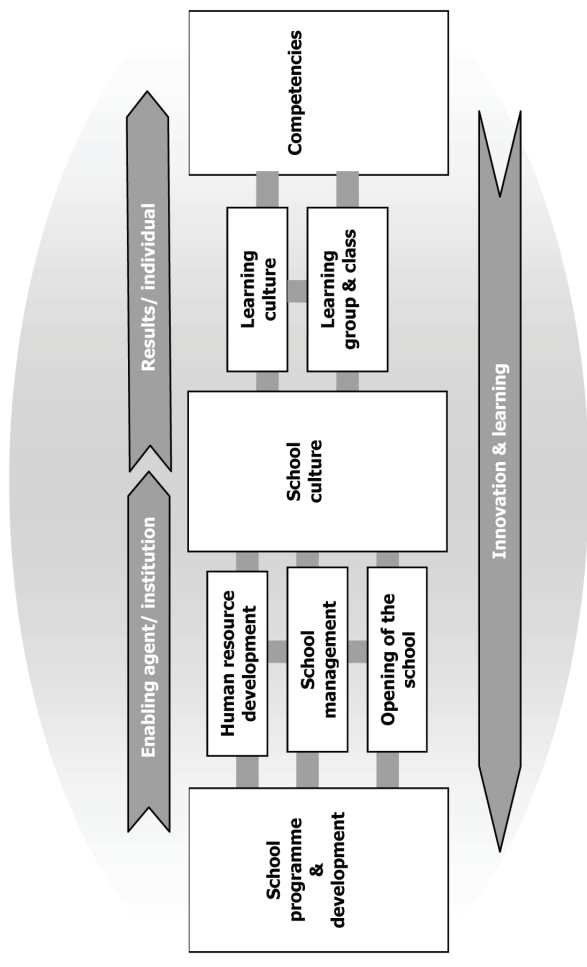


Fig. 2: Fields of quality in the framework for orientation „quality of schools: schools in democracy“ in relation to the structure of the EFQM-model

1. Competencies¹

The development of various competencies of pupils is the overall objective of education and schooling. All activities that serve the improvement of school are directed toward this objective.

The pupils in our school are competent to judge and act, enabling them to participate actively and responsibly in democratic forms of social life and to shape these in cooperation with others.

Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As individual personalities and members of a community the pupils have their own interests, opinions and objectives and know how to introduce them actively into the community • Social interaction amongst pupils is characterised by democratic forms of communication and negotiation (such as listening actively, deliberation etc.). • Pupils are able to understand another's point of view and to put themselves in the situation of people from different contexts and cultures. • Pupils reflect their values, beliefs and actions within the wider context. • Pupils demonstrate active responsibility towards others and the democratic community they live in. • Pupils possess of categorical and interpretive knowledge enabling them to perceive and judge problems in their environment relating to democracy. • Pupils possess of abilities both to plan and carry out (democratic) projects and to deal with the media and the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of the evaluation of lessons and, in particular, projects • Written self-evaluation of pupils • Portfolios documenting experiences and learning progress • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the following quality domains, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning group, - Culture of learning, and - School culture -

¹ The domain of quality „competencies“ defined below refers to one particular objective of education for democracy: the development of democratic competency of pupils. All aspects included by the term democratic competency and examples of arrangements for learning to foster democratic competency in class and school are specified in: de Haan, Gerhard/Edelstein, Wolfgang/Eikel, Angelika (Ed.) (2007): Qualitätsrahmen Demokratiepädagogik. Demokratische Handlungskompetenz fördern, demokratische Schulqualität entwickeln. Weinheim: Beltz

2. Learning group & class

The learning group is considered a distinct unit in school separate from general school life and lessons. Being the “smallest social community” in school it provides an important space for social experiences and democratic interactions.

In our classrooms pupils interact with each other according to democratic rules and norms, and pupils actively take responsibility within and for their class community.

Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangement for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference and diversity of pupils as well as teachers are acknowledged and respected in school. • Pupils and teachers negotiate common rules for living together respectfully and without humiliation and violence, and document these. • Pupils and teachers agree in advance which sanctions will be effective and fair when rules are broken. • Pupils and teachers evaluate regularly whether rules have to be revised. • Parents are informed about the rules and forms of social interaction within the classroom and the learning groups. • Conflicts both between pupils and between pupils and teachers are handled constructively and in a fair way. • Pupils and teachers maintain accepted rituals that serve social cohesion within the classroom. • Pupils undertake different tasks within and for the community in their classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class assembly at all class levels • Published catalogue of common rules and rituals • System of specific responsibilities within the class assembly (“chief system”) • Class programmes • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class assembly • Negotiation of common rules for interaction • Responsibilities in the “chief system” • Morning assembly in primary schools • Contracts between teachers and pupils • Class programmes to build up social competency • ...

3. Culture of learning

The term "culture of learning" refers to the way in which teaching and learning processes are shaped both in lessons and multidisciplinary projects. It comprises an evaluation of both learning and teaching by pupils in the interest of a continuous improvement and high satisfaction with both processes.

Lessons in our school are characterised by concepts of teaching and learning which foster intensive understanding of issues and offer pupils the possibility to develop self confidence.

Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the focal development areas of the curriculum (laid down in the school's programme) refers to the development of democratic competency. • Lessons are characterised by project oriented learning including authentic locations outside the school. • Teachers encourage self-directed learning, cooperation and mutual support. • Pupils participate actively in shaping the methods and contents of their lessons. • The assessment of learning results takes place according to criteria which are transparent and fair (for both pupils and parents). • Pupils are included in determining scores and marks and are given the opportunity to discuss them. • Lessons are evaluated regularly by both teachers and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School curriculum • Documents on lesson design, project planning and design • Cooperation contracts with partners outside the school in the context of class projects • Analysis of pupils' evaluations • Pupils' learning portfolios • Evaluation forms for self-evaluation of teachers' lesson design • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project oriented learning • Cooperative learning / peer learning • Service Learning • Companies run by pupils • Pupils' self-evaluation of their learning processes / portfolios • Learning workshops ("Lernwerkstätten") • Differentiation of spaces for learning and spaces for performance • Processes for choosing and negotiating the contents of lessons, peer teaching • Self-evaluation of teaching processes (teachers) • Pupil feedback • ...

4. School culture

The development of a "school culture" aims at shaping school as a living space which is formed by the structure and forms of communication as well as by the relations between all persons involved and the atmosphere at school as a whole.

Our school culture is characterised by democratic values and forms of communication and offers all involved manifold possibilities to participate in discussing, shaping and deciding on questions and issues of their concern.

Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions are characterised by respect and appreciation across all levels. • Lessons, projects and school life offer pupils different opportunities to become familiar with and appreciate the heterogeneity and diversity of (ethnic) life styles and beliefs. • Persons and groups requiring special support and consideration are naturally included in school life. • The school has institutionalised procedures for conflict management and mediation, which are perceived as a part of the school's culture by both pupils and parents. • Participation of pupils, teachers and parents in all issues and questions concerning their interests is supported and put into effect by appropriate structures for participation. • Partners from outside the school are included in decision-making bodies of the school – where school laws allow. • The school has an active pupil representation whose work is taken seriously and is supported by all other groups and can therefore be effective. • Pupils' projects, active commitment, and initiatives are largely encouraged, fostered and supported – also beyond the activities of the pupils representation. • Structures for bottom-up and representative participation are interlinked at all levels (classes, forms, school life, school organisation...) and groups (at least teachers, pupils, parents). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of training of mediators amongst teachers and pupils • Records or the like about real dialogues for mediation • Existence of a teacher or educator responsible for pupil mediators; mediation room etc. • School's programme: institutionalisation of different approaches to participation (bottom-up, representative and project-oriented participation) in the formulation of objectives and activities • Evidence of training on a regular basis for pupils who are included in the work of the school's decision-making bodies or who are active members of the pupil representation • Documentation of bottom-up panels, negotiation groups, conferences out of which communication and decision-making processes are observable • Documentation and project results of pupils' initiatives are visible throughout the school • Records of class assemblies that provide evidence that they have been used to exchange views with the pupil representation... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict resolution, de-escalation training, mediation • Bottom-up panels, conferences of pupils, teachers and parents amongst others • Projects, initiatives etc. of pupils and parents • Training for moral courage • Representative decision-making bodies comprising pupils, teachers and parents

5. Opening the school

"Opening the school" comprises the relations between school and its environment including cooperation with external partners, e. g. various educational institutions, civic agents, and other institutions.

Our school cultivates cooperation with various external partners in order to achieve democratic goals in school, community and society.		
Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school cultivates close partnership with responsible bodies / agencies of youth welfare service. In this partnership approaches of these institutions are also influential. The school has cooperation agreements with communal partners and civic agents. The school cooperates with other educational institutions. Cooperation with partners in society is used mutually to explore areas of experience and learning outside the school and to foster social participation. Organisations outside the school offer consultancy and financial support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreements on objectives with external partners (e. g. adult education centre, jobcentre, companies, youth welfare office, agencies of youth welfare service, police, other schools) Documentation about relevant cooperation projects The transition of pupils from one educational institution to another is designed cooperatively (from nursery school to primary school, from primary school to secondary school, from secondary school to vocational schools or university) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking with other educational institutions Cooperation with civic agents Pupils' clubs provided by the agencies of youth welfare service ...

6. Human resource development

Human resources denote all pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff of a school including volunteers working at school on a regular basis.

The staff of our school is able and motivated to cooperate with the aim of democratic objectives and to improve its actions professionally.		
Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an internal concept for human resource development and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at the school oriented towards key points of the democratic school's programme and taking into account diverse interests and competencies of staff. • Professional training for education for democracy are always attended by more than one member of staff simultaneously (e. g. teams consisting of teachers, educators/ school social workers and head teachers etc.). • Reflection and improvement of one's professional action is a key point in team meetings, appraisal interviews and meeting of decision-making bodies. • There are fixed schedules for team meetings and agreed forms of cooperation and communication. • Teachers visit each other's lessons on a regular basis and reflect on them afterwards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents for human resource and CPD planning • Interviews of staff members • Evidence and certificates about professional training relevant for an education for democracy • Records of team meetings, meetings of decision-making bodies and others • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and external professional training • Development of team structures • Supervision and feedback of colleagues • ...

7. School management

School management comprises all managerial functions of the school which are carried out by the school's senior management and other responsible persons on the school's staff.

Our school management initiates and fosters the development of a democratic school programme and encourages all members of the school community to participate actively in the process.		
Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a steering group at the school who meets regularly and in which pupils and parents participate actively together with management and teachers. • The overall responsibility for democratic school development is implemented in a cooperative way. The specific responsibilities are transparent for everybody and can be claimed. • The school management ensures transparent information for all groups of the school community. The information is understandable for all these groups. • The school management supports constructive and fair handling of conflicts within all levels of the school's organisation (e. g. by supporting the implementation of systemic mediation methods). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of meetings of the innovation team • Records of meetings or other processes (concerning school development) in which democratic decisions are observable • Notice-board, internet, intranet • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering group which consists of an equal number of members of each group relevant in the school community • Extended, cooperative senior management • Questionnaires, interviews • ...

8. School programme & development

The "school programme" is a written document fixing the quality conception of the school. Besides the description of basic conditions and a record and analysis of the current pedagogical status, it includes the "mission statement" (Leitbild), concrete development objectives and the related workplans with their respective focus, activities and evaluation strategies. "Development" means the continuous process of school improvement and updating of the programme.

Our school has a school programme which incorporates democratic pedagogical objectives, activities and structures and serves as a participatory instrument for planning and development.

Criteria	Possible evidence	Arrangements for learning, methods, activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's programme is based on an analysis of the status quo at a given point in time which captures how teachers, pupils and parents view their school. • The school's programme comprises a survey of the social context of the school and includes the situation of the communal environment. • Pupils and parents participate actively together with teachers in the development, implementation, evaluation, and updating of the school programme. • The school has a democratic profile, and its school programme outlines democratic objectives and projects across all development levels. • The projects and activities of development are evaluated and updated regularly with the participation of all groups of the school community (teachers, pupils, parents). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-elaborated school programme "school in democracy" • Documentation of processes of participative development of the school programme • Long-term planning for the updating of the school's programme which is communicated openly • Development of the school programme in cooperation and with support of external experts • Guided survey (interview, inquiry, questioning) and evaluation • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of school's programme by means of processes of negotiation, creative workshops for the future (Zukunftswerkstatt) • Workshops and conferences for self-evaluation • Analysis of strengths and resources, analysis of strengths and needs • ...