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Title: Democratic school development: Potential and limitations of a strategy against right-wing extremism in schools.

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Outline:

Summary:

The prevalence of far-right youth cultures and attitudes has initiated an academic debate on political and pedagogic counter-initiatives since the 1990s. This debate also concerns the question over a possible institutional course of action for schools.

This study is designed as an ethnographic case study to reconstruct the implementation process of a pilot project for democratic school development at an East-German school where the pupil body exhibits right-extremist tendencies. Set against the backdrop of a mandate for political education in schools and of the launched programme "Learning and Living Democracy" of the Bund-Länder Commission (BLK) as response to right-wing extremism and political disenchantment among young people, this study investigates potentials, limitations and challenges of this programme's strategy of action against right-wing extremism. In order to do so, it will integrate research on right-wing extremism with school and organisational studies. In its centre rests an analysis of process and of the factors that promote or inhibit this process in an interplay of agency and structure. The research provides findings on the tensions and contradictions, within which political education as integrative task is located, and offers empirically-grounded impulses for developing further the prevention of right-wing extremism in schools in both research and practice.

The first part examines the current state of research and the academic debates on right-wing extremism in schools (chapter 2). Here, the recent developments of right-wing extremism which confront schools are presented. Also the particular cultural influences in the school environment on the development of extreme right-wing attitudes are sketched out. Setting out with the school's mandate for political education, a survey of the prevention of right-wing extremism is conducted, before investigating the specificity of democratic school development as strategy of action according to the BLK programme "Learning and Living Democracy". For this, the study foregrounds existing research regarding the development of democratic competencies and for the development of a democratic school culture through democ-

racy-oriented school development. Following the specification of research perspectives on the implementation of the pilot school project "Democracy in Schools" (chapter 3), the theoretical approach of a reflexive structuration process is presented. This approach provides the framework for analysing the process development. Furthermore, the methodological design and the empirical methods of the study are set out and located in the context of evaluation research within educational studies (chapter 4). As exploratory case study the ethnographic research project follows the open research approach of Grounded Theory. The methodological approach comprises participatory observation over a period of two years. This is accompanied by document analysis as well as problem-focused interviews for capturing and analysing participants' perspectives (external advisors, teachers, pupils, parents).

The findings are discussed in the second part. The analysis of actors' perspectives follows along the phases of the process. It identifies beneficial and detrimental factors that influence the implementation process according to approach, participation, content and institutional framework (chapter 5). The evaluation demonstrates that the opportunities for democratic school development as an approach to the prevention of right-wing extremism is limited by institutional contradictions, insistence grounded in the school's structures, inconsistent processes of participation as well as a neglect of the societal dimensions of right-wing extremism and democracy (chapter 6). In order to fully make use of the potential of democratic school development as a strategy against right-wing extremism, the concept needs further theoretical and conceptual strengthening. For this it is, for example, necessary not only to specify more strongly the concept of democracy on which it is premised but it also requires addressing more explicitly racism as well as other forms of discrimination in a society of immigration and the particular aims of the underlying concept.