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Implementation of public sector reforms: Unravelling the G8-reform

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Abstract

The G8-reform, implemented in German federal states between 2001 and 2007, has caused a considerable ongoing public debate. With this phenomenon, the shortening of secondary academic education from nine to eight years portrays one of the most significant and controversial reforms in the education sector since Germany's reunification. The most remarkable point about the G8-reform is its development over time, as only some German federal states maintained the reform, whereas the overwhelming majority reverted it partly and one federal state returned to the previous model of nine years. This thesis seeks to explain how these differences came about. After examining the complicated context in which the G8-reform is embedded in, the thesis traces the implementation process of the G8-reform in three federal states according to a set of six determinants of success: the level of complexity of actions, the availability of resources, the existence of correcting measures, the direction of political consequences, the frequency of changes in political leadership and the alignment of stakeholder positions. All determinants except for the level of resources seem to have an impact on the success of the reform and therefore its maintenance or reversion.

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1. Introduction

„Every reform, however necessary, will be weak by minds carried to an excess, that itself will need reforming“ (Coleridge, 1817, p. 17). The scope to which the essential meaning of this quotation can be applied is extensive. It implies that for long-term successes, action must not be taking overhasty and excessively, but rather thoughtfully to ensure that the potential of a reform is fully lived up to. In most discourses, reforms are discussed in terms of success or failure with the potential to spark an intensive debate. In Germany, one reform caused a continuous public outrage over the last couple of years: the G8-reform, whereby G8 stands for “eight-year *Gymnasium*”. This widely-debated pieces of legislation by the German *Länder* (federal states) reduced the secondary number of school years to obtain the A level diploma from nine (G9) to eight years (G8) at the *Gymnasium*, the highest academic school qualifying for university entrance. G8 was implemented in all formerly Western *Länder* between the years 2001 and 2007, compared to all formerly Eastern *Länder*, which run traditionally on G8.

This thesis will examine the context in which the G8-reform took place and trace the process of its implementation in three German *Länder*. The goal is to identify determinants of successful public sector reforms and explain why the status of the reform differs across the three *Länder*. By doing that, the G8-reform will be investigated from a context and implementation perspective instead of the predominant pedagogical perspective and therefore narrow the knowledge gap about G8.

1.1. Context

The G8-reform as such is not a new phenomenon (Homuth, 2017). The debate about the duration of secondary education regained momentum with the German reunification in 1990. At that time, efforts to align the duration of schooling in Eastern and Western *Länder* out of financial considerations have failed whereas some East German *Länder* tried out G9 and decided to return to G8, most have maintained G8 as the standard (Zitzler, 2015). Despite the failed efforts of aligning the duration of schooling at *Gymnasien*, the idea of reforming the G8 and G9 system reemerged in the 2000's, triggered by the so-called „PISA-Shock“ (Homuth, 2017). PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is an effort by the OECD to compare the performance of students across 32 countries (OECD, 2017). In 2000, PISA found that the competences of German students were average and the entrance age into the labor market around one year higher compared to other countries, predicting a decrease of Germany's competitiveness (Artelt et al., 2002a).

The results of PISA disappointed the expectations of public and policy makers. As Saxony and Thuringia as G8-*Länder* achieved the best results in PISA, the possible introduction of G8 attracted renewed attention. Between 2001 and 2007, all ten Western *Länder* integrated the G8-model into their educational politics (Merkelbach, 2011; Schneider 2017). The individual implementation of the G8-reform in the *Länder* is due to the distribution of competences in the federal system of Germany: in

education politics, the authority for education lies predominantly with the *Länder*. However, the G8-reform did not prove to be successful in most *Länder* and was followed by the reversion of G8 back to G9 or the introduction of a hybrid G8/G9 model. The trend of reverting the G8-reform shapes the current discourse in educational politics and shall be the focal point of this thesis.

1.2. Relevance of the topic

In its potential to spark a public outcry, the G8-reform has been leading in education politics. Why?

The societal importance of the G8-reform lies in its scope. Being one of the most extensive educational reforms, the reduction of the number of school years influences 11 million students: those enrolled at a *Gymnasium*, primary students who have to decide for a future school model and those enrolled at other school types which are confronted with organizational challenges if the quality of the *Gymnasium* decreases (DStatis, 2017). Introducing G8 also influences teachers and the parents of these 11 million students. Lastly, educational reforms touch the interests of German taxpayers, as education is a publically financed good.

The scientific relevance of the G8-reform is constituted through existing studies and particular characteristics in the development of the reform. Prevalent literature about the G8-reform is concerned with the justifications for its introduction, perceived (dis-)advantages and its consequences for students, teachers and parents. However, authors such as Kühn et al. (2013), Huebener and Marcus (2015) or Homuth (2016) focus predominantly on the pedagogical background. What is missing in the academic literature is an analysis as to why the reform has succeeded or failed from a context and implementation perspective. This bachelor thesis aims to narrow the gap between pedagogical and political insights by adding this new perspective to the body of knowledge. Another scientific relevance of the G8-reform derives from its reversion to the old model of G9 in several *Länder*. Whereas studies exist about the further development of reforms, a the return to the status quo prior to the reform occurs rarely and has therefore been academically neglected. The G8-reform is therefore an interesting phenomenon.

From the missing analysis of an implementation and context perspective, a practical relevance can be identified: because no final solution to the G8-problem has been found yet, future research about how to make such reforms successful is welcome.

The societal, scientific and practical relevance of the topic indicate why a case study about the G8-reform is a suitable example to identify the determinants of success for a public sector reform. The thesis examines which factors have influenced the decision to revert the G8-reform positively or negatively. Based on an evaluation of the reform in three federal states as a success or failure, the thesis traces how the implementation process occurred in three *Länder* and where differences in the determinants of successful implementation were present. The *Länder* under analysis in this comparative

case study will be Saarland, Hessen and Lower-Saxony, as the time limit of the project makes it unfeasible to examine all *Länder*.

1.3. Sub-questions and outlook

Taking the background information and relevance of the G8-reform into account, the research question of this thesis is: „Which factors explain the decision to revert the G8-reforms from the years 2001 to 2007 in three German federal states?“ To clarify the research objective underlying this explanatory research question, the answering of empirical and theoretical sub-questions is helpful. They are as follows:

- I. Theoretical sub-question: How does the literature define success of public sector reforms and which factors are identified as decisive from an implementation and context perspective? (SQ1)
- II. Empirical sub-question: In terms of goal achievement and resilience, in how far was the G8-reform successfully implemented in the selected *Länder*? (SQ2)
- III. Empirical sub-question: Which success factors identified in the literature are absent, present or inadequately fulfilled in the selected *Länder*? (SQ3)
- IV. Empirical sub-question: Do these factors explain the reversion of the G8-reform in practice? (SQ4)

After a depiction of the most important scholarly literature concerning the success of public sector reforms and its determinants thereof to answer SQ 1 (Chapter 2), the methods section (Chapter 3) will illustrate how this case study research about the G8-reform was conducted. Chapter 4 will give insights about the German-wide context of the G8-reform. Building on this information and providing an answer to SQ 2 and SQ3, Chapter 5 will present the findings from the three *Länder* and compare them in a cross-case analysis. The thesis will be finished by an answer to SQ4 and discussion of its limitations in the conclusion (Chapter 6).

2. Theory

The research question requires the exploration of the theoretical body of research about the decisive factors for the successful implementation of public sector reforms. Determinants for successful reforms can be categorized into the implementation and the context perspective. “Implementation” is defined as “to carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, or complete” a public policy (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974, p. xxi). It commences with the passing of legislation which in turn is expected to lead to the desired objectives. Policies can therefore be defined as a “chain of causation between initial conditions and future consequences” (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974, p. xxiii). In this thesis, “reform” is treated as a type of public policy which amends an existing rule in order to improve it.

“Context” refers to the conditions under which the implementation of a reform occurs and the external influences on the behavior of actors in the implementation process. To evaluate the determinants of success, it must be defined which criteria constitute the success of a public policy. Following McConnell (2010), a policy is successful if “it achieves the goals that proponents set out to achieve and attracts no criticism of any significance and/or support is virtually universal” (McConnell, 2010, p. 351). This thesis bases on the assumption that sufficient support for a reform translates into resilience, meaning that a reform is lasting. Therefore, “goal achievement” and “resilience” are the ultimate indicators for success and are further explained in the Chapter 3.

2.1. The context perspective

The context in which policies are shaped and implemented is crucial in the analysis of public sector reforms. Public organizations, as the entities which implement public sector reforms, operate in a “web of politics” (Rainey, 2014, p. 4). This “web of politics” encompasses “constitutional provisions, laws, political authorities and processes” (Rainey, 2014, p.4). Education politics, as a service frequently delivered by the state in a monopolistic manner, is not an exception. Therefore, analyzing the environment in which public sector reforms take place must not be neglected when considering the determinants of successful policy implementation (Rainey, 2014).

Firstly, the context perspective of Germany encompasses its sociopolitical- administrative regime (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), which refers to the federal structure between *Bund* (Federation) and *Länder* (federal states) and the resulting from it the distribution of tasks in education politics. This requires the consideration of Germany’s prime law (Rainey, 2014): constitutional principles affect policy implementation. The conjunction between education politics and the principle of federalism has been termed *Bildungsföderalismus*. It is argued that the complex structure of cooperation between *Bund* and *Länder* impairs the feasibility of educational reforms (Schwager, 2005). Hence, the relationship between *Bund* and *Länder* is assumed to have implications for the G8-reform.

The German sociopolitical-administrative regime further encompasses the scope of political consequences in different policy fields. For a reform to be successful, its implementation should incite a positive public opinion and must not harm the electoral prospects of the implementing parties (McConnell, 2010). Public opinion as a success determinant so far is predominantly framed as part of the implementation perspective (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974). Opposed to this, Rainey (2014) argues that the public opinion and media rather belong to the context perspective. Considering new developments in public policy theory and the necessity to synthesize explanation models (Matland, 1995), it seems appropriate to treat public opinion in this thesis as part of the context.

Secondly, the context of education politics includes the trend towards the functionalization of reforms. Educational and pedagogical theories to improve the quality of education are neglected for the sake of fulfilling economic or demographic policy goals (Zaida, 2010). This theoretical consideration is included as it supplements the theoretical framework with a policy-field dependent determinant of success. Thirdly, unexpected events in the broader environment hinder the implementation of a public policy. Unexpected disturbances may affect the steps of the implementation process, such as a sudden shortage of available funds personnel or changes in administrative law (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974).

2.2. The implementation perspective

Whereas the context perspective describes the general setting which a reform is embedded in, the implementation perspective depicts the processes leading to the incorporation of the reform into practice. The implementation process starts with the establishment of a policy design, giving a long-term action plan with a time frame, balancing stakeholder positions and considering the “ex ante likely impact of proposed policies” (McConnell, 2010, p. 347). It further requires a cost evaluation and plan for the allocation of resources. If not (completely) fulfilled and therefore decreasing the success chances, a policy’s status can be rated along a continuum from success to failure. A failure of a policy is present if it failed to achieve its objectives, incites negative political consequences, is regarded as illegitimate and eventually terminated. To evaluate a reform’s success realistically, its several objectives and side effects must be assessed individually (McConnell, 2010). McConnell’s (2010) theoretical contributions are valuable for this thesis as they lay the foundation for the evaluation of the status of the G8-reform.

Adding to this intertwinement of policy success and determinants thereof, Pressman and Wildavsky’s (1974) insights supplement the theoretical framework of the implementation perspective. Their assumptions are included due to their works’ classical status and long-time relevance in implementation theory. Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) examine the failure of a reform which complied with basic criteria for success, as also emphasized by McConnell (2010): a consent between stakeholders in terms of goal achievement and sufficient funding. Despite the presence of these success determinants, the reform failed, inciting Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) to expect that the devil in detail hinders the success prospects. This refers to the length of the chain of causality: the higher the amount of interdependency between actors, the more decision points and need for coordination arise, potentially resulting in disagreements and delays. These interdependencies are complicated by changes in political and administrative leadership as political powers (designing the policy) must be in dialogue with administrative actors (implementing the policy). To be successful, a policy should be implemented according to a hierarchical distribution of tasks, as straightforward as possible.

Similar to McConnell (2010), Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) assign importance to the inclusion of stakeholders. Other than McConnell (2010), they do not emphasize a consensus between

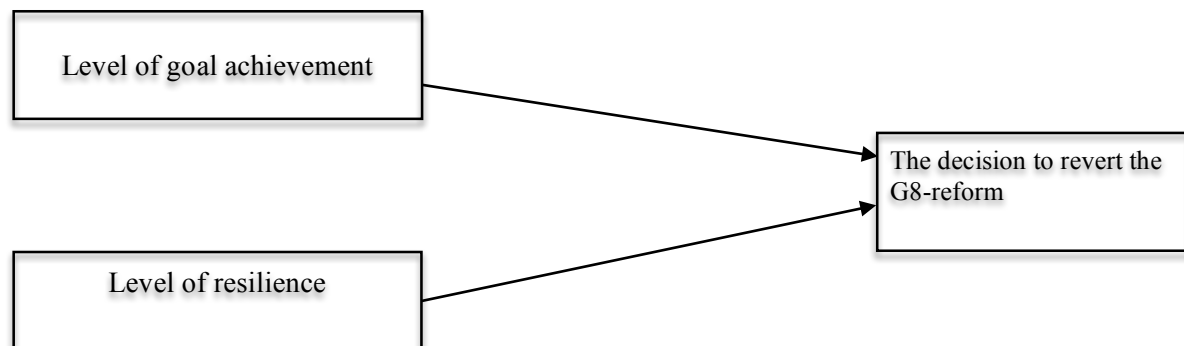
incompatible interests in the policy design, but as vital for political leaders to receive first-hand information. This progressive thinking shortens the chain of actions (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974), for example regarding the introduction of correcting measures after the initial implementation.

The recurring theme of stakeholder consultation and alignment is a crucial aspect of strengthening a policy's legitimacy. According to Wallner (2008), the success of an educational reform in two different federal states of Canada was decided by the degree of legitimacy assigned to it by stakeholders. This case study shall be mentioned here, as it resembles the approach of this thesis.

The analysis of the implementation perspective will be dominant in the analysis.

2.3. The theoretical model

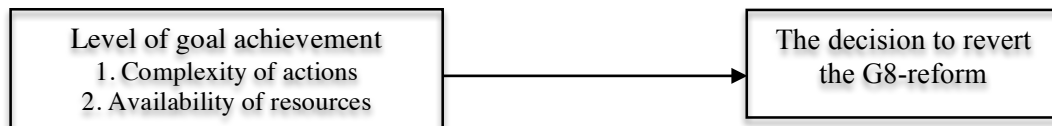
Based on the reviewed literature, a theoretical model is established. In this thesis, it is assumed that there are two main independent variables, the level of goal achievement and the level of resilience, which have an effect on the decision to revert the G8-reform. The dependent variable "decision to revert the G8-reform" can have three characteristics: maintenance of G8, introduction of a parallel track of G8 and G9 or reversion from G8 back to G9.



The first expectation to be derived from this model is that "the higher the level of goal achievement, the less the likelihood that the G8-reform will be reversed". The second expectation is that "the higher the level of resilience of the reform, the less likely that the G8-reform will be reversed". These expectations, as a weaker form of hypotheses, are the framework for the thesis as it is expected that the analyzed *Länder* with the highest levels of goal achievement and the highest levels of resilience will maintain the G8-reform. Vice versa, it is assumed that the *Länder* with the lowest level of goal achievement and the lowest level of resilience will revert the reform. As this thesis is based on a qualitative case study approach, the expectations will not be statistically tested to affirm or reject these

expectations. Instead, the *Länder* are compared according to their levels of goal achievement and resilience and the decision to revert G8.

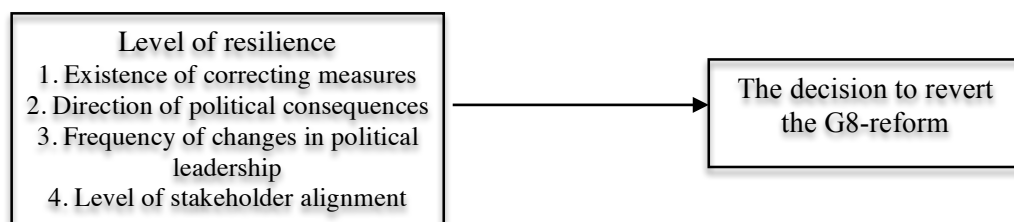
In order to explore the expectations, the levels of goal achievement and resilience are specified. Derived from the literature, it is suggested that the level of goal achievement encompasses the level of available resources and the level of complex actions.



Making the concept of goal achievement more concrete, the expectations can be further specified. It is expected that:

1. a higher level of complexity of actions during the implementation will decrease the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a positive impact on the decision to revert the reform (E1), and
2. a higher level of available resources during the implementation will increase the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a negative effect on the decision to revert the reform (E2).

According to the reviewed literature, the level of resilience can be specified into the level of coherence of a policy, the direction of political consequences, the frequency of changes in leadership and the level of stakeholder inclusion.



By making the level of resilience more specific, the following expectations are added:

3. a higher number of correcting measures during the implementation will increase the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a negative impact on the decision to revert the reform (E3),

4. a negative direction of political consequences for the responsible politicians during the implementation will decrease the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a positive effect on the decision to revert the reform (E4),
5. a frequent change of political leaders during the implementation will decrease the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a positive effect on the decision to revert the reform (E5), and
6. a high level of stakeholder alignment prior to and during the implementation will increase the likelihood of a successful implementation, which will have a negative impact on the decision to revert the reform (E6).

By establishing this theoretical model, SQ1, asking for the theoretically decisive success factors for public sector reforms, is answered. Derived from the reviewed scientific literature, it is assumed that in terms of goal achievement, the level of complexity of actions and the level of available resources are most relevant for the success of reforms. In terms of the level of resilience, it is expected that the existence of correcting measures, the direction of political consequences, the frequency of changes in leadership and the level of stakeholder alignment are the most decisive determinants for the success of reforms.

3. Methodology

Chapter 3 will present the underlying research design, the case selection, the operationalization and data collection.

3.1. Research Design

The research design of the thesis is a diagnostic comparative case study. Thus, the unit of analysis is the G8 reform introduced between 2001 and 2004, whereas the selected *Länder* in the years 2001 to 2017 serve as the settings. The analysis is conducted as process-tracing of the implementation according to the determinants of successful reforms (IVs) and their connection to the dependent variable, namely the decision to revert the G8-reform (Beach & Pedersen, 2011). Theories about success determinants from the implementation perspective and context perspective will be applied in a deductive nature to test if their (non-)existence incited the G8-reversion. Conducting a diagnostic comparative case study is accompanied by several threats to validity:

The first threat is related to case selection, as random sampling in such a small-n study is not feasible. Instead, the cases are selected purposely and may be subject to selection bias as the researcher

can never be fully objective in the selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). In this study, the cases are sampled based on the variation of the dependent variable. A sampling based on the variation of the independent variable would have been unsuitable as the examination of the independent variables is part of the process-tracing itself. According to the three characteristics of the dependent variable, all possible cases are classified by using a scheme from the public news to ensure objectivity (Tagesschau, 2017). Then, one case of every category is selected by random sampling, ensuring that the researcher selection bias is minimal.

The second threat concerns the degree to which findings can be generalized from a small sample to a bigger population and are thus representative (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). In the present scope and design of the thesis, this is not possible. However, the generalization of most qualitative studies bases on testing and improving theory instead of extending the results to other cases (Maxwell, 2008). Thus, generalizability in this study is approached through the transferability of the reviewed theory. In order to draw conclusions about the transferability of the study, multiple cases are analyzed in-depth. This allows to compare patterns across the cases and draw conclusions about the quality of the underlying theory. Through this procedure, the study's level of confidence is raised (Zainal, 2007). The underlying approach to the research problem is therefore one of the strong points of the thesis.

The third threat relates to the limited establishment of a causal relationships in qualitative studies. Relying on the three conditions of causality has led to the following assessment: due to the tracing of the reform process, it can be assumed that the independent variable precedes the dependent variable in time (Gerring & McDermott, 2007). This study is not designed to statistically determine if a correlation between the independent and dependent variable(s) is present, as it bases on qualitative data. Further, qualitative case studies cannot rule out spuriousness. To counter this threat, the thesis builds on an extensive review of existing literature which considers a wide array of independent variables. However, it cannot be excluded that the perceived relationships are caused by neglected factors. Criticism concerning the inability to establish a correlation and rule out third variables can be encountered by focusing on the advantages of qualitative studies: quantitative methods have limitations in providing context to existing data (Zainal, 2007). Numbers may not be enough to indicate if a connection of the independent variables to the G8-reform exist. Therefore, this research design is the most suitable to answer the research question.

3.2. Case selection

Case study researchers aim to select a case from a representative sample which illustrates variation on the dimension of the theoretical interest (Maxwell, 2008). The population from which the samples are selected encompasses 16 *Länder*, among which the G8-reform was implemented in all ten formerly West-German *Länder*. These ten cases can be classified according to the three possible characteristics of the dependent variable:

- maintenance of G8: Hamburg, **Saarland**, Bremen
- freedom of choice between G8 and G9: Schleswig-Holstein, North-Rhine Westphalia, **Hessen**, Bavaria, Baden-Wurttemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate
- reversion of G8 to G9: **Lower-Saxony**

From each category, one is randomly sampled, resulting in the following cases for analysis: Saarland, Hessen and Lower Saxony. By including two of extreme cases into the analysis (Saarland for maintenance and Lower-Saxony for reversion of G8), it is expected that the relevance of the success factors will become clearer than with only one extreme case. As the majority of the ten states introduced the freedom of choice, one case from this category is also included.

The selection of these three diverse cases illustrates the heterogeneity among Germany's *Länder* (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) and "represent(s) the entire range of variation rather than only the typical members" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 235). By conducting a multiple case study, cases which do not fit the underlying theory and therefore require its revision can be identified (Maxwell, 2008). Threats and limitations arising from this sampling method are addressed in section 3.1.

3.3. Operationalization

The following section operationalizes the concepts contained in the research question: the G8-reform itself and the independent variables. An operationalization of the federal states took place in 3.2. "G8-reform" refers to the shortening of secondary education from nine to eight years at all schools which offer the A-level: the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule/Gemeinschaftsschule*. The analysis will focus on the *Gymnasium*, as the *Gesamtschule/ Gemeinschaftsschule* are distinct school forms which offer more degrees than the A-levels. However, the G8-reform was extended to the *Gesamtschule/Gemeinschaftsschule* in two cases, which has implications for the complexity of the policy design.

The G8-reform is assumed to be successful if it has a high level of goal achievement and resilience. To operationalize goal achievement, it will be determined if the G8-reform achieved its goals of: increasing the competitiveness of students by lowering the graduation age and countering the demographic change by an earlier labor market entrance, resulting in increased tax revenues (Kühn, 2013). A reform may be accompanied by negative side-effects, which can create a public resentment and overshadow the successes of the policy, leading to a perception of the policy as a failure (Zaida, 2010). The thesis will balance goal achievement and negative side-effects. Due to McConnell's (2010) vague operationalization of "resilience" as the preservation of the policy's instruments and goals, "despite minor refinements" (McConnell, 2010, p. 352), "resilience" in this thesis will be treated as the maintenance of a policy over a longer period, independent if a correction of the original policy design took place.

The G8-reform can be implemented according to the organizational models “5+3” or “6+2”. They describe the relocation of the 265 “Jahreswochenstunden”, which are a requirement to obtain the A-levels, across all school years. Whereas the “5+3” model compresses tuition hours in *Sekundarstufe 1* (grades five to nine in G8, grades five to ten in G9) from six to five years, the “6+2” increases them in *Sekundarstufe 2* (grades ten to twelve in G8, grades eleven to thirteen in G9) by a year (Köller, 2017). The “5+3” model has been adopted by most of the *Länder* and from all under this analysis (Köller, 2017).

Lastly, an operationalization of the independent variables (IV1-IV6) takes place.

The two sub-items for the variable “level of goal achievement” are operationalized as follows: “The level of complexity of actions” refers to the number of involved organizations and what their role in the design, implementation and reversion of G8 is. As there exists no benchmark for the ideal number of involved organizations, their numbers in the *Länder* are judged against each other. The “availability of resources” encompasses money, infrastructure and time. In this thesis, the focus lies on the financial allocations for the *Gymnasium* in the *Länder* budget, which will be measured by the development of education expenses in Euros. Operationalizing the “availability of resources” from a budgetary perspective also includes the employment numbers of educational staff and wages in the education sector over time. A short overview of investments into infrastructure is also given. “Time” will be neglected due to the unavailability of information about the time management for reforms.

The four sub-items for the independent variable “level of resilience” are operationalized as follows:

The “existence of correcting measures” is an item of the broader concept of “policy design” and refers to the concrete actions taken to achieve the policy goals until the goal is achieved or the policy dropped. Correcting measures vary in their scope, whereby it is assumed that extensive correcting measures complicate the policy implementation. The “direction of political consequences” is operationalized through the %-outcome of elections for the parties entrusted with the implementation and/or reversion of G8 over the period of analysis. The “frequency of changes in political leadership” considers how frequently the appointment of the education ministers changed and resignations were linked to the G8-reform. Similar to “direction of political consequences”, it is framed in terms of re-election: the outcome in elections for a party determines if it can hold a ministry. The theory suggests that the “frequency of change in leadership” further involves the leadership in all administrative entities (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974). As minister of education performs at the highest level in this hierarchy and determines the direction for subordinate action, the frequency of change in administrative leadership is neglected. The “level of alignment of stakeholder positions” is operationalized through the attitude of parties (internal stakeholders as they are pass G8) and external stakeholders towards G8s. The external stakeholders mark the highest representative body of the stakeholder groups at *Länder*-level. It will be

examined if the majority opinion among all stakeholders is congruent with the will for implementation, introduction of freedom of choice or reversion over time.

3.4. Data collection

The required data used to answer the empirical sub-research question will be secondary. In order to create this data, a content analysis will be conducted, which is a frequently used technique for verbal and unobtrusive research designs. Document analysis refers to “a data collection method in which a sample of documents is coded by the researcher to say something about the units of analysis that have produced these documents or about these documents themselves” (Van der Kolk, 2017). It is expected that the some documents will not contain direct references to the G8-reform. To retrieve the relevant information, a list of key words will be established to search websites and documents based on the operationalization of the independent variables. As the independent variables of this research are derived from existing scholarly literature, a list of key words can deductively be established prior to the content analysis, but updated throughout the process as new findings accumulate.

The following sources will be used to retrieve information about the presence of the independent variables:

1. Sub-item 1 - Level of complexity of actions:

By assuming that the G8-reform encompasses mainly the adaptation of the curricula and hour boards, the *Länder* school laws from the reform year and/or reversion year will be used to trace the changes in law and identify which tasks were assigned to which implementing organization.

2. Sub-item 2 - Level of available resources: The expenses for *Gymnasium*, personnel and infrastructure will be retrieved and analyzed which changes occurred over time from all budgetary plans in the period of analysis. The development of educational staffs' wages are retrieved from the official pay tables (*Besoldungstabellen*), whereas the numbers of students and teachers are published by the *Länders'* statistical offices. Information about infrastructure is retrieved from newspaper articles, which will be searched for through Google Search, the archives of major newspapers and Nexis Lexis Academic. They are scanned for words such as “full-day school”, “canteen”, “leisure room” and “lunch provision”.

3. Sub-item 3 - Existence of correcting measures: Information about correcting measures will be retrieved from plenary debates, stakeholder statements and newspaper articles by scanning the documents for words such as “curricula”, “increase in teachers”, “funding”, “adaptation of timetables” etc.

4. Sub-item 4 - Direction of political consequences: Information about voting percentages and the composition of governments is retrieved from the German news agency “Tagesschau”, which provides

an archive of all regional elections. A Google search is conducted to identify the policy fields which influenced the election outcome.

5. Sub-item 5 - Frequency of changes in leadership: From the *Länders'* official websites, it is retrieved which ministers held the office of education minister and a Google Search supplements this information about the reason for resignation from office.

6. Sub-item 6 - Level of stakeholder alignment: Information about the party system is retrieved from plenary debates, coalition agreements and party programs. The external stakeholders are identified by cross-references contained in the previously used documents. Their position towards G8 will be retrieved from their individual websites.

The use of secondary qualitative is most suitable to fulfil the goals of this study. Qualitative data reconstructs the context, traces interim steps and considers the cases' individuality to identify "unanticipated phenomena" and revise existing theories (Maxwell, 2008). Therefore, it can to limited extent also address causal research questions (Maxwell, 2008). By reconstructing the processes that accompany a reform implementation, political leaders can critically reflect on the reform and identify weak and strong points of their approach. If the results of qualitative studies are taken into consideration by political and administrative leaders, awareness for improved policy implementation is raised. However, it must be noted that policy makers cannot influence all sub-items represented here. Particularly the direction of political consequences and frequency of changes in leadership are a consequence of policy makers' previous behavior.

4. The context of the G8-reform

The context in which the G8-reform took place is an integral part of the analysis about the success or failure of the G8-reform and looks at the "bigger picture" prior to the *Länder*-specific analyses (Chapter 5 and ANNEX B). Building on the theory about the context perspective, this chapter considers education politics in law, the *Bildungsföderalismus*, the conference of education and culture ministers (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK), the economization of educational reforms and occurrence of unexpected events.

4.1. Education politics according to the German constitution

The political-administrative regime of Germany is federally organized. A central authority (the *Bund* or federation) and the autonomous member states (the *Länder* or federal states) form a political entirety (Brautmeier, 2013), which is protected by the eternity clause (Art. 79GG). Derived from the principle of federalism anchored in Article 20 (1) of the German basic law (*Grundgesetz*, GG), the *Länder* receive the greatest possible autonomy but may closely cooperate (Sturm, 2013).

The federal organization requires a distribution of tasks between *Bund* and *Länder*, which also applies to the school system: it is under overall supervision of the state (Art. 7(1) GG), which holds the monopoly in providing education. Since both *Bund* and *Länder* enjoy „state character“ (Sturm, 2013), the legal situation concerning education politics must be further differentiated. The GG attributes the sole responsibility for education to the *Länder*, which are therefore assigned the cultural sovereignty (*Kulturhoheit*) (Art. 70GG). The *Kulturhoheit* restricts the cooperation between *Bund* and *Länder* in education politics: joint tasks are limited to determining the performance of the education system and to issue recommendations based on these performance tests (Art. 91(2) GG; Sturm, 2009).

The conduction of PISA falls within this range of joint tasks, which was identified as the trigger for the G8-reforms. The *Länder* are obligated to participate in this assessment tool and have limited possibility to vary their participation as the sampling of participating schools is determined by the OECD (Isensee & Kirchhoff, 2010) and the national organization is carried out by federate organizations (KMK, n.d.). The national conduction of PISA allows for internal cross-comparisons between the *Länder* (mpid, 2005). Mirroring the cooperation between *Bund* and *Länder* in performance assessment, PISA is co-financed by the KMK, as a representative body of the *Länder*, and the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF, 2016). Even though the *Bund* and *Länder* can issue recommendations, G8 does not seem to be initiated through a joint approach. The BMBF has not issued official recommendations for G8; therefore it is assumed that the introduction of G8 has been exclusively decided by the *Länder*.

In 2006 and therefore after G8 had been politically decided by the *Länder*, the *Kulturhoheit* was further enforced. Through a prohibition of cooperation (Art. 104b GG), political initiatives regarding the school system are banned, even if all 16 federal agreed on common action (ifo Institut, 2017). The provision additionally eliminated the *Bunds'* influence by denying it the ability to give additional financial support to the school systems (ifo Institut, 2017). Article 91 of the GG forms the sole exception to this rule. Due to this distribution of tasks, each *Länder* passed individual school laws, which do not contain cross-references to the *Bund* (Brautmeier, 2013).

This distribution of tasks between implies consequences for the budgets of the *Länder*. Most *Länder* have tight budgets and it is expected that their debt load will increase due to the demographic change (Brautmeier, 2013). Even though the *Länder* can determine the expenditure for education politics due to the *Kulturhoheit*, their income is dependent from the means allocated to them through the *Bund* (Brautmeier, 2013). To reduce their debt level, *Länder* can reduce expenditure, but not raise incomes, which places education politics and debt reduction in a constant cleavage (Brautmeier, 2013).

4.2. Bildungsföderalismus (Federalism in education)

The cooperation between *Bund* and *Länder* in education politics, referred to as *Bildungsföderalismus*, impairs the feasibility of reforms (Schwager, 2005; Brautmeier, 2013). Since 1949, the *Bildungsföderalismus* is intended to spark competition between the *Länder* to ensure that the most beneficial school programs prevail through best practice exchange (Hepp, 2013).

As *Länder*-specific educational politics consider size, financial capacities and political background, fragmented education policies across the *Länder* emerged. Framed as an efficiency discussion, the *Bildungsföderalismus* sparked reoccurring debates. The *Bund*'s effort to shift the distribution of competences in its favor have failed before the Constitutional court. Nevertheless, 61% of Germans wish for more power of the *Bund* in education politics (ifo Institut, 2017).

Rooted in the growing diversity, critics see the danger of developing into irreconcilable directions with a negative impact on Germany's international competitiveness: the *Bildungsföderalismus* might promote unequal chances and decreases educational mobility (Hepp, 2013), both between school forms and between federal states (Brautmeier, 2013). The scattered G8/G9 pattern enforces this problem. With the shock of the PISA-results in 2000, a trend to hold the *Bildungsföderalismus* responsible for the bad performance emerged. This is partly rooted in the strong political interweaving (*Politikverflechtung*) through the distribution of tasks, which makes it unclear for citizens which actor is responsible (Brautmeier, 2013). Frequent reforms enhance this feeling of uncertainty (Brautmeier, 2013). Transferring the issue to the G8, the "reforms of the G8-reforms" may lead to further resentment of the *Bildungsföderalismus*. A unified G8/G9-rule could therefore be argued as beneficial. Due to the provisions of the GG, such a unified model could solely be rooted in a KMK resolution (see 4.3.). With the present situation of strongly differing models of G8/G9, socio-economic disparities are widened and hinder the goal of enhancing nation-wide competitiveness.

The federal organization of education politics may impact the outcome of regional elections. As education policy is one of the political fields in which the *Länder* hold the predominant political power, it gives the political parties an opportunity for political profiling (Zitzler, 2015). Consequently, education politics have played a „pivotal role in a series of regional elections“ (Zitzler, 2015, p.3).

Despite the ongoing debate, the effect strength of the *Bildungsföderalismus* on educational development in Germany is questionable. Many studies do not identify the *Bildungsföderalismus* as the decisive factor for good education results (Brautmeier, 2013). Instead, they regard the social background of students or the amount of education spending as more important (Brautmeier, 2013). These findings mirror the theoretical assumptions about the relevance of resource availability.

In order to facilitate action across *Länder*, state and *Länder* have established coordinating structures, among which the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (KMK) is of highest relevance. Its tasks and influence on the G8-reform are elaborated on in 4.3.

4.3. The „Kultusministerkonferenz“ and G8

The „Kultusministerkonferenz“ is a voluntary collaboration between the 16 federal ministers for education and serves as an organ for self-coordination to establish educational comparability (Hepp, 2013). It emerged from the provision that *Länder* may cooperate in domains of their exclusive responsibility. The KMK is therefore an organ to find consensus without surrendering rights to the *Bund* (Brautmeier, 2013). The KMK passes resolutions, which become legally binding once the education ministers comply with their political duty to incorporate them into *Länder*-law (KMK, 2014). 91% of German citizens desire more comparable standards in the education system (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2008), giving the KMK a basis to strengthen its competences. With the current structure of voluntary commitments, frequent changes in presidency and the principle of unanimity for resolutions, the KMK lacks the ability to act enforcing (Brautmeier, 2013).

With respect to the G8 reform, the KMK agreement about the organization of academic secondary education is of particular importance (KMK, 2016). The duration of *Gymnasium*- education is 12 years (G8) or 13 years (G9), which makes a uniform regulation needless. Across the 12 or 13 years, students have to be taught a minimum of 265 *Jahreswochenstunden* to obtain the A levels (KMK, 2016). The distribution of the 265 *Jahreswochenstunden* make up the hour board (*Stundentafel*). The hour board determines the total number of weekly tuition hours per year in one subject for all grades (§9 HSchG). Its composition occurs through the *Länder* ministry of education which further fragments the school system. The hour boards serves as a basis for each school to set up the school internal timetable (*Schulcurriculum*) (vbw, 2010). With the introduction of G8, each *Land* and school subsequently had to relocate the amount of hours taught per week; in average, this resulted in an increase of tuition hours per week from 29 to 33 hours (Greiner & Himmelrath, 2014).

4.4. Economization of education: functionalization of reforms

This section considers the triggering cause of the G8-reform, namely the PISA 2000 results and to which extent they affected the German school system. Following PISA, all German *Länder* launched the G8-track. To which extent serves PISA as a justification for such a profound reform? Whereas the consideration of scientific results in policy-design is desirable (von Winterfeldt, 2013), the results of studies may be interpreted falsely or be used for „wrong“ reasons, leading to sub-optimal policy designs. As the various *Länder* cannot vary in their contribution to PISA, it cannot be individually assessed in how far the introduction of the G8-reform should be driven by PISA or not. Solely one argument for G8

is pedagogically motivated: the improvement of students' abilities. This goal has been criticized as „pseudo-pedagogical“ and illogical (Burchardt, n.d.), as a shortening of education does not necessarily account for an improvement of quality. G8 can therefore be placed in the debate about the economization of the education sector.

The education sector is a profitable market for tutoring institutes, educational publishers and providers of teaching aides, leading to a modelling of schools as businesses which produce human capital (Burchardt, n.d.). The increasing influence of the economy on the education sectors relocates the focus from education as a maturing process to education as a guarantor for employability (Burchardt, n.d.). In this context, PISA may have been misused: instead of seizing the diversity of educational systems, the study focused in the performance and need for reforms such as the revision of school laws (Burchardt, n.d.). Critical voices point out that the official report on national education (*Bildungsbericht*) identified the leveraging of human resources as the prime goal of education and therefore affirms this assumption (Burchardt, n.d.).

Schools seek to distinguish themselves to withstand competition in times in which the demographic change may lead to a closure of schools. The reversion of G8 back to G9 or a parallel track are effective tools for schools to create a unique selling point (Kühn, 2013). In areas with a high supply of education facilities, the offering of a G9-track proved to be the most relevant factor in school choice, whereas the effect disappears for academic secondary schools which face less competition (Kühn, 2013).

4.5. Unexpected turbulences

According to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011), the occurrence of unexpected environmental turbulences has a negative impact on the implementation success of reforms. Turbulences refers to “the degree to which changes in one part or aspect of the environment in turn create changes in another” (Rainey, 2014, p. 93) and are therefore be strongly linked to the context. The implementation of the G8-reform coincided with the financial crisis between 2008 and 2010. This sudden change in the broader environment of the German *Länder* expressed itself in the *Länder*'s budgets. Having occurred after the initial implementation of the G8-reform in all three *Länder*, the financial crisis intervened with the correcting measures taken to improve the G8. The *Länder*'s revenues declined but additional need for expenditure arose, which had an effect on the debt load of Germany as a whole and the *Länder*, where the effect size differed (Färber, 2013).

Regarding the BIP in 2009, Saarland experienced the heaviest decline with 11,9%, compared to a decline of 6,3% in Hessen and 4% in Lower-Saxony (Färber, 2013). Lower-Saxony was among those *Länder* with the highest growth rate after the crisis, whereas the Saarland and Hessen had a slower and weaker increase (Färber, 2013). Among the analyzed *Länder*, only Saarland continuously increased its expenditures which added to the debt load (Färber, 2013). Budgetary deficits require the *Länder* to increase their income or reduce their expenditure (Färber, 2013). As education politics is one of the

domains in which the *Länder* enjoy the exclusive authority, it must be examined if the budgetary allocations for the education sector, in particular the *Gymnasium*, decreased in 2008 and the subsequent years.

In Saarland, the financial crisis did not seem to have had an impact on the expenditure for the *Gymnasien*, which experienced a continuing growth since 2001. However, prior to and at the time of the financial crisis, the Saarland already invested little into its education sector if compared with other *Länder* (Landeselterninitiative für Bildung e.V., 2009). In Hessen, the expenses for the *Gymnasium* were continually rising. Opposed to this development, the overall expenses for schooling dropped by 30% from 2008 to 2009 and remained at this low until 2012. According to the budget plan, this decrease was linked to the termination of some programs and not the financial crisis. In Lower-Saxony, the overall expenditure for the academic secondary high schools did not decrease. Overall, the financial crisis did pose a challenge for all German *Länder*, as the decline in revenues implies a relocation of the budget. In all *Länder*, the relocation of financial means does not seem to have affected the budget provided for *Gymnasien* and those entities entrusted with the G8 implementation.

5. Findings

In this section, it will be determined to which extent the G8-reform was a success in the individual *Länder*. It will do so by examining if the goals were achieved and if the reform proved to be resilient. Subsequently, each *Land* will be analyzed according to the six determinants of success to find out to which extent they were present, absent or insufficiently fulfilled.

5.1. Evaluation of the G8-reform in terms of goal achievement and resilience

5.1.1. Goal achievement

This section determines to which extent the G8-reform was a success in the *Länder* in terms of goal achievement. To do so, the pro and counter arguments for G8 must be analyzed. The idea for G8 emerged from economically and demographic considerations (Kühn et al., 2013). Following the PISA-shock, politicians criticized the high age of entrance into the labor market of academically qualified graduates (Kühn et al., 2013). This development paralleled the rising demand for a highly qualified working population to ensure Germany's competitiveness. Furthermore, Germany faces a shift in the age distribution through the simultaneous ageing of the population and decline in birth rate, which strains the social systems- a highly qualified working population has to enter the labor market earlier (Kühn et al., 2013; Marcus and Zamber, 2016). G8 should also improve students' performance: a narrowing down

of the curricula by compressing it into eight years was expected to relocate the focus on the basic curricula (Kühn et al., 2013).

Opponents of G8 criticized the lack of pedagogical considerations and voiced concerns how justified the G8 goals were when compared to expected negative side-products. First and foremost, it was feared that the quality of academic secondary education would decrease as the same amount of content would be taught in less time, leading to superficial studying, declining performance, little time for extracurricular activities and more psycho-social pressure in terms of performance and stress. G8 therefore does not mirror the heterogeneity in the student's abilities (Kühn et al., 2013). In response to the argument of saving financial costs, critics argued that resources would have to be invested into the revision of curricula, school books and materials, as well as in equipment designed for full-day schooling (Kühn et al., 2013).

The hopes and fears accompanying the introduction of the G8-reform were similar across the *Länder*. This is rooted in the relatively homogeneous PISA results across Germany: a low level of productivity and strong scattering of performance. Students in Saarland, Hessen and Lower-Saxony all scored below the OECD-average (Artelt et al., 2002b). The expectations of both proponents and opponents of the G8-reform base on little empirical evidence, as no Germany-wide evaluation for all desired or un-desired effects of the G8 reform exists. Present studies differ in their focus on selected *Länder* or a Germany-wide effect and employ different methods, making them unsuitable to generalize from one *Land* to another or from Germany to individual *Länder*.

It is first determined if the initial goals were achieved and justify the reform. The intermediate goals of earlier labor market entry and compensation of skilled worker shortage was achieved, but with some sacrifices as G8-students graduate around 10 months instead of a year earlier than G9 students (Huebener & Marcus, 2015). In comparison to G9-students, G8-students delay their enrolment for the sake of voluntary services, a stay abroad or an apprenticeship, which is why the effect on earlier labor market is slightly mitigated (Klovert, 2016). Germany seems to have caught up in competitiveness in this regard, but it remains questionable if an increase in quality also occurred. From a financial perspective, G8 cannot be seen as cost-saving or cost-extensive per se, as studies about expenditure in G8 compared to G9 do not yet exist (Huebener & Marcus, 2015). Grounded in the overall earlier entrance into the labor market, it can be assumed that the state has a greater tax revenue.

Due to the insufficient studies, the (side) effects of the G8-reform on students is vaguely determined: G8 students seem to achieve similar results to G9 students. In Saarland, the G8-students achieved an average of 2,45 whereas the G9-students achieved an average of 2,51, in Lower-Saxony, the G8 students achieved an improvement of 0,02 grading points (Köller, 2017) and in Hessen, G8 students achieved an average of 2,27 in G8 and 2,44 in G9 (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2013a). In all three *Länder*, the GPA of G8 students compared to G9-studentes differed by less than 10% and are

therefore insignificant (Köller, 2017; Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2011). Critics view these results as whitewashed and connected to a qualitative decrease of requirements (WiWo, 2013). The level of grade retention has risen independent of G8 or G9, but the same amount of students attend the *Gymnasium*. Furthermore, stress levels among G8 students seem to be higher, but with little effect on leisure activities (see ANNEX A). Regarding the strength of negative side-effects, it must be noted that even though the empirical evidence is not sufficient, side-effects may be perceived by the students, parents and teachers and thus be relevant as their perception influences the attitude towards G8. In light of the reversion of G8 in seven of the ten *Länder*, it seems to be that the perceived side-effects play a role (Kühn, 2013; Huebener & Marcus, 2015).

Summing up, the G8-reform seems to have achieved its goals with relatively little empirically proven negative side-effects. For the present thesis, it is assumed that the side-effects do not overshadow the goal achievement of G8.

5.1.2. Resilience

In this section, the second condition for a criteria for the success of a reform, resilience, shall be examined (McConnell, 2010). The Saarland is one of the three *Länder* which maintained the G8-reform holistically as the standard model. In combination with the assumptions about the goal achievement, the reform in Saarland can be considered a success. The majority of *Länder* has introduced a hybrid model of G8 and G9, giving schools the freedom to opt for G8, G9 or a parallel track. Among them is Hessen. After Hessen introduced the freedom of choice, the amount of G8- *Gymnasien* decreased to 17, opposed to 183 G9-*Gymnasien* and 18 which offer parallel tracks (Frankfurter Neue Presse, 2015). Even though G8 still exists, it must be classified as partly resilient if considering the proportion between G8 and G9 *Gymnasien*. The overwhelming return to G9 academic high schools implies that the G8 reform was only a very limited success in Hessen (Bündnis 90 Die Grünen, 2016). A complete reversion from G8 back to G9 took place in Lower Saxony. Lower-Saxony introduced a state-wide return to G9 in the academic year of 2015/16 and only particularly gifted students have the opportunity to complete a the fast-track G8. The G8-reform was not resilient in Lower-Saxony and is therefore considered as a failure.

5.1.3. Interim finding for the evaluation of the G8-reform

This section about the evaluation of the G8-reform provides an answer to SQ2: “In terms of goal achievement and resilience, in how far was the G8-reform successfully implemented?” Regarding goal achievement, it can be concluded that the G8-reform did lower the graduation age, which is a prerequisite for the achievement of further objectives. In the debate around G8, the emphasis shifted from goal achievement to negative side-effects. Although unambiguous empirical evidence is lacking,

these perceived side-effects decisively shaped the public opinion. Concerning resilience, the G8-reform prevailed in Saarland, was partly sustained in Hessen and completely abandoned in Lower-Saxony. Taking these findings together, the G8-reform is rated as a success in Saarland, a partly success in Hessen and failure in Lower-Saxony.

Building on these findings, the following case studies will determine the extent to which the success factors of reforms are present in the three *Länder*. For each *Land*, this means the analysis of the complexity of actions, the existence of correcting measures, the direction of political consequences, the frequency of changes in political leadership, the alignment of stakeholder positions and the availability of resources. By analyzing the extent to which extend the success factors are present, an answer to SQ3 will be given for each *Land* in their interim findings. The detailed analysis for the presence of the success determinants can be found in ANNEX B.

5.2. Interim findings for Saarland

The Saarland is Germany's smallest *Land* with a number around one million inhabitants (statista, 2015). It is located close to the border of France. Saarland justified the G8-reform with its close location to the border region, making the area more likely to fall behind in comparison with French students (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). In 1999, it profiled itself as the first Western *Land* to respond to the international job market (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). The demographic change in Saarland takes place quicker than in other *Länder*: over the past two decades, the average age increased from 41 to 46 (Saarbrücker Zeitung, 2016). If judged on BIP per person, the Saarland ranks on place eight out of the 16 German *Länder* (Statista, 2015). The Saarland's period of analysis ranges from 1999 to 2017.

The G8-reform in Saarland affects exclusively the *Gymnasium*. Its implementation has travelled over the following hierarchy in the Saarland: the Saarland ministry of education, the six schools regions, the school boards and the schools with the director and subject conferences. Additionally, the Saarland established expert commissions prior to the implementation, to revise the curricula with particular subject commissions and for further G8-modifications. Whereas the modification of hour boards took place through the ministry, the adaptation of curricula was an ongoing process which directly involved the teachers. Over time, the Saarland provided an alternative for G8 by giving the *Gemeinschaftsschule* with G9 an equal status to the *Gymnasium*. In order to facilitate the G8-reform, the ministry employed more teachers and rewarded civil servants with a pay increase of 39% over time. However, Saarland spends least money per student on the education at the *Gymnasium*. Even though the expenses for the *Gymnasium* were gradually rising, only one major investment for infrastructure occurred at the outset of the G8-reform, whereas continuous investments were missing.

Even though the CDU as the initiating party of G8 lost voter support, it could maintain its pole position and remained the leading part of the government coalition. At the same time, the SPD could extend its influence. None of the education ministers, out of which two were from the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), one from the Green party and one from the SPD (Social Democratic Party), resigned from office due to the G8-reform. The political attitude towards G8 is fragmented: CDU and Greens want to maintain G8 while extending the two-pillar structure to offer students a choice. The FDP wants to extend the freedom of choice to the *Gymnasium*. Throughout the period of analysis, the reform incited criticism from SPD and Left. Regarding current developments, their influence on the G8-reform seems to have been small. External stakeholders rejected G8 at its outset, but seem to have reached a consensus that a constant back and forth in this structural debate is counterproductive (see ANNEX A, Federal State 1: Individual Analysis for Saarland).

5.3. Interim findings for Hessen

Hessen is situated centrally in the Western part of Germany and has a population of six million inhabitants (Hessen, 2016). Among the German *Länder*, Hessen's share of foreign workers is 5% above the German average. The per head capita is 15% higher than the German average, rooted in the booming branch mixture (Bahadori, 2016). Consequently, Hessen has a high BIP per person, making its economy the fourth strongest out of the 16 *Länder* (Statista, 2015). In the past two decades, Hessen's average age increased from 40,3 years to 43,7 years (Statistik Hessen, 2016). The period of analysis for Hessen ranges from 2003 to 2017.

The Hessian G8-reform applied to *Gymnasium* and *Gemeinschaftsschule*. Since 2014, schools can choose if they offer G8, G9 or a parallel track of G8 and G9. The following institutions were entrusted with its implementation: the Hessian ministry of education, the 15 local school supervisory authorities, the schools boards, the school conferences, the school directors and subject conferences. Additionally, the *Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung* and the *Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie* contributed to the reform. The modification of hour boards took place through the ministry at the outset of the reform. An adaptation of curricula occurred in delayed in 2008 and more extensively in 2011, next to other correcting measures such as the "11-point-plan" and the employment of significantly more teachers. Regarding the availability of resources, Hessen's expenses for the *Gymnasium* were continuously rising. After the initial implementation of G8, more teachers were employed. Civil servants in the educations sector benefitted from a payment increase by 33% over time. The expansion of full-day profiles for G8-*Gymnasien* was extensive, which marks the lion share of investment into infrastructure.

For the Hessian CDU, the G8-reform had a negative effect even though it remained in government over the period of time and recently recovered in election results. The SPD gained voter

support, whereas the FDP dropped out of parliament. The implementation of G8 resulted in a resignation by a CDU minister of education. There were three CDU education ministers and two FDP education ministers in total. It can be assumed that the G8-reform in Hessen had an impact on voter behavior.

Even though they initially pushed the G8-reform, the CDU and FDP corrected their position towards the advocating for the freedom of election. All other parties voiced resentment against G8 and the freedom of election. This attitude is mirrored by the external stakeholders: parents, teachers, students and civil society initiatives wish for a full reversion of G8, whereas parts of the economy value the benefits of G8 (see ANNEX A, Federal State 2: Individual Analysis for Hessen).

5.4. Interim findings for Lower-Saxony

Lower-Saxony is a *Land* inhabited by 7,8 Million people in the North-West of Germany, neighboring the Netherlands (Portal Niedersachsen, n.d.). The close cooperation between Lower-Saxony and the Netherlands has been very successful (Läuffer, 2007). Lower-Saxony's economy is characterized through the automotive industry and agriculture (Portal Niedersachsen, n.d.). However, if judged against the BIP per person, Lower-Saxony's economy ranges on place ten out of 16 (Statista, 2015). Regarding the Lower-Saxonian's average age, it is at the level of the German average at 43,4 years (Landesamt für Statistik Niedersachsen, 2013). The period of analysis for Lower-Saxony encompasses the years 2004 to 2017.

At its outset, the G8-reform applied to the *Gymnasium* and was later extended to the *Gesamtschule*. The reform has been reverted to G9 for both the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule*. The hierarchy of implementing organizations encompasses: the Lower-Saxonian ministry for education, the four "Landesschulbehörden", the school boards, the school director and the school management, as well as the subject conferences. The modification of hour boards falls into the responsibility of the ministry of education. In order to make G8 more successful, the ministry initiated a belated purification and establishment of core curricula, established round tables to discuss amendments, employed more teachers and provided extra financial means. Besides the one-time investment of 2 Million € to facilitate G8, Lower-Saxony continuously invested into the education sector. Civil servants experienced a wage increase of 24%. The supply of teachers in Lower-Saxony has been critical as it could not be guaranteed during the G8-implementation and its reversion. Regarding the effect of the G8-reform on political consequences, the CDU has continuously lost voter support and eventually its share in the government coalition. Its former coalition partner FDP reached an ascent. The SPD evolved to the leading party and helped the Green party to secure a place in the government coalition. In Lower-Saxony, two resignations of education ministers were linked to the G8-reform. Whereas the CDU and FDP were initially proponents of the G8-reform, they adapted their position towards the freedom of election. The SPD, Greens and Lefts on the other hand opposed G8 and were able to enforce a return to G9. Concerning the

position of external stakeholders, Lower-Saxony is relatively differentiated: whereas only the students and the “Schulleitungsverband” arranged with G8 in an effort for stability, parents’, teachers’ and a people’s initiative advocated for the full reversion. The economy has no uniform opinion, but regards the return to G9 as problematic (see ANNEX A, Federal State 3: Individual Analysis for Lower-Saxony).

6. Analysis

The analysis is divided into the sub-items for both the level of goal achievement and level of resilience. For each sub-item, each federal state will be judged according to all aspects of the operationalization. After a return to the expectations (E1 to E6), the findings for each federal state will be compared with the expectations to determine if it must be affirmed or rejected. All references can be found in ANNEX B.

6.1. IV1- The level of goal achievement

6.1.1. Sub-item 1 – The level of complexity of actions

Sub-item 1 considered the changes of law and its implications for the policy design, as well as the involved organizations and their share in the implementation of the G8-reform. Concerning the change of law, all *Länder* have implemented the “5+3” model. A school experiment intended to test options for the further development of the school system was conducted in neither of them, which may have been advisable. Whereas G8 in Saarland exclusively affected the *Gymnasium*, Hessen introduced G8 for both the *Gymnasium* and *Gemeinschaftsschule* and Lower-Saxony expanded G8 from the *Gymnasium* to the *Gesamtschule* over time.

In light of the frequent criticism of the G8-reform, the Saarland introduced the most subtle changes and developed a freedom of choice between G8 at the *Gymnasium* and G9 at the *Gesamtschule* by giving both school forms an equal status. However, the freedom of choice between G8 and G9 is not available at the *Gymnasium*, where G8 remains the standard model. Parallel tracks of G8 and G9 are not offered. Contrastingly to this, the freedom of choice between G8 and G9 became the standard model in Hessen in 2013 and replaced the exclusive G8 at the *Gymnasium*. Lower-Saxony does not offer a freedom of choice and returned fully to G9 as the standard model, both at the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule*.

The institutional framework of all *Länder* is mostly similar: the respective ministries of education as the highest education authority establish the hour boards for all schools and provide teachers and their salaries. Due to its smallness, the Saarland misses the lower school supervisory

authorities, which form an additional interface between schools and ministry in Hessen and Lower-Saxony. In all *Länder* the districts are the school boards, which provide the schools with material costs and establish school development programs. In Hessen, this also encompasses the decision about a school's return to G8. At the lowest level of hierarchy are the school directors and subject conferences, which are mostly entrusted with the same tasks: establishing school internal curricula and distributing the school's budget.

The implementation of the two main tasks related to the G8-reform has been handled very differently across the *Länder*. In Saarland, the modification of hours boards and adaptation of curricula took place before the first schools started the G8-track. In Hessen, the modification of hour boards took place in a timely manner, but the adaptation of curricula occurred with a four-year delay. In Lower-Saxony, both tasks were executed with delay. Among the two tasks, the adaptation of curricula is the more extensive one and further differences in its execution can be found across the *Länder*: in Saarland, a newly established subject commission revised the curricula in conjunction with the ministry. The schools' subject conferences frame concrete guidelines for the lessons. In Hessen, two external organizations were entrusted with the establishment of the core curricula. In opposition to traditional curricula, Hessen adopted core curricula based on the achievement of a prescribed set of competences. Being passed mostly independent of content, the core curricula give the schools' subject conferences both the flexibility and burden of designing the detailed content. In Lower-Saxony, the competence-oriented core curricula are passed through the ministry of education, but similarly as in Hessen, it is the subject conferences' task to set up precise contents.

According to the first expectation (E1), it is assumed that the higher the complexity of actions during the implementation, the lower the level of goal achievement will be, which in turn positively affects the decision to revert the G8-reform.

The scope of law change was smallest in Saarland, as the G8 reform only targeted the *Gymnasium* throughout the period of analysis. In Hessen, the scope of the reform was broader, but occurred at the same time for the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule*. Lower-Saxony introduced the most complex changes in the scope of law, as the expansion of G8 to the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule* occurred staggered. The institutional framework for all *Länder* is largely the same. Even though the Saarland is missing an intermediate level, this can be expected to be rooted in its considerably smaller size, which makes the existence of a lower school supervisory authority redundant.

Concerning the implementation of the two tasks, the Saarland executed them least complex in the sense that all institutions had time to prepare for them parallel in one process. The Saarland implementation design might have required less extensive correcting measures than in Hessen and

Lower Saxony (see “Existence of correcting measures”). In Hessen, the adaptation of curricula occurred delayed, whereas Lower-Saxony executed both tasks with delay. Delays are typically assumed to cause more complexity, as they require a re-organization of the process and illustrate an increase in work load for the entities involved. In implementation theory, more delay during the implementation process results in deviations of the actual outcome from the desired outcome. The more and longer the delays, the stronger this effect will be (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1974). In Saarland, the modification of curricula imposed less additional work on teachers than in Hessen and Lower-Saxony. By giving teachers in Hessen and Lower-Saxony more flexibility, it is expected that the workload of these teachers increased, adding to the complexity of the implementation of the reform.

Derived from these findings, it seems that the proceedings in Saarland were least complex and most complex in Lower-Saxony. This supports E1, according to which it is expected that the G8-reform is least successful in Lower-Saxony.

6.1.2. Sub-item 2 – The level of availability of resources

The operationalization of sub-item 2 has been threefold: it examines the financial allocations for the education sector in the *Länder*’ budgets over time, traces the teacher supply and wage development of civil servants and explores the provision of infrastructure. In Saarland, the expenses for the *Gymnasium* budget rose by 18,1 % (from 80,452,600 to 98,162,900€) (see Table 2). Despite the financial crisis and Saarland’s tight budget, the education sector has not been affected by budget cuts. However, Saarland ranks lowest in terms of education spending when compared to the other *Länder*. During the implementation of G8 and major amendments, an increase in teachers could be noticed. The wage of civil servants rose considerably by 39%. When it comes to investments into infrastructure, the Saarland ranks among the lowest in Germany and did only one investment into infrastructure of the *Gymnasium* at the outset of the G8-reform. However, *Gymnasien* were provided with an additional investment of 760,000€ specifically linked to the G8-reform. In Hessen, the expenses for the *Gymnasium* rose by 18,4% (from 98,501,800 to 120,650,000€) between 2004 and 2013 (change in budget structure after 2013 - *Gymnasium* not contained any more”). It reached a high until 2008, followed by a gradual decrease in expenses since then. The supply of teachers in Hessen remained steady over the period of implementation. Only after 2010, an increase of teaching positions could be identified, which continues until today. The wage of civil servants experienced an increase of 33%. Information about the infrastructural investment could not be found in the budget, but it can be expected that the share of this budget increased: Hessen transformed most G8-*Gymnasien* into full-day schools, providing them with lunch facilities and free time activities. Hessen is the only *Land* in which the IZBB investment program, whose means are meant for the expansion of full-day schools, is explicitly linked to G8. In Lower-Saxony, the budgetary allocations for the *Gymnasium* in the period of 2007 until 2017 rose by

24,9% (from 656,503,303 to 873,768,000€). During the implementation period of G8 and its reversion, the supply of teachers could not be guaranteed and has recently sunk drastically. Civil servants' wages rose by 24%. Lower-Saxony undertook steady investments into the infrastructure of schools. Additionally, 2 Million € were provided for the amendments of G8. If expressed in the amount of money spend per student at the "Gymnasium", Hessen spends most and Saarland least.

According to E2 it is expected that a higher level of available resources leads to a better level of goal achievement, which in turn has a negative impact on the decision to revert the G8-reform.

In all three *Länder*, the expenses for the *Gymnasium* have risen over time. The highest increase occurred in Lower-Saxony, which stands in contradiction to the expectations of E2. The wages for civil servants have also experienced a steady growth. With the strongest increase in Saarland, this development would affirm E2. Saarland and Hessen provided more teachers in the crucial implementation period of G8, whereas Lower-Saxony started the G8-reform in times of shortage of teachers. The findings for Saarland and Hessen correspond to the expectations of E2. In terms of investments into infrastructure, Hessen and Lower-Saxony performed higher and more consistently than Saarland, rejecting E2. However, this finding must be mediated when taking into consideration the points of time in which the two crucial tasks to complement the G8-reform took place. The Saarland invested into *Gymnasien* at the time when the first G8 students started the *Gymnasium*, so it could be argued that a further G8-related investments over time were not required. Nevertheless, the Saarland's expenses for students at the *Gymnasium* are lowest among the three *Länder*.

Overall, a clear pattern which would confirm or reject E2 could not be identified. It must be taken into consideration that the level of available resources may not have had a direct influence on the level of goal achievement in the three *Länder* or that the limited availability and comparability of data influences these interpretations.

6.2. IV2- The level of resilience

6.2.1. Sub-item 3 – The existence of correcting measures

Sub-item 3 considers correcting measures which were taken to amend the original policy design in order to improve G8 over the period of analysis. The correcting measures across the three *Länder* vary according to the level of detail that the modification of hour boards and the adaptation of timetable took place at the outset of the reform. In Saarland, the correcting measures encompassed a further adaptation of the new G8-curricula with the help of a newly created *Lehrplankommission*. Furthermore, the A levels of *Gymnasium* and *Gesamtschule* were granted an equal status over time, providing students with the opportunity to opt for G8 or G9 at the different school forms. With a view to the future, an

expert commission was established to discuss further improvements for G8. In Hessen, an 11-point-plan for G8's improvement was passed, which contained an amendment of the curricula. The amendment of curricula was not lasting, as Hessen introduced the concept of core curricula three years later. The introduction of core curricula required a renewed adaptation of contents taught to students, which occurs in a very decentralized manner by transferring the decision about content to the individual schools. Hessen provided additional teachers and increased the expenditure for study materials. Even though this "correcting measure" crosses over with the availability of resources, it must be mentioned here as well, as it is a sign for an assumed learning process of policy-makers. Furthermore, the decision to grant the *Gesamtschulen* the freedom of choice earlier than the *Gymnasien* may be seen as an effort to improve the offer for students and help to sustain the G8-model. In Lower-Saxony, a round table of stakeholders was established in order to discuss G8-related improvements, such as the belated purification of curricula, the employment of more teachers and the extension of full-day tracks.

Following the expectations of E3, it is assumed that more and better correcting measures will increase the likelihood of a high level of resilience, which in turn negatively affects the decision to revert the G8-reform.

Correcting measures have occurred in all three *Länder* under analysis. However, there are considerable differences in the scope of these correcting measures, which might be related to the initial execution of the adaptation of hour boards and curricula. Consequently, the correcting measures in Saarland build on the further improvement of hour boards and curricula. It also extended the freedom of choice by improving the permeability between two already existing school forms. In Hessen, the correcting measures were more extensive, as the establishment of core curricula fell into this remit as well as the partly reversion of G8 for the *Gesamtschulen*. In Lower-Saxony, the correcting measures were most extensive, as they encompassed the executions of the two tasks, which were expected to take place at the outset of the G8-reform. The additional employment of teachers may be viewed as the effort to mend an ill which would have caused difficulties regardless of the G8-reform.

In conjunction with the level of complexity of actions, it appears that the Saarland possessed the best policy design for G8. This finding would speak in favor of E3, which expects Saarland to have the most successful and Lower-Saxony to have an unsuccessful G8-reform.

6.2.2. Sub-item 4 – The direction of political consequences

Sub-item 4 examined the voter support for the implementing or reverting parties of G8 over the respective periods of analysis. In Saarland, the CDU's voter support dropped after the G8-reform, but the party managed to maintain its pole position and remain the leading part of the government coalition.

Parallel to the CDU's decline, the SPD increased its voter support. FDP and Greens reigned alongside the CDU but are not represented in parliament anymore. In Hessen, the CDU's voter support also dropped significantly as a consequence of the G8-reform, but the party remained part of the government coalitions. At the same time, the SPD caught up in results, whereas support for the FDP decreased heavily. In Lower-Saxony, the G8-implementing CDU continuously dropped in voter support and lost its position as part of the government. The SPD rose up to the leading party in 2013 and consequently decided the return to G9. The smaller parties FDP and Greens could record increases as well.

Derived from the reviewed theory, E4 proposes that negative political consequences for the political parties decrease the level of resilience, which in turn has a positive effect on the decision to revert the G8-reform.

In all three *Länder*, the initiating party of G8 was the CDU. In Saarland, the CDU dropped in voter support, but remained the leading party. The same is true for Hessen, even though the result of the first elections after the G8-reform illustrated a bigger disaster for the Hessen CDU than for the Saarland CDU. This results corresponds to the CDU's introduction of the freedom of choice between G8 and G9 at the *Gymnasium*, which may be seen as a shift in position towards the wishes of the voters. In Lower-Saxony, the CDU remained the strongest party in percentages, but could not form a coalition with its subsequent partners anymore. This development allowed the SPD to pave the way for the reversion of the G8-reform.

Relating these findings to E4 results in a differentiated picture: on the one hand, the G8-reform helped none of the *Länder*- level CDU parties to improve their position. Therefore, E4 would have to be rejected. On the other hand, Lower-Saxony is the only *Land* in which the CDU could not secure its place in government. This finding would correspond with E4, expecting that Saarland has the most successful reform and Lower-Saxony the least successful G8-reform.

Overall it can therefore be concluded that a negative direction of political consequences has an impact on the long-term success of a reform, which confirms E4.

6.2.3. Sub-item 5 – The frequency of changes in political leadership

Sub-item 5 regards the amount of times that the position of the education minister has rotated in the *Länder* and if resignations from this position were rooted in the G8-reform. In Saarland, the minister of education changed four times. None of the resignations could be linked to the G8-reform. The course of amending G8 was kept by all education ministers, even though a slight tendency towards discussions about the freedom of elections occurred recently. In Hessen, the ministry of education was led by five different ministers. The first minister's resignation was explicitly linked to the G8-reform.

Whereas the second and third minister amended G8, the fourth one introduced the freedom of choice as the standard model from 2014 onwards. In Lower-Saxony, the resort of education politics was chaired by four different ministers, out of which the first two had to resign from office partly because of the G8-reform. Despite the amendments, the current minister of education decided the return to G9.

E5 expects that the number of changes in political leadership decrease the level of resilience, therefore having a positive effect on the decision to revert the G8-reform.

The frequency of changes was highest in Hessen and equal in Saarland and Lower-Saxony. When taking into account the different periods of analysis, the situation changes: in Saarland, the minister changed in average every 4,5 years (18 years of analysis), in Hessen every 2,8 years (14 years of analysis) and in Lower-Saxony every 3,3 years (13 years of analysis). According to the expectations of E5, the G8-reform in Hessen and Lower-Saxony would have to be more unsuccessful than in Saarland. This expectation corresponds to the empirical situation. When additionally taking into consideration the frequency in which resignations from the ministry of education were linked to the G8-reform, the expectation of E5 is strengthened once more: two out of four in Lower-Saxony, one out of five in Hessen and none out of four in Saarland.

Therefore, it seems that E5 can withstand the empirical findings.

6.2.4. Sub-item 6 – The alignment of stakeholder positions

The degree to which the stakeholder positions (sub-item 6) are aligned will be identified by examining the party positions towards G8 and how they have changed over time as well as that of external stakeholders.

In Saarland, the CDU has continuously advocated for G8. Whereas the FDP initially supported the modifications of G8, it is now in favor of the freedom of election. The SPD rejected G8 and also aims for the freedom of election, the Greens demand an alternative to G8 at the *Gesamtschule* and the Left party demands G9. At present, this leaves one party for an exclusive G8, two for the freedom of choice and one for the full reversion. When G8 was introduced, two parties were in favor (CDU, FDP, Greens) and two opposing (SPD, Left). The attitude towards an exclusive G8-track has therefore weakened, even though only one party wishes for a holistic return. Whereas the CDU could introduce G8 without the support of other parties, its pole position has weakened over time. Nevertheless, the CDU could defend its position against other parties in the framing of coalition agreements. The willingness of the other parties to compromise on the issue of G8 might correlate to the position of external stakeholders. Whereas parents, teachers and students at first clearly opposed G8, their focus shifted towards a quality improvement of G8 over time. The civil society movement “G9 jetzt!” is the

only stakeholder to advocate for a full return to G8. It can be concluded that the majority of stakeholders were critical of the G8-reform at its outset. Whereas this attitude does not imply a widely supported introduction of G8, G8 found acceptance in the meantime, which corresponds to the current state of the policy.

In Hessen, it was also the one-party government of the CDU which initiated the G8-reform. The CDU and its initial supporter, the FDP, adjusted their position towards the freedom of choice over the period of analysis. The Green party, being displeased with the G8-reform, supports the approach of freedom of election. The SPD and Left remain the only parties which reject both G8 and the freedom of choice and demand the full return to G9. When taking into consideration the development of other parties' positions and electoral outcomes, this might relate to the CDU's agreement to settle for a freedom of election. Regarding the position of external stakeholders, all of them advocate for a full return to G9 and reject the freedom of choice. The only exception are representatives of the economy, which hold a differentiated view on G8 and the freedom of election. In Hessen, the attitude of stakeholders was and is more negative towards G8 than the current state of the policy may suggest. The freedom of choice portrays a compromise between the strong parties in favour of G8 and the various "smaller" stakeholders which oppose it.

In Lower-Saxony, the changes around G8 have been most extensive, as it is the only German *Land* so far which has reverted G8 completely. Being initiated and amended by the CDU, its reversion fell into the responsibility of SPD, which enjoys the support of Greens and Left. The CDU and FDP, as the former sole advocates for G8, focus their efforts on the freedom of choice. The change in course of action in Lower-Saxony was largely linked to the replacement of the CDU with the SPD as ruling party. It might be possible that G8 could (partly) be maintained in Hessen and Lower-Saxony simply because the political ideas of the CDU remained prevalent. With regard to external stakeholders, all except for the students promoted a reversion of G8. It is remarkable that Lower-Saxony is the only *Land* in which the students, those who are most affected by the G8-reform, wished for the reforms' maintenance and improvement instead of reversion.

According to E6, it is expected that a better alignment of stakeholder positions increases the level of resilience and therefore has a negative impact on the decision to revert the G8-reform.

Regarding the position of parties, the following situation emerges: in all *Länder*, the CDU could implement the G8-reform due to its majority in the state federal parliaments. In all *Länder*, it did so mostly against the will of the other parties. In Saarland, the full reversion of G8, which would mark a failure of the reform, is only pursued by one party. Even though G8 prevails for the moment, the majority of parties could settle for freedom of election, marking the partial maintenance of G8. In Hessen, the

rejection of G8 and the freedom of choice is more elaborate- two parties demand it. A clear shift in attitude away from an exclusive G8 towards a freedom of choice could be identified. This shift mirrors the current state of the G8-reform in Hessen. In Lower-Saxony, all parties advocated for G9 except for CDU and FDP, who adapted their position towards the introduction of the freedom of election.

These findings leave a relatively uniform result: according to the number of parties, the advocates of G8 succumb to the advocates of G9 or the freedom of choice in all *Länder*. However, this neglects that the external stakeholders exert different degrees of influence over the policy outcome. This is most of all true for the dominant party in government.

The position of external stakeholders can be summed up as follows: in Saarland, most external stakeholders have accepted G8 and aim for its improvement. In Hessen and Lower-Saxony, external stakeholders favor a return to G9.

In Saarland, both the positions of the parties as well as the opinion of the external stakeholders largely correspond to the development of the legal situation. The alignment of stakeholder positions seemed to be good over the period of analysis. In Hessen, the attitude of stakeholders towards G8 is more negative than the current state of the policy might suggest: following the stakeholders, G8 should have been completely reverted in Hessen. The alignment of stakeholder positions has been improved over time. In Lower-Saxony, the current policy state mirrors the position of most stakeholders. It seems that the CDU implemented G8 as opposed to the majority will of stakeholders. This approach backfired, resulting in very bad alignment of stakeholder positions prior to the reform and therefore in a failure of the reform.

Although the alignment of stakeholder positions has been determined rather roughly, the findings seem to confirm H6.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary

The present thesis centers around the implementation of public sector reforms. In this context, the G8-reform as a public sector reform had been selected for the conduction of a comparative case study of the three German *Länder* Saarland, Hessen and Lower-Saxony. By tracing the implementation process of the G8-reform, which reduced the amount of secondary academic education at the *Gymnasium*, it was hoped to identify the determinants of success for the implementation of public sector reforms across the three *Länder* and explain why the outcome of the G8-reform varied across them. The

overarching research question reads as follows: “Which factors explain the decision to revert the G8-reforms from the years 2001 to 2007 in three German federal states?”.

To understand the proceedings of the G8-reform, it is important to shed light on the overall context which education reforms in Germany take place in. The German education politics are characterized by the strict division of tasks between *Bund* and *Länder*, resulting in a phenomena known as *Bildungsföderalismus*. This structure is critically reviewed as impeding the development of the overall German education sector. In order to achieve a minimum of comparability between the *Länder*, actors such as the KMK emerged and take an important share in the further framing of education politics in Germany. By doing so, they indirectly influence the G8-reform. The G8-reform is regarded as rooted in the PISA-results. The significance of this study is expressed in the wave of reforms which it incited. Indeed, it is questionable if the importance of PISA is overrated and does not justify a reform so extensive in scope. As the most decisive unexpected turbulence during the time of implementation, the financial crisis increased expenses for the *Länder* and decreased revenue, leading to an additional tightening of already tight *Länder* budgets. Despite the critical condition, the *Länder* did not lower their expenses for education. This development can be regarded as remarkable, as it seems that all *Länder* assign a big importance to the education sector.

In order to find an answer to this main research question, it must first be determined to which extent the G8-reform was successfully implemented in the individual *Länder* according to goal achievement and resilience (SQ2). The findings suggest that the reform has been a success in Saarland, a partial success in Hessen and a failure in Lower-Saxony. Whereas the level of goal achievement is expected to be the same for all federal states, the level of resilience varies heavily among the *Länder*, leading to their evaluation as successful or not and providing an answer to SQ2.

In this thesis, it is assumed that a reform is successful if it achieves its initial goals and is resilient. The level of goal achievement and level of resilience are therefore the decisive factors for successful reform implementation. Goal achievement has been further specified into the complexity of actions and the availability of resources, whereas the level of resilience encompasses the existence of correcting measures, the direction of political consequences, the frequency of change in political leadership and the alignment of stakeholder positions.

The expectations tested in the thesis assume that a lower complexity of actions and a higher availability of resources will have a positive impact on the level of goal achievement and therefore weaken the decision to revert the G8-reform. Regarding the level of resilience, it is expected that it is enhanced by the existence of correcting measures on the policy design, a positive direction of political consequences, a low frequency of change in political leadership and a good alignment of stakeholder positions, therefore weakening the decision to revert the G8-reform. Given the different status of the

G8-reform in the selected *Länder*, the G8-reform proved as a suitable unit of analysis to test these expectations. Therefore, the expected determinants of success for public sector reforms could be evaluated for each *Land* to determine if the fulfillment of these determinants explains the respective outcome of the reform in the *Länder*. By assessing the extent to which these success factors are present in the individual *Länder*, an answer to SQ3 was provided.

The empirical findings from Saarland, Hessen and Lower-Saxony affirm five out of the six expectations according to the operationalization. Lower-Saxony, as the only *Land* which reverted the reform holistically, had the highest complexity of actions and therefore the most complex correcting measures and the most negative political consequences for the CDU as the G8-initiating party. Together with Hessen, it scored high on the frequency of change of political leadership. Stakeholders in Lower-Saxony demanded the return to G9, which was eventually granted. The students from Lower-Saxony formed a remarkable exception: as the stakeholders which are most affected by the reform, they voiced support for a maintenance of G8 on order to avoid too frequent changes in the school structure. The neglect of this wish by policy-makers might be rooted in several reasons: when taking the amount of organizations advocating for a return to G9, the voice of the students might simply be overridden even though they have a permanent representation at the ministry of culture (§168 (1) NSchG) and must be consulted in all issues relating to the school system which directly affects them (§170 (3) NSchG). Furthermore, the will of the parents for decisions about G8 and G9 might be of more relevance for the parties, as parents have the right to vote and students not yet. Opposed to Lower-Saxony, the Saarland performed well on the above-mentioned criteria, whereas Hessen achieved mixed results. In terms of availability of resources, the empirical findings did not affirm the expectations completely: whereas the supply of teachers and increase of civil servants corresponds to the result that Saarland has the most successful G8-reform, the findings about the developments of the “Gymnasium” budget and number of investments for infrastructure would speak for a higher success of G8 in Hessen and Lower-Saxony. These findings may imply that either the availability of resources is not a decisive factor for the implementation of reforms, which seems unlikely regarding empirical evidence of other studies in this domain, or that a further differentiation in the types of resources must take place. The result may also be influenced by the limited availability of data and comparability.

The six determinants of success have been derived from a theoretical framework which considers the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1974), Wallner (2008), McConnell (2010) and Rainey (2015). How do the above-mentioned results contribute to the theory? As five out of six determinants are affirmed as decisive by this thesis’ results, the theory’s which have been tested can be (mostly) affirmed. Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) contributed the most extensive theoretical insights. Their assumption that the devil lies in the detail has been affirmed in this research by illustrating which impact the complexity of actions and scope of correcting measures has on the success chances of G8. The

alignment of stakeholders positions has not only been featured in the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1974), but also by McConnell (2010) and Wallner (2008). McConnell's assumptions about the negative effect of frequent changes in leadership and a negative political consequences have also been affirmed in this thesis. Being featured by Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) and McConnell (2010), a high availability of resources could not be proven to increase the success chances and maintenance of G8. Even though the theory-testing has failed for this sub-item, it must be borne in mind that the thesis has methodological limitations and partly affirms the expectations (E2). Therefore, it must not be concluded that the theory of previous researchers is rejected. Instead, it would be desirable to cast a closer look on the availability of resources.

Based on the cross-case analysis of Saarland, Hessen and Lower-Saxony, an answer to SQ4 "Do these factors explain the reversion of the G8-reform in practice?" can be proposed. As the empirical findings correspond mostly to the theoretical expectations, it can be assumed that the level of goal achievement and level of resilience as well as their respective sub-items are the decisive factors of successful public reform implementation. However, some sacrifices have to be made: not all of the analyzed determinants of success might have the same impact on the decision to revert the reform. This indicates an avenue for further research, which could examine if the presence of one factor might override the others in their importance. Reflecting on the theoretical framework, the "alignment of stakeholder positions" has been the most frequently featured determinant of success across the work of all scholars. Therefore, it could be explored if the alignment of stakeholder position ranks higher in priority as the other determinants of success. For a better answer to SQ4, the G8-reform must once more be considered in its overall context. Being a measure of education politics, a full explanation of the phenomenon must go beyond the implementation perspective. Particularly the pedagogical components in the design of the reform are expected to provide further explanations. In conjunction with the implementation perspective, an interdisciplinary approach to G8 could provide a more elaborate explanation about the success of educational reforms and therefore facilitate the lives of those affected by it.

By answering the main research question, the thesis has to a certain extent filled the knowledge gap concerning research about the G8-reform, as it added the context and implementation framework to the research about the effects of the G8-reform and pedagogical assumptions.

7.2. Reflection

Even though an answer to the main research question of the present thesis could be provided, the study comes along with several limitations, which will be examined in this paragraph. Lastly, more possible avenues for further research will be indicated.

As indicated in the Chapter 3, the research design is connected to three threats: a bias in the case selection, a limited generalizability and the inability to establish a causal relationship. Derived from these threats and the experiences during the research, four limitations of the study results can be identified. Firstly, whereas the researcher bias while selecting the cases can be effectively countered, another threat related to case selection emerged during the conduction of the study: the limited availability of data. Whereas information for most independent variables could be retrieved from the sources described in Chapter 3, the data for the availability of resources was in some instances inadequate. For example, the budgetary plans of Lower-Saxony are not available prior to 2007. Moreover, the different structures of the *Länders'* budget plans and different designations for budget items impeded the comparability of results. Depending on the *Land*, expenditure categories such as “expenses for Gymnasium” also encompassed other academic secondary institutions or sub-forms or varied over the period of analysis.

Secondly, as described in Chapter 3, the generalizability of the results is very limited. Whereas a generalization to the broader population, meaning the remaining G8-implementing *Länder*, or to the implementation of other public sector reforms is excluded, this thesis focuses rather on the transferability of theory. The findings of the cross-case analysis mostly correspond to existing theories and are an indication for the validity of these success factors in the context of high school education politics for the G8-reform. However, this finding does not imply that the success factors are decisive for reforms in all policy fields. It might be possible that the relevance of success factors varies according to the policy field, which makes studies about the implementation of reforms in other policy fields an interesting avenue for further research.

Thirdly, the use of qualitative data impedes on the ability to establish causal relationships, in particular to rule out spuriousness. Ruling out spuriousness cannot be fully established in the present thesis. For example, the education politics may have been a decisive factor in the election outcomes, but other policy fields may have had more influence. This limitation applies similarly to all other independent variables. A fourth area leaving room for improvement is the rough determination of benchmarks in the comparison between the *Länder*. The operationalization of the determinants of success as well as success and failure itself may also have influenced the results. In particular, the lack of unambiguous studies determined the level of goal achievement rather roughly.

These limitations of the thesis' findings are connected to the use of qualitative data. Nevertheless, the use of qualitative data proved as a suitable way to answer the main research question in the scope of the present thesis. The suitability of qualitative data is mostly rooted in the possibility to fill “gaps” between data. For example, the election outcome of the regional elections for the several involved parties could be traced based on the percentages provided by the official statistical databases.

In order to find out why the election results developed in that manner, the use of qualitative data was desirable. The same applied for the frequency of changes in political leadership. Whereas the frequency can be determined by a number, the research question could not have been answered without taking into consideration the justifications for the reform, which are not available in statistical databases. Even though the increase of budgets, wages of civil servants, numbers of teachers and investments can be determined in numerical means, only the additional use of qualitative data can uncover if the development is linked to reforms such as G8. The same logic applies for the remaining variables and illustrates that a combination of different types of data was needed to answer the research question, giving an example for the conjunction of qualitative and quantitative data.

Rooted in the research difficulties due to a lack of sufficient data, this thesis suggests avenues for further research. When determining the level of goal achievement of the G8-reform, it was found that the research focuses rather on the side-effects of the reforms than on the actual achievement of the goals. Furthermore, there are no studies which examine all the *Länder* in comparison, making it difficult to state if the effects of the G8-reform occurred German-wide or federal-state specific. Future research in this domain would facilitate it to determine the status of the current reform in the *Länder* and to identify if the importance of the success factors outweighs on goal achievement and/or resilience.

Regarding the implementation perspective itself, a further avenue for research could be the comparison of the newly implemented G8-models with the successful models in Saxony and Thuringia. Out of the determinants of successful reform implementation, only the policy design and availability of resources could be compared in terms of weekly given hours, the availability of teachers and full-day schooling tracks. A research about the comparison of the formerly Western *Länder* with Saxony and Thuringia might be able to enhance or weaken the expectations about policy design and resources, therefore allowing for a stronger or weaker exploration of the other determinants for success. After all, the unsuitability of the policy design was the central and most frequently voiced critique from G8-opponents. Regarding avenues for further research which build directly on the findings of the present thesis, several options are conceivable. The research could be expanded to encompass the whole population of *Länder*, which would increase the extent to which the findings can be generalized. In order to retrieve even more detailed information, the pool of sources could be supplemented by interviews with stake holders, as they are mentioned in the exploration of sub-item 6. Moreover, clearer concepts for the operationalization could be established, eventually allowing for a statistical analysis of the connections between independent and dependent variable.

As a final statement to this research, it shall be noted that the implementation of public sector reforms is a complex endeavor. In order to make the public sector a successful provider of services to the citizens, the “art of implementation” must be mastered. It therefore remains of vital importance to

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complement the theories by Pressman and Wildavsky (1974), Wallner (2008), McConnell (2010) and Rainey (2015) by further studies.

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[art=F¶mfromHL=true#ivz14](http://www.nds-voris.de/jportal/portal/t/ba2/page/bsvorisprod.psml?doc.hl=1&doc.id=VVND-VVND000035840&documentnumber=1&numberofresults=11&doctyp=vvnd&showdoccase=1&doc.part=F¶mfromHL=true#ivz14) on 30th June 2017.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1. An overview of stud findings about the effects of the G8-reform

Criteria	Measurement	Finding
Quality of education	in average grades	abilities vary according to subject between G8 and G9 (Trautwein et al., 2015)
	in GPA results	minor differences in favour of G8 or G9 (Kühn, 2013)
	number of grade retentions	no significant difference between G8 and G9 (Trautwein et al., 2015)
		increased grade retention and lower performance in SLI in both G8 and G9 between 2002 and 2013 (Huebener & Marcus, 2015)
		increase for G8 and G9 (Anger et al., 2014)
Number of A-level graduates	amount of students	stable numbers across G8 and G9 (Huebener & Marcus, 2015)
Effect on higher education	enrolment rates, dropout rates, changes in mayor	all higher under G8 (Marcus & Zamber, 2016)
Well-being	stress and health	higher stress levels and more health issues for G8 students (Trautwein et al. 2015; Meyer & Thomsen, 2015; Milde-Busch et al. 2010; Marcues & Huebener 2015)
Leisure time activities		G8 students have less time for leisure activities (Milde-Busch et al., 2010)
		small differences between G8 and G9 when it comes to informal activities (meeting friends, watching TV) (Trautwein et al., 2015)
		no differences in voluntary commitment, sports and instruments (Trautwein et al., 2015)
		G8-students less time for side job (Marcus & Huebener, 2015)

		decrease of informal leisure time activities and increase of formal activities for both G8 and G9 (Hille et al. 2013)
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APPENDIX B

Federal State 1: Individual analysis for Saarland

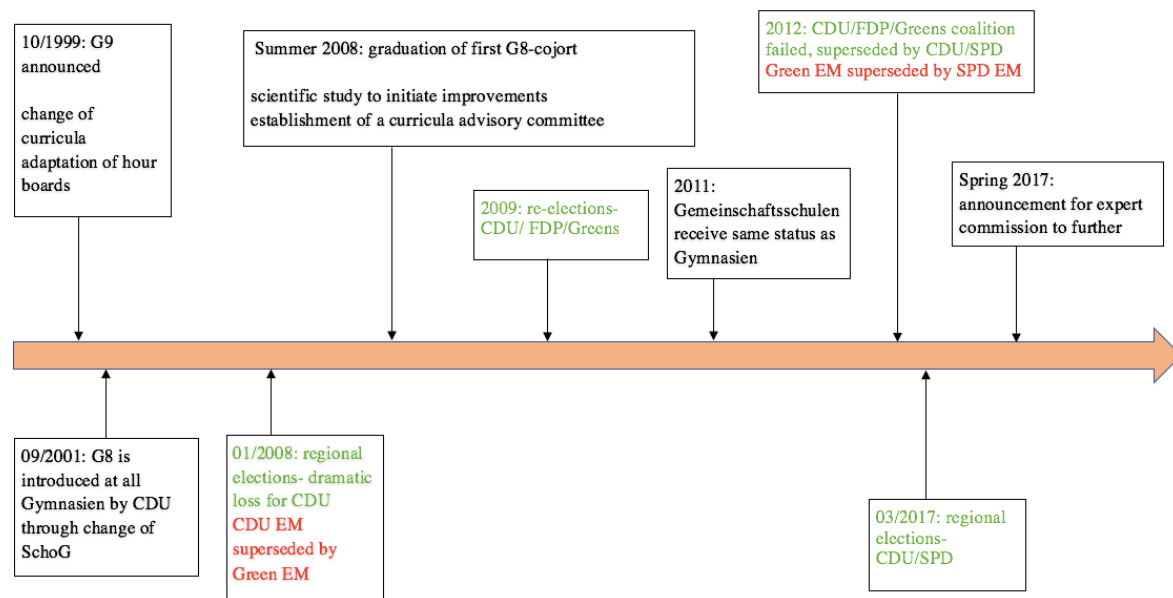


Figure 1. Implementation of the G8-reform in Saarland over time

1.The level of complexity of actions

1.1.Change in law for the G8-reform

At the beginning of the G8-reform was a CDU initiated change in the “Schulordnungsgesetz” (SchoG and SchumG), limiting *Gymnasium*-education to eight years from September 2001 onwards (§3a (4) SchoG), whereas the obtainment of the A-levels at the *Gemeinschaftsschule* remains nine years (§3 a(2)). This provision gives students the freedom to choose between G8 and G9. When deciding for G8, the possibility of a parallel track was excluded (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). Prior to the passing, parents, teachers and students were heard by parliament (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008) and the conduction of a school experiment (§5SchoG) to test G8 was excluded due to the pool of experiments about the reduction of school duration and the 8-year conduction of the experiment. Regarding the concrete design of the reform, Saarland opted for the “5+3” model (Köller, 2017).

1.2. The implementing organizations and their tasks

The Saarland Ministry for Education is the highest education authority (*Schulaufsichtsbehörde*) and in charge of the structural design of the school system, the education of teachers and the their personnel expenditure (§41 SchoG) (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur, n.d.). Saarland is subdivided into six school regions, within which the school boards are an interface between schools and the ministry (§2 (3) SchoG; Saarland Ministerium der Justiz, n.d.). The school boards (*Schulträger*) are the respective municipal associations (§38 SchoG) and provide the schools with the material costs (§16 (2) SchoG), facilities (§ 44,45 SchoG) and extra educational civil servants (§45 (3) SchoG). Subordinate to the school boards, the school director manages the provided financial means and establishes the timetables (§16 (2) SchumG).

The adaptation of the curricula and the modification of hour boards were prepared in the two-year period between the announcement and implementation by setting up two extra commissions with external stakeholders (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008).

The adaptation of curricula focused on a purification, as the G9-curricula were in their scope deemed unsuitable for G8 (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). It was in a newly created subject commission's responsibility to consult the subject conferences of all *Gymnasien* to adopt new curricula. The subject conferences encompass teachers which teach the same subject, students' and parents' representatives and therefore includes many stakeholders (§15SchumG). Until February 2001, the new curricula for grade five were present, giving the commission time to update the curricula for the other grades while the schools commenced with G8 (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). The modification of hour boards relocated the number of weekly taught tuition hours as follows: 30 in grade 5 and 6, 32 in grade 7 and 8, 34 in grades nine to 12, which means a steady rise over the years and a maximum of four hours afternoon lessons from grade nine onwards (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). To steal the thunder from critics, the ministry emphasized that 30+ weekly hours used to be the norm in the past (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008).

2. The availability of resources

The Saarland's public budget close is one of the tightest in Germany, bringing it close to insolvency and resulting in a public deficit of 14,948 € per person (Brautmeier, 2013). It is expected that the Saarland cannot invest significantly in education (Brautmeier, 2013), which is affirmed by a glance at its education budget. Even though the expenses for the *Gymnasium* rose among 18,1% over the period of analysis, the Saarland is among the *Länder* which spend least money on education per

child (see table 2). In Germany-wide comparison, the Saarland spends 7,400 € per child at the *Gymnasium* (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017).

Until 2009, the number of school personnel rose among 251 teachers, which corresponds to the announcement to employ more teachers during the implementation (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). Subsequently, new employments decreased but are still significantly higher than 1999. Since 2008, the number of *Gymnasium*-students decreased among 6000, which might have triggered the decline in teachers from 2010 onwards (Saarland Statistik, 2017).

Employees in the implementing organizations and at schools are civil servants (§27, §41 SchoG). As such, they are reimbursed according to the official wage table (*Besoldungstabelle*) (§41 (1) SchoG). From 2001 until 2017, wages rose constantly, with a current gross salary of 5059€ for A13, 6196€ for A15 and 6887€ for A16 (Öffentlicher Dienst info, 2017a). The increase per year amounts between 0,3% and 3,3%, amounting to an increase of 39% in total (Öffentlicher Dienst info, n.d.a) (see Appendix “Table 2”). What is remarkable about Saarland is the steady increase of educational means despite a declining number of students. In the coalition program of 2012 to 2017 it was stated that demographic rent (“demographische Rendite”) will be left in the education system, leading to an over proportional share of the education budget in the overall budget (CDU Saar & Saarland SPD, 2012).

The availability of infrastructure, such as canteens, leisure areas and homework tutoring, is of particular importance for G8-schools as the compression of teaching hours leads to longer school days. In 2001, more than 1Mio € were provided for infrastructure and another 52,000 in 2005. However, these were the sole infrastructural investments. The 2001 investment corresponds to a special investment program of 760,000€ for the introduction of G8 to provide canteens and extra rooms (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008).

The G8-*Gymnasien* were not automatically transformed into full-day schools (Saarland Ministerium für Bildung, Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008). Even though the Saarland received an amount of 49,036,422€ by the IZBB (investment program for education and care) for the voluntary development of full-track schools, it cannot be derived that the financial means were used for the improvement of G8, as the accompanying report establishes no link to G8 (IZBB, 2010a).

Table 2. Available resources in Saarland from 2001 until 2017 according to the budget plan

Year	Overall expenditure for “Gymnasium” in €	school personnel (directors and teachers) in numbers	salaries of the school personnel in €	investment expenses to improve the infrastructure in €
2001	80,452,600	1,473	71,324,500	1,022,600
2002	81,427,700	1,479	73,536,400	0
2003	83,318,900	1,578	72,252,100	0
2004	83,526,900	1,597	75,412,200	0
2005	86,704,400	1,614	77,412,800	52,000
2006	86,092,800	1,629	77,614,800	0
2007	85,852,200	1,650	77,398,600	0
2008	86,308,000	1,703	77,865,500	0
2009	88,359,700	1,726	79,248,700	0
2010	90,059,300	1,682	80,789,000	0
2011	89,466,000	1,662	79,800,000	0
2012	90,672,300	1,647	80,958,400	0
2013	93,266,900	1,646	83,105,500	0
2014	95,452,500	1,646	84,917,000	0
2015	95,550,800	1,638	84,789,600	0
2016	97,047,500	1,637	85,859,800	0
2017	98,162,900	1,629	86,707,200	0

3. The existence of correcting measures

After the first G8-cohort graduation 2008, a scientific study by the “Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung” found that another revision of curricula and a better implementation of the curricula at schools directly were needed, implying the success of G8 might be school-specific. Consequently, a curriculum advisory committee (*Lehrplanbeirat*) was established to renew the curricula (CDU Saar, 2009).

The shift from the *Gymnasium* to the *Gemeinschaftsschule* was facilitated to give students a choice between G8 and G9 and in 2011, the A levels at the *Gemeinschaftsschule* received an equal status to the *Gymnasium*-degree (CDU Saar, 2012a; Landesregierung Saarland, n.d.). Following the reemerged G8-debate in 2017, it was announced that once again an expert commission of stakeholders will advise policy-makers on future G8-modifications (CDU Saar & Saarland SPD, 2017).

4. The direction of political consequences

The G8-reform was announced in October 1999, one month after the CDU won the state parliament elections with an absolute majority, only 1,1 % ahead of the SPD (Tagesschau, 2009a). Over the period of analysis, the CDU lost its ability to form a one-party government in 2009 when electoral support decreased to 34,5%, but remains the leading part in the subsequent CDU-FDP-Greens coalition and current CDU-SPD coalition (Tagesschau, 1999). The coalition contract of CDU, FDP and Greens contained a clear commitment to G8. Reasoned in a decreased efficiency of the FDP, the CDU-FDP-Green coalition was declared as failed in 2012 (Georgi, 2012). The subsequent current CDU-SPD coalition agreement aims to appease the structural school debates by maintaining G8 with constant improvements. Since the last regional elections in March 2017, Greens and the FDP are not represented in parliament anymore, which is presumably rooted in the strong polarization of the elections that ignited voters to cast their vote for one of the traditional people's parties (Weiß, n.d.). The G8-debate resurged as the election date coincided with the decisions of other *Länder* to return to G8 (Tenta, 2017; Saarbrücker Zeitung, 2017a), but it was decided by CDU-SPD to maintain G8, although the CDU is the only party in Saarland's political system to advocate for this option (ZDF heute, 2017; Saarbrücker Zeitung, 2017a & 2017b).

5. The frequency of changes in political leadership

Over the period of analysis, education politics were guided by four education ministers. The resort was led by CDU politicians until 2008, followed by a minister stemming from the Green party and superseded in 2012 by a member from the social democratic party SPD. The initial implementation of G8 fell therefore mostly in the responsibility of the CDU. None of the changes in offices was linked to the G8-reform: Schreier (CDU) resigned to become CDU chairman (CDU Fraktion im Landtag des Saarlandes, 2007), Kramp-Karrenbauer's (CDU) resignation was linked to the recast of ministers after the formation of the CDU-FDP-Greens-coalition (Staatskanzlei Saarland, 2017), Kessler (Greens) was dismissed of office due to the breaking apart of this coalition and Commerçon is still in office (Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland, 2017). In 2015, Commerçon emphasized that a freedom of choice exists through the *Gymnasien* and the *Gemeinschaftsschule* and that this model will be maintained to guarantee stability (Landesschülerversammlung des Saarlandes, 2015). With the approach of the regional elections in March 2017, Commerçon voiced support for the introduction of the freedom of choice at the *Gymnasium* (Wichmann, 2017).

6. The level of inclusion and alignment of stakeholder positions

6.1. Party positions

The CDU advocated for an introduction of G8 and for its maintenance. After its solo run in the G8-introduction, it has acknowledged the need of reform on the G8-reform and established the two-pillar-approach for students to opt for G8 or G9 (*Gymnasium/Gemeinschaftsschule*) until 2011 (Landtag des Saarlandes, 2011). This reform ended structural debates until the election campaign of 2017 (Landtag des Saarlandes, 2011), during which it became apparent that the G8-reform has an impact on the voter even though there were no direct political consequences for the CDU so far. The CDU wants uphold the two-pillar approach (CDU Saar, 2012b).

The FDP, as the CDU's former coalition partner, acknowledged the need for action regarding the G8-reform (FDP, Saar 2012). As they do not regard the delivered amendments as sufficient, the FDP advocates for a freedom of choice at the *Gymnasium* (Landtag des Saarlandes, 2015).

The SPD rejected the G8-reform from its outset onwards and advocates for a parallel track at the *Gymnasium*. It still emphasizes the need for stability and will, as long as the G8-structure remains in order, focus on quality debates rather than structural debates (Grüne Saar, 2014).

The Green party criticizes the side-effects that G8 had on its students (Grüne Saar, 2014). Nevertheless, as its first contribution in the government since the G8-reform, the Greens as party of the CDU-FDP-Green coalition held the opinion that the return to G9 was not an option (Kessler, 2015), inciting the Greens to focus on modifications of the G8-reform. They hold the position that a holistic return to G9 creates new problems, and therefore advocate for G9 at the *Gesamtschule* and G8 at the *Gymnasium*, therefore a very similar approach to the CDU (Grüne Saar, 2014).

The Left party has continuously voiced its rejection of G8 and requests the other parties to base their decisions on the citizens' initiative "G9-jetzt!". Given the current situation, they advocate for the introduction of electoral freedom (Saarbrückener Zeitung, 2017).

6.2. External Stakeholders

The „G9-jetzt!“-initiative started out from parents in 2014 and petitions for a return to G9. It initiated the parliament to debate G8/G9 again, but its wish was rejected in October (Landesschülerversammlung Saarland, 2015).

The position of the „Landesschülerversammlung“ (§65SchumG) shifted over time: until 2014, it promoted a return to G8. Upon the rejection of this plan, it now advocates for an improved quality of G8 to prevent that the school structure changes constantly (Landesschülerversammlung Saarland, 2015). Similarly to the LSV, the „Landeselternvertretung“ (§66SchumG), criticizes the "hasty" implementation of G8, but

decides to focus on a quality improvement after a return to G9 has been excluded (LEV Gymnasium, 2017).

The State Association of philologists (*Landesverband der Philologen*), VOS (*Vereinigung der Oberstudienräte der Gymnasien*), GEW and SLLV (*Saarländischer Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverband*) are the professional associations of *Gymnasium*-teachers. The SLLV rejects a renewed debate about the school structure and favors an improvement of the G9-track at *Gemeinschaftsschulen* (SR, 2017), whereas the VOS advocates for an improvement of the G8 at the *Gymnasium* (Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland, 2015). The state association of philologists rejected the debated introduction of freedom of choice as “one of the worst ideas that could be” (Wichmann, 2017). The GEW is not a supporter of G8 (Koch, 2011), but simultaneously warns about an overhasty re-introduction of G9 (SR, 2017). In total, the position of the teachers is similar to the LSV and LEV.

There exists no common statement of business representatives in the Saarland concerning G8. However, it is stated by the SPD, that the economy criticizes a lack of know-how and deeper knowledge of G8-students (SPD Saar, 2017).

The media refer to a generally less intensive debate about the reversion of G8 in the Saarland and highlight efforts to make G8 successful (sol, 2013).

Federal State 2: Individual analysis for Hessen

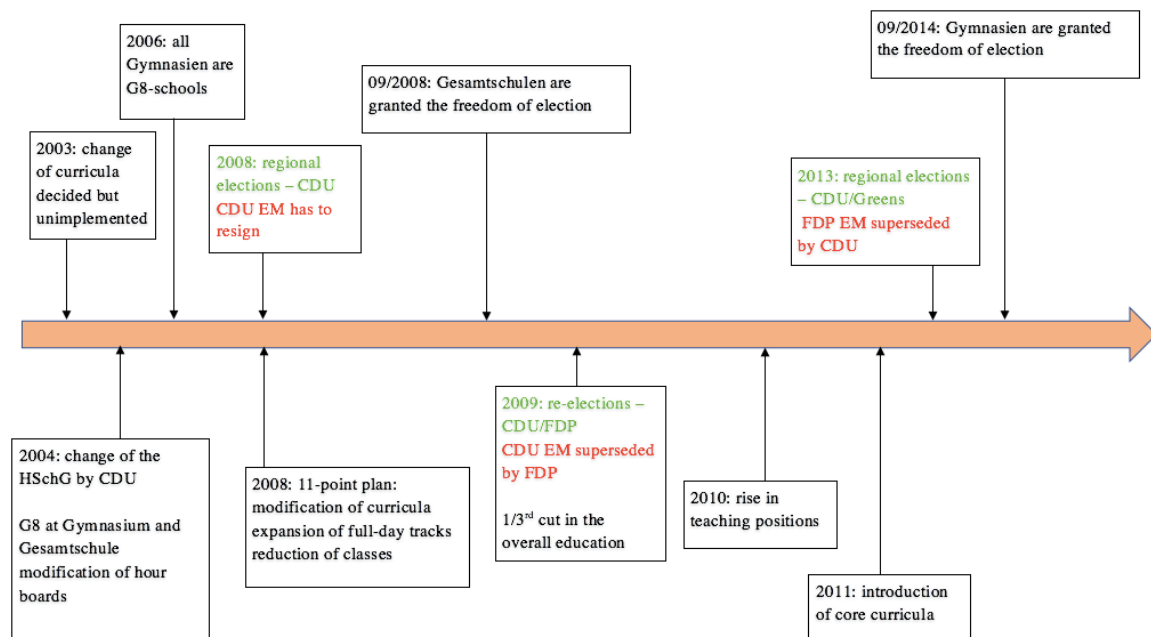


Figure 2. Implementation of the G8-reform in Hessen over time

1. The level of complexity of actions (IV1)

1.1. Change in law for the G8-reform

In 2004, the G8-reform commenced with a draft bill by the CDU to change the “Hessisches Schulgesetz” (HSchG) (Zitzler, 2015). The adapted HSchG extends to the *Gymnasium* and *Gesamtschule*, reducing both to eight years (§24(2), 25 HSchG of 2004). The change took place without the prior conduction of a school experiment (§14 HSchG). Hessen opted for the “5+3” implementation model (Zitzler, 2015).

The G8-implementation took place in consecutive steps. It started in 2005, giving schools until September 2006 to fully implement G8, giving the schools leeway according to their individual resources (Zitzler, 2015).

1.2. The implementing organizations and their tasks

The Hessian Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs is the highest education authority and responsible for the provision of providing structural guidelines, development of core curricula and education of teachers. It supervises 15 regionally subordinate local school supervisory authorities

(*Untere Schulaufsichtsbehörden*). Within these 15 regions, the school districts take over the role of the school boards as they supply the schools with material costs and establish school development plans for their regions (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2017). This also include the approval for a G8-reversion (Statatliche Schulämter in Hessen, 2017). The school director manages the assets provided to the school (§ 88 (3) 5 HSchG).

At its outset, the G8-reform was not linked to a change in curricula, even though the CDU-FDP coalition had passed a resolution to clear the curricula and create a flexible hour board for schools before the G8-implementation. The ministry failed to implement this resolution (Hessischer Landtag, 2008a), leaving the schools with the G9-curriculum (Hessisches Kultusministerium, n.d.). The eventual adaptation of curricula will be dealt with under “Existence of correcting measures”.

The modification of the hour boards takes place through the ministry. Grades five to nine are taught an average of 33 hours per week, grade 10 34 hours and grades eleven and 12 33 hours (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2012). Based on this hour board, the school director generate the school’s timetables (§88 (2) 2 HSchG). Resulting from the requirement to consult the school’s conference when drafting the timetables, it can be assumed that this burden is spread to the teachers. The design of time tables is a yearly reoccurring task. However, G8 led to an extension of school days and therefore may have complicated the establishment of timetables due to a shortage in facilities or increased working hours for teachers.

1.3. Change in law for the introduction of the freedom of election

Whereas the *Gesamtschulen* were granted the freedom to choose between G8 and G9 in 2008 (Hessisches Landesamt für geschichtliche Landeskunde, 2012), *Gymnasien* received this power in 2014 under the CDU-FDP coalition. The changes in the HSchG determine that *Gymnasium* and *Gesamtschule* range from grade five to grade 12 OR 13 (§24 (2), 25 (2) HSchG). The decision about a return to G9 is made by the school conference (newly added §24(3) HSchG), shall be based on the availability of human resources and infrastructure and framed as a school experiments (§14 HSchG) due to the organizational complexity (Hessisches Kultusministerium, n.d.). Before the school conference can make a decision, the parents’ and students’ association are obliged to agree about a reversion. Through these organs, teachers, parents and students are included in the process (Lorz, 2014). The reversion process therefore takes place in a bottom-up approach, whereas G8 had been imposed on schools through a top-down decision. Furthermore, the Hessian academy for teachers (*Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie*) is running a scientific study about the freedom of choice(Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie, 2017).

2. The availability of resources

Hessian's debt level per inhabitant amounts to 9155 € (Brautmeier, 2013). With this number, Hessen can be found midfield in a German-wide comparison (Burth & Gnädinger, 2016). This assessment is mirrored by the amount of money which Hessen spends per child at the *Gymnasium*: with 7.800 €, Hessen is among the top *Länder* (Blaeschke et al., 2017).

Despite Hessen's strong commitment to debt reduction, it has steadily invested into education (Hessisches Ministerium der Finanzen, 2016).

When looking at Hessen's education expenses, a continuous rise until 2009 can be found, when a significant cut of around 30% occurred. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, Hessen invested into infrastructure but neglected the education sector (Petermann, 2010). Until 2013, expenses were gradually rising again with a sudden jump from 1.500.000.000 € to 5.000.000€. The upward trend in educational expenses continues until 2017.

Expenses for the *Gymnasium* reached a high in 2008, but have been declining since (see Appendix "Table 3").

The amount of teachers varied heavily until 2010 (Hessisches Statistisches Landesamt, 2016). Afterwards, a steady increase of young teachers could be identified even though the amount of students decreased (Statistik Hessen, n.d.). This situation led to an assessment of the teacher-student-ratio as "never as good as today" in 2012 (Frankfurter Rundschau, 2012a). The increase of teaching positions and expenditure is linked to the expansion of full-day programs, which experienced a surge in popularity after the G8-reform (IZBB, 2010b). The variations in teaching numbers during the decisive implementation of G8 and growing number of students until 2010 may have had an effect on the smooth implementation of the reform, leading to tight schedules of teachers.

The growing allocation of financial resources may be interpreted as a sign for the increased importance of education politics despite tight budgets and situates Hessen above the average of education spending (IZBB, 2010b; Frankfurter Rundschau, 2014a). The lion share of the education budget is rooted in personnel expenditure, which increased by 2 Million Euros (see Appendix "Table 3"). This development is also grounded in the development of civil servants' wages. Wages were stable until 2008 and experienced a continuing growth. Between 2004 and 2017, the wages went up by 33% which translates into 4407€ for A13, 5516€ for A15 and 6137€ for A16 after six years of service (Öffentlicher Dienst info, 2017b) (see Appendix "Table 3"). The increase in payment for school directors was rooted in the increased demands for them (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2013b).

The development of infrastructure took predominantly place by expanding the full-day profile of schools since 2003 (KMK, 2015). This development started before the G8-reform, however, it led to an increased interest of the *Gymnasium* in the transformation into full-day (KMK, 2015). The extension of full-day services required a widening of infrastructure, provided by the *Bund* and Hessen (KMK, 2015). Support came mainly through the IZBB, which provided Hessen with 278 Million € (IZBB, 2010b). The IZZB report relates the expansion of full-day tracks to G8, for example by providing pedagogical lunchtime supervision from 2008 onwards as part of the 11-point plan (IZBB, 2010b). Even though G8 is related to the expansion of full-day tracks, this development must not be understood as a universal remedy for the G8-reform. G8-critics see a decisive difference between G8 and full-day schools: G8 led to an involuntary extension of the school day (Sportjugend Hessen, n.d.), whereas full-day tracks are typically an additional offer (IZBB, 2010b).

Table 3. Available resources in Hessen from 2003 until 2017 according to the budget plan

year	Overall expenses for schooling (vocational and general) in €	Expenditure for “Gymnasien” in €	Salaries of the school personnel in €	Investments into infrastructure (buildings) in €
2003	3,227,083,400	105,336,400	3,180,669,700	800,000
2004	3,181,086,100	98,501,800	3,134,298,100	500,000 (planned)/ 320,763 (spend)
2005	3,228,598,400	97,085,300	3,189,356,900	0
2006	3,274,222,700	111,668,500	3,234,097,800	0
2007	3,484,908,000	178,591,800	3,284,482,000	Not contained
2008	3,639,686,500	179,938,100	3,459,804,500	Not contained
2009	1,282,122,900	177,536,300	3,790,625,700	Not contained
2010	1,320,733,600	155,601,700	3,959,144,400	Not contained
2011	1,341,389,900	154,951,400	4,009,221,100	Not contained
2012	1,513,719,000	120,650,000	4,292,717,400	Not contained
2013	5,049,015,400	Not contained	4,423,385,300	Not contained
2014	5,064,958,900	Not contained	4,428,624,900	Not contained
2015	5,347,351,500	Not contained	4,681,870,200	Not contained
2016	5,251,675,500	Not contained	4,817,704,900	Not contained
2017	5,480,939,200	Not contained	5,014,115,500	Not contained.

Due to a restructuring of the budget plan, the expenditure for “Gymnasien” from 2013 onwards is not retrievable any more, as well as the investments into infrastructure for “Gymnasien” from 2007 onwards.

3. Existence of correcting measures

The first measure to improve G8 was the “11-point-plan” in 2008 (Warnecke, 2012), with a soft readjustment of curricula, reduction of class sizes and extension of full-time options (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2011). A more extensive revision of curricula started in 2011 for Sekundarstufe 1 and was continued in 2016 with Sekundarstufe 2 (Hessisches Kultusministerium, n.d.). In these years, the KMK nation-wide standards for education became effective. These standards replaced the curricula and are largely independent of content; instead, they focus on competences. Taking the KMK standards and the experience of G8 and G9 students as a guideline (§4 (1) HSchG), the *Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung* and the *Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie* developed core curricula. As the core curricula are framed independently of content, they are valid for both G8 and G9 (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2012). This regulation gives schools flexibility in the selection of content. Each schools’ subject conferences establish subject-specific curricula which are valid only at the individual school (§ 4(4) HSchG), imposing the lion share of curricula design on the teachers. The LEB (*Landeselternbeirat*, state parent advisory council) has to approve changes in the core curricula and school-specific curricula (Hessisches Kultusministerium, n.d.).

The flexibility in curricula may increase the burden of teachers: instead of providing them a fixed pattern, teachers were „left alone“ to develop the curriculum for G8 students. However, curricula adapt continuously to the level of knowledge. Therefore it cannot be said that the burden of revision was exclusively incited by the G8-reform. Additionally, the ministry further offered the provision of prime examples for curricula and provides consultants (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2012). Until 2013, a monitoring of results, additional help for the graduation classes and an intensified dialogue between ministries and schools, parents and students were planned (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2011). 2500 more teachers were employed (Kohler, 2012) and expenditure for study materials increased by 40% (CDU Hessen & FDP Hessen, 2009). These measures appeased the public opinion during the FDP-reign of the ministry of education (Zitzler, 2015). It incited the minister to announce the continuance of G8, particularly because the results of G8-students were at the same level as of the former G9-students (Hessischer Landtag, 2011; Hessischer Landtag, 2012).

4. The direction of political consequences

The CDU government which decided the introduction of G8 had been elected with the absolute majority of 48,8% in 2003 (Tagesschau, 2003a). In the 2008 elections, voter support for the CDU had dropped significantly: the CDU achieved 36,8%, only 0,1% ahead of the SPD (Tagesschau, 2008). In

the analysis, the education policy of the CDU was identified as a decisive factor. Many parents were traditional conservative voters, but put off by the G8-reform. Nevertheless, the CDU remained committed to G8 (Zitzler, 2015). Due to the unstable majority situation in the Hessian state government, the need for re-elections arose in 2009, in which the CDU extended its lead over the SPD and coalized with the FDP (Tagesschau, 2009b). Shortly before these elections in 2013, prime-minister Bouffier announced the freedom of choice for the 2014 (Frankfurter Neue Presse, 2012). This strategy of stealing thunder from the opposition parties and creating new coalition possibilities played out well (Warnecke, 2012), as the upward trend for the CDU continued (Zitzler, 2015). Opposing the CDU results, the former coalition partner FDP lost 10% and required the CDU to start a coalition with the Greens (Tagesschau, 2013a). This result mirrored the loss of the FDP at *Bundes*-level (Frankfurter Allgemeine, 2013). It cannot be linked to G8 as the FDP education minister appeased the public through reforms and implemented the freedom of election.

5. The frequency of changes in political leadership

Over the period of analysis, the ministry of education was led by five different ministers. Two CDU-ministers held the resort until 2009, followed by two FDP- ministers until 2014, which were in turn superseded by a CDU-minister. Whereas the G8-reform was decided by the CDU, the freedom of choice fell into the responsibility of the FDP. Out of the frequent changes in leadership, one was linked to the G8-reform: Wolff (CDU) had to step down from office after the election disaster in January 2008. At the time, 71% of survey respondents expressed disagreement with the Hessian education politics, out of which 39% attributed the SPD better competences in education than the CDU (Zitzler, 2015). The frequent change of her successors was rooted in the failure of a coalition and internal FDP-debates (Frankfurter Rundschau, 2012b). Whereas the G8-reform was pushed by CDU-minister-president Koch, his successor Bouffier (CDU) announced the freedom of choice in 2012 (Zitzler, 2015) for September 2013. At that time, 37% of Hessians named school and education politics as the biggest thematic problem in regional politics (Zitzler, 2015). Correcting the legal situation for a partly return to G9 also fell into the remits of the FDP.

6. The level of alignment of stakeholder positions

6.1. Party positions

The CDU committed itself to G8 from the passing of the law 2004 onwards (CDU-Landtagsfraktion Hessen, 2003). After realizing the need for improvement, the CDU initiated the introduction of core curricula and establishment of school specific curricula (Hessischer Landtag, 2008b). Prior to the elections in 2013, the CDU announced the freedom of election. In order to create

more stability in education politics, financial security for schools should be guaranteed despite declining student numbers. Decisions shall be made on a schools on a decentralized level (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2014).

At the beginning, the FDP supported the CDU (Hessischer Landtag, 2005), but adapted its position in 2007 by admitting that the G8-reform was not carefully executed. After the freedom of choice for the *Gemeinschaftsschule*, the FDP advocated the same concept for *Gymnasien*. It rejects a complete reversion as it would limit the diversity of the education system (Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2013b). The SPD rejected G8 from its outset. Before the reform, the SPD presented 74,000 signatures of an Anti-G8-alliance to parliament and accused the CDU of ignoring critical voices of external stakeholders. It also referred to a possible misinterpretation of the PISA-results, as a short school duration is not equivalent to a quality feature of education (Hessischer Landtag, 2004). In 2013, the SPD rejected the freedom of choice as an interim solution, as it would create a *Gymnasium* of 1st and 2nd class, and advocated for a full return to G9 with individual possibilities to shorten education (Hessenschau, 2013; Lorz, 2014). The Greens' attitude towards G8 has been critical. In 2008, they initiated the return to G8 for the *Gemeinschaftsschule* and demand the same for the *Gymnasium* (Grüne Hessen, 2012; Lorz, 2014). They opposed the implementation of the freedom of election, as there is no guarantee under law that each student can indeed attend a G9 secondary high school (Hessischer Landtag, 2013a). The Green party formed a coalition with the CDU under the condition the freedom of choice starts in grade 5, and not in grade 8, as suggested by the CDU (Lorz, 2014). The Left party was most critical: they positioned themselves against any reduction of school years and regard the full reversion as inevitable (Hessischer Landtag, 2008c).

6.2. External stakeholders

The two main influential external stakeholders in the legislative process of education politics are the LEB and the state students' representative body (Landesschülerversammlung, LSV). Their powers in the legislative process are constituted through the right of hearing, right to information and right of proposal against the Hessian ministry of education (Deutscher Bildungsserver, 2017; Kultusministerium Hessen, n.d.). Whereas the LEB interpreted the correcting measures as an acknowledgment that G8 needs reform, the adjustments could not convince parents (Landeselternbeirat von Hessen, 2012). Since the introduction of the freedom of election, the LEB and the LSV expressed disapproval of this solution as it would further disintegrate the school system and hinder mobility and permeability between the school forms (op online, 2012). Both organizations advocate for a full return to G9 with individual options for premature graduations (Hessische Kreis- und Stadt Elternbeiräte et al., 2012; Geis & Schwedes, n.d.).

The GEW as the teachers' association opposed the introduction of G8 with the argumentation that qualitative studying requires time (GEW Hessen, 2004). It subsequently rejected the freedom of

choice with the demand to return to G9 (GEW Hessen, 2017a). The freedom of choice is regarded as pretentious: it was introduced not for pedagogical reasons, but because of the approaching regional elections and merely relocates the problem to schools (GEW Hessen, 2012). The GEW regards the “parents” as the most prominent opponents of G8 (GEW, n.d.). In a declaration by the 2014 minister of education the decisive role of „the parents“ was also highlighted: the freedom of choice shall adapt the offerings of the schools according to the wills of the parents and therefore the needs of the students. The statement implies that the attitude of the parents towards G8/G9 is more important than the experiences of the children with G8/G9. The position of the “Vereinigung hessischer Unternehmervverbände”, as an economic stakeholder is positive: it advocates for G8 to secure international competitiveness (Bebenbergr & Schmidt, 2012). This finding mirrors the assumptions made in the section “Economization of reforms”. As companies are the only stakeholders voicing continuous support for the implementation of G8 and the reasons for the introduction of G8 were mostly economically motivated, it can be assumed that the G8 reform has to a certain extent been functionalized. The initiative “Pro G9”, emerged in 2013, opts for a G8-reversion. It is supported by unionized associations, the LSV and LEB and “innumerable” parents’ initiatives (Hessischer Landtag, 2013b).

Federal State 3: Individual analysis for Lower-Saxony

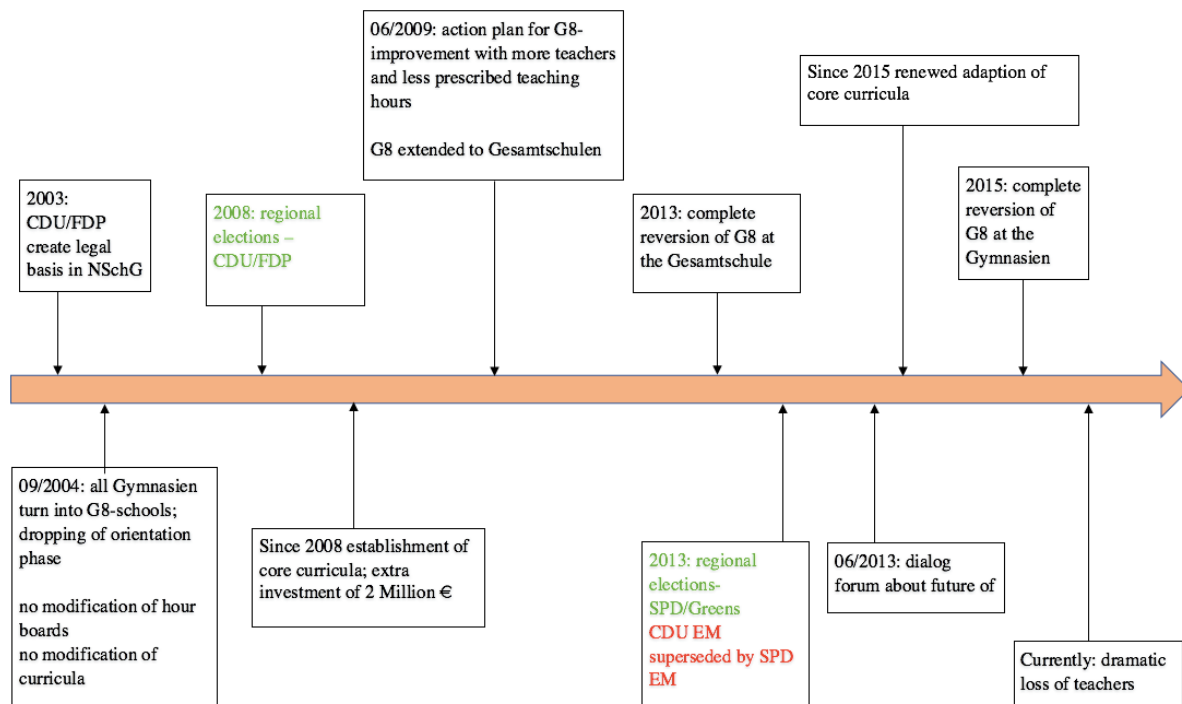


Figure 3. Implementation process of the G8-reform in Lower-Saxony over time

1. The level of complexity of actions

1.1. Change in law for the G8-reform

In order to introduce G8 in September 2004, the CDU-FDP created a legal basis for the new school structure in 2003 by determining that the *Gymnasium* would encompass grades five to 12 (§11 (2) NSchG) (Niedersächsisches Gesetzverordnungsblatt, 2003). In 2009, parliament extended G9 to the *Gesamtschule* (§12(2) NSchG) (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010a). There was no school experiment prior to the G8-implementation (§22(1) NSchG). Lower-Saxony opted for the “5+3” model (Köller, 2017).

The G8-reform implied an additional far-reaching structural modification: being unique for Lower-Saxony, the “orientation phase” in grades five and six was meant to remain in order until G8 stabilized, leading to a full introduction of G8 in grade seven. Instead, the “orientation phase” was instantly dropped and students were confronted with both the G8-modifications and the structural amendment (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2014).

1.2. The implementing organizations and their tasks

The change in law occurred one year prior to the G8-implementation at schools. Being Lower Saxony's highest education authority, the ministry of education develops the school system by making legislative proposals. Further, it provides advice to the schools and school boards (§120(1) NSchG), provides teachers and personnel costs (§112 (1) NSchG) and establishes core curricula (§122 NSchG).

Being overseen by the ministry of education (§119 NSchG), the "Landesschulbehörde" is the next level of hierarchy and breaks down into 4 regional departments (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2017a), which in turn encompass the districts (Niedersächsisches Landesschulbehörde, 2010). The districts fulfill the task of the school boards (§102(2) NSchG) and as such responsible for the school facilities, infrastructure (§108 NSchG), material costs (§113 NSchG) and the development of full-day schools. At the lowest level of hierarchy, the school director manages the schools' assets (§33(4), §43(4) NSchG). However, the allocation of the financial means is done in cooperation with the school management (Schulvorstand), which involves the director, teachers', students' and parents' representatives (§38(a) NSchG).

At the outset of the G8-reform, the curricula remained unedited, leaving students with the same amount of subject matters in a compressed time. The modification of the hour board is executed by the ministry of education and the school management (§38 (a) NSchG). Initially, the hour board exceeded the prescribed number of tuition hours by the KMK, imposing more work on the students than legally necessary and illustrating an area for improvement (Stöber, 2013). The weekly study load under G8 encompassed around 32 hours from grades five to nine and around 34 from grades ten to twelve (Grüne Niedersachsen, 2014).

1.3. Change in law for the reversion of G8

Lower-Saxony turned into the first *Länder* to completely revert the G8-reform (Füller, 2014). The reversion affected the *Gesamtschule* in 2013 (§12(2) NSchG) and the *Gymnasium* (§11(2) NSchG) in 2015 (Schure, 2015). It reduced the weekly number of tuition hours to 30 (Niedersächsisches Vorschrifteninformationssystem, 2015).

2. The availability of resources

The Lower-Saxonian public budget expressed in debt level per person amounts to 8,759€ (Brautmeier, 2013). Despite the financial crisis, the *Länder* reaffirmed its commitment to investments in the education sector, as a glance into the education budget shows. In the expenses for education per child at the *Gymnasium*, Lower-Saxony is situated midfield with 7,600 € (Blaeschke et al., 2017). Throughout the period of analysis, Lower-Saxony continuously made investments in *Gymnasien* between 200.000 and 300.000 Euros (see Appendix "Table 4"). At the same time, its budget for

personnel was continuously rising and experienced an increase of 24% between 2007 (no information prior to 2007) and 2017 (see Appendix “Table 4”). This development corresponds to the rise in wages for civil servants (§53 NSchG). Since 2003, educational staff received an increase in pay every year, varying irregularly between 1% and 3%. Over the period of analysis, the wage rose around 21% to 4099€ for A13, 4832€ for A15 and 5332€ for A16 (Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Bezüge und Versorgung, 2017). Opposing the rising income for teachers, the number of teachers did not rise as steadily. Despite the declining student numbers since 2004, the CDU-FDP coalition promised to create 4000 more teaching positions and keep them despite the demographic change (GEW Niedersachsen, 2008; Handelsblatt, 2014). Whereas the CDU-FDP coalition managed to get the level of teaching supply to 100%, the level of employed teachers sank drastically, leading to a frequent cancellation of lessons (CDU Niedersachsen, 2017). It seems that the provision of teachers at the introduction of the G8-reform as well as its reversion could not be guaranteed.

Regarding the provision of infrastructure, there exist no hints about dissatisfaction with provided means. The increase of full-day schools reached a peak with 70% of all *Gymnasien* in 2014 (Handelsblatt, 2014). Lower-Saxony received an amount of 394,617,429€ from the IZBB program, but the report does not link the expansion of full-day tracks to the introduction of G8 (IZBB, 2010c).

Table 4. Available resources in Lower-Saxony from 2007 until 2017 according to the budget plan

year	Overall expenditure for “Gymnasien, Internatsgymnasien and Kollegs” in €	Salaries of the school personnel in €	Investments in €
2007	656,503,303	652,634,086	334,105
2009	734,430,490	728,449,877	200,907
2010	765,127,210	753,316,438	299,864
2011	792,999,994	786,031,698	221,199
2012	823,304,645	816,095,661	242,962
2013	855,285,556	847,601,068	189,795
2014	851,007,623	843,225,889	234,204
2015	855,201,543	852,141,544	253,986
2016	901,652,000	830,151,000	270,000
2017	873,768,000	860,261,000	270,000

The budget plans prior to 2007 are not retrievable for the public.

3. Existence of correcting measures

In the effort to restore calm in education politics, the CDU leadership established a round table around education minister Heister-Neumann with external stakeholders in 2009 (Lappe, 2009; Hilbers, n.d.). The round table produced an action plan which incorporated the following amendments: a reduction of compulsory hours from 265 to 260 by cutting out elective courses, a lower maximum of students per class, less afternoon sessions, teachers' hours, less exams and the maintenance of the G9-model at the *Gesamtschule* to offer students a choice (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010b; Hilbers, n.d.). The expansion of full-day tracks was extended to 45% of all *Gymnasien* and 4500 additional teachers' positions were created (2500 by Busemann and 2000 by Heister-Neumann) (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010d; Hilbers, n.d.)

Being the most extensive amendment, the purification of curricula coincided with the establishment of core curricula (Kutter, 2008). The competence-oriented core curricula, established by the ministry (§122(1) NSchG), were cleared from subject matters and specifically designed for a shortened school duration (Binder, 2012). Prior to their passing, a hearing with the "Landeselternrat" and "Landesschulbeirat" takes place (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010e). Based on the core curricula, the subject conferences define the concrete contents for each subject at school level (§35 NSchG). The subject conferences' of the schools received assistance by additional staff (Multiplikatoren) to implement the core curricula (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010d). Particularly this belated modification of curricula was intended to guarantee the success of G8-students (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010d). In order to facilitate all these changes thoroughly, the *Gymnasien* received an additional budget of 2 Million € in 2008 (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2010c). Following these amendments, the education minister expressed a strong commitment to G8 due to the identical results of G8 and G9 (GEW Niedersachsen, 2010).

4. The direction of political consequences

The CDU-FDP coalition elected in 2003 brought the G8-reform on its way. In these elections, the CDU got its strongest result of 48,3% in Lower-Saxony after the *Länder* had been dominated by the SPD in the past thirteen years (Spiegel online, 2003; Tagesschau, 2003b). These results posed a disaster for the SPD (Spiegel online, 2003). Education politics were identified as an influential component of the election campaign: the CDU received higher competence levels in this domain by voters (Müller-Rommel, 2003). The 2008 regional elections were again dominated by the CDU, which could maintain its coalition with the FDP. It seemed that Lower-Saxonians casted their vote for the CDU due to its popular minister-president and his economic program (Müller-Rommel, 2013). Voters continued to attribute the CDU more competence in education politics (32% CDU, 28 % SPD) (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2008). This is interesting, as the elections in Hessen and Lower-Saxony took place

simultaneously – whereas the Hessian CDU suffered a defeat because of the G8-reform, the G8-reform in Lower-Saxony did not seem to tilt the outcome (Walter, 2008; Taffertshofer, 2010). In the 2013 regional elections, the CDU lost six percent, enabling the SPD and Greens to form a government with a majority of only one seat in parliament (Dorfer, 2013; Tagesschau, 2013b). External stakeholders referred to the need of action in education politics prior to the elections, if the CDU-FDP coalition wanted to win the elections (GEW Niedersachsen, 2010). Eventually, it was assumed that voters yielded their vote to the FDP in order to maintain the CDU-FDP coalition (Wittrock, 2013). It remains to be seen if the success of the current SPD-Green coalition will be influenced by the G8-reversion.

5. The frequency of changes in political leadership (IV2)

Over the period of analysis, Lower-Saxony's ministry of education was led by four different education ministers: three CDU-politicians, superseded by a SPD-politician in 2013 (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, n.d.a). The introduction of the G8-reform fell into the responsibility of the CDU, whereas its reversion was initiated by the SPD. It can be argued that the G8-reform had an effect on the political career of the first two education ministers. In the 2008 regional elections, the CDU-FDP coalition remained in the government and with it all its ministers, except for education minister Busemann (Spiewak, 2008), who was transferred to the ministry of justice (Taffertshofer, 2010). This replacement was linked to Busemann's reform drive, such as the G8-reform (Schöneberg, 2008), which provoked discontent among external stakeholders (Taffertshofer, 2010). Fearing an election loss like its counterpart in Hessen, the Lower-Saxonian CDU put their hope in Heister-Neumann (CDU), who lost the position in a 2010 due to the public resentment of various reforms, among them the G8-reform for the *Gesamtschule* (NDR Online, 2009). Heister-Neumann was further criticized for her inability to provide sufficient personnel (GEW Niedersachsen, 2010). It can be assumed that the lack of personnel during a reform implementation may have a negative influence on it. The SPD linked the frequent exchange of ministers to the CDU's whirl in education politics (Niedersächsischer Landtag, 2010). The appointment of subsequent education minister Althusmann, who was an influential CDU-politician, was discussed as a sign for the increased importance of education politics and thereby also highlights the importance of charismatic leaders in elections (GEW Niedersachsen, 2010). Althusmann implemented further correcting measures. His resignation was linked to the elections in 2010, when the winning coalition of SPD-Greens yielded the position to Heiligenstadt (SPD) (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, n.d.a). Heiligenstadt implemented the G8-reversion, but no political consequences could be identified yet (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2017b).

6. The level alignment of stakeholder positions

6.1. Party positions

Being the party that decided the G8-reform, the CDU defended the G8 initiated modifications to achieve successes. Referring to the improvement of PISA-results, the CDU emphasized that educational success must be seen in the long run (Niedersächsischer Landtag, 2010). Since the SPD-lead of the education ministry and the reversion of G8, CDU has opposed this plan. It prefers the freedom of election, which was firstly brought forward by the CDU's former coalition partner FDP (CDU- Fraktion im Niedersächsischen Landtag, 2014). The FDP supported G8 at the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule* (FDP Niedersachsen, 2008; Hannoversche Allgemeine, 2013). It criticized the SPD-Green coalition for reducing the quality of the *Gymnasium* by re-extending the school duration and reducing educational diversity (FDP Niedersachsen, 2013; FDP Niedersachsen, 2014a). However, it was lastly the FDP which handed in a draft bill for the freedom of choice (FDP Niedersachsen, 2014b). Trying to frame education politics as an opposition party, the SPD constantly criticized CDU-initiated laws, going well beyond the introduction of G8. It rejected the introduction of G8 at the *Gesamtschule* and the overall "carelessly" prepared G8-reform (Niedersächsischer Landtag, 2010; SPD Landtagsfraktion Niedersachsen, 2010). Whereas its position towards G8 at the *Gesamtschule* was devastating, the SPD maintained a more differentiated attitude towards G8 at the *Gymnasium* and left it open if it would advocate for a full return (Kutter, 2011). After assuming the position of the education minister from the CDU, minister Heiligenstadt (SPD) established a dialogue forum with external stakeholders to discuss a reversion. Subsequently, the SPD decided against the freedom of choice and for a full return to G9 with the option for high-performance students to graduate earlier (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2014; Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, n.d.b). Throughout the period of analysis, it advocated for a strong expansion of the *Gesamtschule* (SPD Landtagsfraktion Niedersachsen, 2010). The Green party rejected the G8-reform from its outset and demanded its abandonment as the standard model both for the *Gymnasium* and the *Gesamtschule* (Merkelbach, 2011). Selected students should be allowed a premature graduation (Grüne Niedersachsen, 2014). The Left party advocated for a holistic return to G9 of all school forms (Kutter, 2011).

6.2. External stakeholders

The "Landesschülerrat" acknowledged that it became inured to G8 and therefore contradicts the position of many parents (Budde et al. 2014). Its main focus is stability in the school system (Döhner, 2014). Opposing the "Landesschülerrat", the "Landeselternrat" (§169 NSchG) welcomed the decision of the SPD-Green coalition to reintroduce G9 and urged for a resilient implementation (Landeselternrat Niedersachsen, 2014). The GEW was first and foremost focused on the burden of teachers. Following Heister-Neumann's failure to provide sufficient teaching positions, the GEW identified supply of staff

as its priority. It also advocated for a G9-return for the *Gesamtschule* (GEW Niedersachsen, 2010). The Lower-Saxonian philologists' association stands up for G9 as the rule as proposed by the SPD-Green government (Philologenverband Niedersachsen, 2014a & 2014b).

The position of the free economy towards G8 is more differentiated. Although an initial supporter of the G8-reform, several employer's associations report that G8-students lacked essential social competences and team spirit (Budde et al., 2014). Others, such as the companies comprised under the "Unternehmerverbände Niedersachsen", emphasize the negative consequences which accompany a G8-reversion, such as a renewed organizational occupation for schools, and insist on continuity as a prerequisite for high quality education (Unternehmerverbände Niedersachsen e.V., 2014). The school directors association ("Schulleitungsverband") expresses an urgent need for a re-reform of G8. As long as students are relieved from stress, G8, G9 or parallel tracks might be equally preferable solutions (Stöber, 2013). The initiative „Volksbegehren für gute Schulen“ emerged in 2009 as a response to the CDU-FDP plans to incorporate G8 at the *Gesamtschulen* (Kutter, 2011). Even though the initiative failed to collect sufficient signatures, it received wide support by the Greens, SPD, Left party and the GEW (Schrammar, 2009).