

Students' perceptions of learning and educational transitions during the pandemic

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All over the world schools had to switch to distance learning in the spring 2020 due to the pandemic. The first longer period of distance learning in Austrian schools took place from mid March to mid May 2020. An ongoing longitudinal study in one rural region of Austria covers this period – with a first round of data collection in the year before the pandemic and another data collection phase at the beginning of July 2020.

The longitudinal study aims at accompanying students from grade 7 to grade 10 and by this covering the phase around the transition process from lower to upper secondary school and focusses on experiences and attitudes related to transition processes (e.g. individual resources, support by family, school, and peers). The students taking part in the 2020-survey were at the end of grade 8 and therefore about to change schools. Thus, the study explores students' uncertainty concerning the transition due to the pandemic and distance learning.

The 2020-survey captures students' experiences with distance learning, life during lockdown, but also specific questions concerning the upcoming transition. Regression analyses show effects of background variables on the level of coping with requirements of distance learning. Most noteworthy are the differences between students depending on their achievement prior to the crises. Thus, phases of distance learning seem to substantially widen existing achievement gaps. In addition, the same factors correlate with the students' level of uncertainty regarding the transition process.

Firstly, the contribution presents the major findings from the empirical study. Secondly, drawing on item-level analyses as well as reflections and conclusions from relevant actors in the region in regards of the findings, implications for teaching and teacher education are discussed.

References:

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