Determinants of Excellent Kindergarten Learning of Excellent Pupils
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Abstract
Research shows that learning processes of cognitively excellent pupils (CEPs) are generally not supported in kindergarten and primary school, often resulting in cognitive, social, and emotional underachievement as well as other negative effects which manifest themselves later in the children’s educational careers (e.g., dropout, behavioral problems, et cetera). This literature study tries to theoretically reveal the causes of this underachievement and presents solutions which lead to excellent learning of CEPs in kindergarten. Personal and environmental determinants are discussed that facilitate or hinder the CEPs’ cognitive, social, and emotional development.

A literature search identified determinants that formed the basis of a theoretical multilevel model in which excellent kindergarten learning is modelled. Several individual and contextual variables (i.e., home, kindergarten) on pupil, class and school level are integrated. At kindergarten entrance, the abilities of CEPs are already influenced by the home environment. During kindergarten, important determinants from the kindergarten context such as internal class and school differentiation also enter the equation. This differentiation determines whether CEPs are enabled or even empowered to work at and above their own cognitive levels; a requirement for learning.

The model is currently being validated in 41 different kindergartens in a 2-year intervention study aimed at improving internal school and class differentiation. Conform the model, the hypothesis is that the intervention, if properly implemented, will result in better cognitive, social and emotional development of CEPs as compared with their development in regular kindergarten/primary school.