
Call for Papers:

What are we doing in schools?

Achievements and performance in education and educational media

2021 GEI Annual Conference

Organiser:	Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI)
Location:	Online
Date:	2 and 3 September 2021
Closing date for applications:	31 March 2021

Achievements are central to how modern societies view themselves. The individual and societal dimensions of those societies are continually examined and reflected upon, raising questions such as: What is considered to be an achievement, and in what context? Is it possible to credit individuals with specific achievements or are they always the product of collective efforts? To what extent is the promise of social advancement an ideological construct within achievement-oriented societies that increases their willingness to accept social inequality? Does an orientation towards a performance paradigm lead to increased individual freedom or does it subject people all the more to external performance pressures? These questions also all touch to varying degrees upon the social function of the school and its position in society: tasked with stimulating and measuring performance measure performance, it is undoubtedly a central institution of the achievement-oriented society.

Current societal trends are raising new questions in this debate. In the global perspective for example, there are discussions regarding whether the advancement of non-western nations should be viewed as a realisation of the achievement principle. At the same time there are those that question whether a trend towards oligarchisation has not already long undermined the achievement principle because, if in doubt, weak performance can be compensated for by financial injections. The digital shift has also fundamentally expanded the social discourse on performance and achievement. The advent of adaptive educational software that individually addresses students based on their level of performance, raises the question of whether such technology will narrow the gap between students or enlarge it. The fact that e-sports players are being awarded grants for top universities or YouTubers are viewed as high achievers is challenging traditional definitions of performance and achievement in schools. The debate surrounding the implementation possibilities of artificial intelligence in what have always been indisputably human domains, such as creative writing or the judiciary, forces us to reconsider the skills we need to teach young people in order to prepare them for the future, and how those skills should best be evaluated.

The 2021 GEI Annual Conference will bring together a range of (trans)disciplinary perspectives on the diverse dimensions of performance and achievement in school education and educational media. We look forward to receiving contributions on the following topics.

The Social Achievements of Schools

Since the institutionalisation of public education in the nineteenth century, schools have had a decisive role in the reproduction of society, which has given rise to difficult questions: What should a school achieve? What social role is ascribed to the school with regards to measuring and improving achievement? What criteria are used when discussing and evaluating their efficiency in different locations and in different periods? Which concepts of achievement underpin school evaluations? Do schools (still) disseminate central social values or are they succumbing to competition from other formats such as pop-culture media? How have the demands made of schools in relation to performance changed in reaction to changing social realities such as increasing diversity in the classroom? Which societal settings will be decisive in determining whether schools contribute to the reproduction or reduction of inequalities related to origin?

Achievement practices in Schools?

Despite long-lasting constants such as certain examination formats, the practices of encouraging and assessing achievement in schools have historically been subject to change: How and when have assessment practices in schools changed? How are indicators of performance, required for teaching and learning in a globalised world, disseminated? Which cultures of performance and achievement can be observed in schools from an international perspective? And what is the approach to different cultural practices? How are digital tools changing how achievements and performance are measured in schools? What role can communality and a culture of sharing play in a school culture focused on individual achievement? And if society's understanding of what constitutes achievement is changed, for example by the implementation of artificial intelligence, what effect will this have on achievement practices in schools?

Achievement and Performance in Educational Media

Educational media can provide conceptually, culturally and historically significant sources from which it is possible to reconstruct how the semantics of a key term, such as 'achievement', have changed over time. What have been defined as achievements in different places and periods and who are the achievers? What position do authors of educational media take with regard to achievement as a central concept of civic modernity and which values and considerations do they reference? Educational media can also be analysed as artefacts that provide inferences about intended achievement methods: when compared from historical or international perspectives, is the reproduction of knowledge, efficiency, critical facility or creativity in the foreground? Which concepts of achievement or performance are used in didactics through the use of datafication, learning analytics and adaptive teaching systems, and how are they assessed or improved? Which subject positions and socio-cultural and economic presuppositions are (re)produced by the data structures and algorithms?

The Effectiveness of Educational Media

Educational Media are themselves objects of social, specialist and pedagogic discourse and are subject to specific performance expectations. In the context of school closures and 'emergency remote teaching' during the Covid-19 pandemic, discussions are turning to whether traditional school teaching concepts can be translated to these changed conditions. Many debates centre on the effectiveness of analogue and digital media, and consequently produce the following questions: Which performance criteria did, and do, educational media need to fulfil in order to be recognised as

being 'good'? What is expected from digital media such as adaptive teaching systems, in terms of performance and achievement? What output, traditionally provided by teachers, are they expected to deliver? Can they effectually relieve the pressure on teaching personnel, who are expected to provide heterogeneous groups with both inclusive and individual teaching content? Which new subject positions and which new achievement profiles subsequently arise for teachers and pupils? What are the differences in expectations for (digital) educational media from an international comparative perspective?

Contributions related to the general topic of the conference are of course also welcome. In order for us to select contributions for the conference we require an abstract (max. 2,000 characters including references) and a CV, which should be sent to leistung@leibniz-gei.de no later than 31 March 2021. A decision regarding contributions will be made by the end of April 2021.

The conference will be held virtually on 2 and 3 September 2021. The conference languages are German and English. Selected contributions will be published in the conference proceedings. If you have any queries please contact Dr Barbara Christophe (christophe@leibniz-gei.de).