

Open innovation networks: a driver for knowledge mobilisation in schools?

Introduction: Research overview

This study investigates whether open innovation networks can drive knowledge mobilisation in schools. Using data from German school leaders, it explores how collaboration with external actors influences innovation processes in teaching and learning.

Open innovation refers to the intentional inflow and outflow of knowledge between an organisation and external partners, with the goal of accelerating internal innovation and creating new opportunities for applying ideas externally.

Why the research is needed?

Schools typically rely on internal knowledge and are weak in knowledge-sharing across boundaries. Yet, mobilising external knowledge is crucial for innovation and improvement in education. The concept of open innovation has so far been largely absent from school improvement research.

Research questions



1

Can different innovation networks of schools be detected?



3

Do less networked schools rely more on internal (closed) innovation?



2

Does the type of network depend on school characteristics?



4

Does network type influence knowledge mobilisation?



5

Do school characteristics shape these effects?

Methodology

The study is based on data from 411 school leaders in Germany (nationally representative sample, LineS study, wave 3).

The survey followed the Oslo Guidelines for collecting and reporting innovation data (OECD/Eurostat, 2018) and applied the Copenhagen Manual for measuring public sector innovation (Co-PI, 2021).

School leaders reported on recent innovations, sources of knowledge, and external collaborations.

A latent class distal outcome model was used to identify different network types and their effects on open and closed innovation.

Results

Schools mainly use internal knowledge for innovation; external knowledge exchange is limited.

Four types of innovation networks were identified:



1

Low cooperation



2

System-oriented



3

Science-oriented



4

Market-oriented

Low cooperation schools relied heavily on internal knowledge.

Market-oriented schools (working with consultants and companies) accessed more diverse external knowledge.

Network effects did not depend on school size, type, or public/private status, though primary schools often benefited more from external cooperation.

Conclusion

Innovation networks have the potential to enhance knowledge mobilisation in schools, but stronger and more diverse collaborations with external partners are needed to unlock their full innovative capacity.



Find out more about the research by reading the [full article here.](#)

The article:

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