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Article — Published Version

Civil Society in Transition: The Case of Germany in the Field of Education

Nonprofit Policy Forum

Provided in Cooperation with:

WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Suggested Citation: Priemer, Jana (2024) : Civil Society in Transition: The Case of Germany in the Field of Education, Nonprofit Policy Forum, ISSN 2154-3348, De Gruyter, Berlin, Iss. Ahead-of-Print, pp. 1-21,
<https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2023-0057>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/308016>

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Civil Society in Transition: The Case of Germany in the Field of Education

<https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2023-0057>

Received July 31, 2023; accepted November 26, 2024

Abstract: The field of education has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades due to shifts in public governance in numerous Western countries. This transformation has been particularly evident in the realm of civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in the education sector. This article illustrates this phenomenon in the context of Germany, where education has evolved into a quantitatively significant and highly diversified field of CSO activities within a relatively brief period of three decades. The study is based on the theoretical assumption that the flourishing of CSOs depends on conditions set by the government. It follows that changing educational governance has led not only to the prospering of civil society but also to structural changes of CSOs in the field of education. Therefore, it outlines the main developments in educational governance in Germany that resulted in increased collaboration between CSOs and schools. Analyses of a dataset of 6,334 German CSOs demonstrate that the field of CSOs in education is currently pluralized and diverse, comprising service providers, support organizations, and advocacy organizations. New collaborations between CSOs and the state result in the adaptation of these organizations to new tasks and professionalization. Nevertheless, CSOs representing a novel type of civil society actor have also emerged. This article contributes to a broader discussion of structural change in civil society in the context of new public governance.

Keywords: new public governance; education governance; education CSOs; school politics

1 Introduction

In numerous Western countries, shifts in public governance have led to a profound transformation in the field of education in recent decades. This transformation has been particularly evident with regard to civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in the education sector. Using Germany as a case study, this article illustrates how

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changes in education policy since the 1990s have led to the increasing involvement of CSOs in the organization of public school education, resulting in the emergence of new actor constellations and new relations between civil society and the state.

While the increasing involvement of civil society actors in the provision of school education is recognized as a broader phenomenon within Western societies (Buckley and Burch 2011; Berkovich and Foldes 2012; Sagie, Yemini, and Bauer 2016), there remains a significant gap in research that specifically focuses on education as a field of civil society activity. To date, few studies have fully accounted for the recent developments in education governance and how they have facilitated the growing involvement of CSOs (Kolleck and Yemini 2019). This gap is particularly evident in research that addresses the broader context of education as a distinct policy field in which CSOs can play a unique and increasingly important role.

Existing studies have often concentrated on particular aspects of CSO activities in education. For instance, Nelson and Gazley (2014) highlight the rise of school-support organizations in the US, while other works examine volunteer mentoring programs in Germany and the US (Jakob and Schöler 2024; Priemer and Rößler-Prokhorenko 2024; Raposa, Dietz, and Rhodes 2017). However, comprehensive research that systematically frames education as a specific field of activity for CSOs, exploring their growing role in public schools as service providers and support organizations, is still lacking – particularly in the German context. Although empirical evidence suggests that the number of education CSOs in Germany has increased from 14% in 2012 to 18 % in 2017 (Krimmer and Priemer 2013: 21; Priemer et al. 2019: 17), many studies fail to address these developments within a broader framework of civil society's evolving role in education policy.

This article addresses this critical gap by focusing on the broader developments in the relationship between CSOs and public education. It begins with the theoretical assumption that changing modes of governance, like the new public governance that has been widely adopted since the 1990s (Osborne 2010a, 2010b), has led to changes in civil society (Salamon 1995). To demonstrate these alterations, I apply Young's (2000) theoretical framework, which distinguishes three types of relationships – complementary, supplementary, and adversarial – which can be conceptualized as encompassing three segments of civil society. Subsequently, a brief overview of the transformation of the German education policy framework since the 1990s and its influence on CSOs will be presented. To narrow the scope somewhat, the bulk of the analysis focuses on changes in the governance of elementary, middle, and high schools, the largest sector of the German public education system. Secondary analyses of the ZiviZ survey, a nationwide representative survey of CSOs in Germany, provide the empirical basis for the description of education CSOs, which is the second part of the article. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of how changes in

school governance can be linked to changes in CSOs in terms of their roles and their financial and human resources.

The objectives are to provide a more precise understanding of education as a distinct field within civil society by exploring their organizations and the characteristics of these organizations. This article aims to highlight the specific dynamics within the education sector and to examine how these collaborations may lead to structural changes within civil society itself.

2 Theory: CSO–State Relationships

Government plays a pivotal role in the shaping and enabling of civil society activities. By imposing regulatory requirements, such as laws and ordinances, as well as providing financial assistance, the state exerts a direct influence on civil society, thereby facilitating the promotion or restriction of such activities (Grønbjerg and Smith 2021; Toepler and Anheier 2021; Zimmer and Smith 2021). Moreover, the involvement of CSOs in the provision of public services, particularly in their relationships with the state, has a significant impact on the shape of civil society (Salamon 1995).

Dennis R. Young's work (Young 2000) sorts these relationships into certain types of partnerships – complementary, supplementary, and adversarial (Young 2000). Even if Young's typology might not capture the multifaceted reality of CSO–government relations (Toepler et al. 2022), it is valuable for organizing the field of CSOs in education, which can aid in comprehending changes in those relations.

The *complementary relationship* first observed by Lester Salamon in 1995, which is widespread in Western countries, describes a very close partnership between the government and CSOs in which the latter act as service providers to the former. Public services financed by the state are provided by CSOs, making the state the most important funding source of these CSOs. To provide these public services, however, CSOs are often subject to strict regulations, making them interdependent (Gidron, Kramer, and Salamon 1992, xiii; Salamon 1995; Toepler et al. 2022, 5; Young 2000, 153–55).

In many Western countries, important welfare state services, such as health and social services, are provided to a considerable extent through cooperation with CSOs (e.g. Pape et al. 2020). In recent years, providers of social services have become more commercial and professional due to changing conditions in the awarding of public contracts. Consequently, these CSOs are becoming increasingly like commercial enterprises and are said to be moving further away from the core of civil society (Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere 2017, 678). Furthermore, the pressure of competition leads some CSOs to explore new areas of activity (Pape et al. 2020). Education may be one of these new fields.

The basic idea of the *supplementary relationship* is that the government cannot always satisfy the demand for all the public goods needed or wanted. As support organizations, CSOs fill such gaps and take on certain tasks to supplement what the government provides. The government does not usually assume the role of contractual partner but rather is in a grant-making position. This, in turn, allows a CSO to retain much of its independence from the government (Young 2000, 151–53).

Advocacy organizations represent the interests of their members before other interest groups and before the government. Young (2000, 155–57) speaks in this case of an *adversarial relationship* with the government. It should be emphasized that not all advocacy organizations are necessarily conflictual – they may simply aggregate interests or contribute constructively to the policy-making process.

As Young himself and some other scholars have noted, the forms of relationships may differ in different policy areas and may change over time, depending on developments in the environment (e.g. Gidron, Kramer, and Salamon 1992; Young 2000). This is especially true when the overarching governance approach shifts to include non-state actors, such as CSOs, in policymaking and service delivery. This shift is captured by the concepts of New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG), each embodying distinct approaches to public administration. NPM emphasizes market-driven reforms, focusing on efficiency, competition, and private-sector techniques, whereas NPG prioritizes collaboration and network governance, engaging multiple stakeholders like civil society and other private actors in decision-making. While NPM treats citizens as customers with a focus on service delivery, NPG sees CSOs as essential partners, fostering democratic accountability and enabling CSOs to actively participate in co-creating public policies and solutions (Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere 2017; Osborne 2010a, 2010b).

As the introduction of NPM and NPG in the public school system has significantly transformed the role of civil society in public education, the next section will explore how the conditions for CSOs and their relationships with the state in German school education have evolved over the past 30 years.

3 Shift to New Public Governance in Public Education

Since at least the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, the provision of many welfare state services has been guided by the subsidiarity principle, according to which civil society actors were favored over other actors in undertaking public tasks. This enabled welfare associations, i.e. umbrella organizations, and their member nonprofit organizations, in particular, to establish themselves as important state

partners in social services, including child and youth welfare (e.g. Zimmer 1999). This can still be seen today in the funding structures of these CSO service providers, in which the government accounts for a significant share of funding (Priemer et al. 2019).

In the field of education, however, there was no such division of labor between CSOs and the government in Germany until the late 1990s. In fact, the government oversees the entire school system, with the education ministries (*Kultusministerien*) of the 16 federal states responsible for its supervision. These subnational ministries, which are the most powerful entities in shaping school policy, manage planning, organization, school authority, and financing, with implementation responsibilities distributed across different political levels (state, federal state, municipality) and bodies like school authorities.

The federal structure results in differences between federal states in terms of school types and curricula, which are regulated by a state's specific school laws. School laws also determine which responsibilities, rights, and duties schools have (van Ackeren, Klemm, and Kühn 2015, 98; Hepp 2011, 79). In most federal states, school laws are complemented by other legal requirements, such as administrative circulars and directives. These legal instruments delineate the participation rights of non-school stakeholders, including CSOs, in matters about schools. Prior to the early 2000s, only a few federal states had established guidelines for such collaboration (Priemer 2022, 216; Teuber 2004, 84), but almost all now require that schools cooperate with civil society actors. This change represents a novel trend in German school policy.

This paradigm shift has been discussed under the heading “educational governance” among German education researchers. In the 1990s, the limits of the German school education system's performance became evident. Changing social and economic demands – such as globalization – required better school performance. At the same time, the state came under increasing financial pressure due to a multitude of unsolved social problems, such as demographic changes and immigration. As in other areas of the welfare state, the government introduced new steering mechanisms in the school system. Initially, elements of NPM were implemented, which were later followed by an increasing number of elements of NPG. This latter approach aimed to involve civil society actors to a greater extent (Altrichter and Maag Merki 2016; Niedlich 2020).

3.1 The Beginning of the Opening of Schools to Non-state Actors in the 1990s

During the 1990s the main changes in educational governance were a shift toward output orientation and further decentralization. The decentralization of authority

resulted in the transfer of more responsibility to the school level, or what has been referred to as “school autonomy” (van Ackeren, Klemm, and Kühn 2015). As part of this expanded autonomy, responsibility for the management of financial resources has been delegated to individual schools. An essential element of this so-called financial autonomy was that schools had the option to generate additional financial resources on their own. While schools were previously financed exclusively with state funds, they were now allowed to raise third-party funds through donations and sponsorships to relieve the financial burden on public budgets (Tarazona and Brückner 2016).

Another significant development at that time was the integration of youth welfare into the school system. Unlike in the US, the United Kingdom, and other Western countries, youth welfare and schools had been kept institutionally separate in Germany. Though the idea of school social work, which refers to youth welfare services that are spatially and organizationally located in schools, originated in the 1970s, it became integrated in the German school system only in the 1990s (Speck and Jensen 2014). Given that the provision of youth welfare in Germany has traditionally been the responsibility of CSOs (Zimmer 1999), it is evident that CSOs have gained access to the school system through the medium of school social work. Although financial autonomy and the introduction of school social work provided CSOs with access to the public school system for the first time in Germany’s postwar history, CSOs remained the exception as partners of the state to the end of the decade.

3.2 Large-Scale Opening to Non-school Actors in the 2000s

It can be argued that certain events can have a long-lasting impact on the relationship patterns between CSOs and the state (Young 2000). In Germany, such an important event was the release of the first Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study. The PISA study is an international comparative school performance assessment by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which was first conducted in 2000. Germany’s poor performance in relation to the other countries in the study generated the so-called PISA shock, which sparked a broad public debate on how to improve the school system.

Since then, elements of new public governance have been introduced by successive governments, which involve various actors in public service delivery and policy making. As in other Western countries (Osborne 2010a, 2010b), the governance mechanisms of public administration have not completely replaced traditional structures, but rather supplemented them with elements of opening up the state and administration to other actors. Some tasks assigned to public schools, such as after-

school care, have been transferred to CSOs through public–private partnerships (Hepp 2011, 42; Niedlich 2020, 169; van Ackeren, Klemm, and Kühn 2015, 33).

The concept of “educational landscapes” or “educational networks,” which emerged in the late twentieth century, has gained traction in Germany. Implementation of this idea has led to the even deeper integration of school social work within schools. Furthermore, various federal, state, and local programs have pushed for collaboration between schools and youth welfare service providers. At the same time, schools themselves were already becoming more involved in collaboration with CSOs such as sports clubs, cultural associations, and youth clubs.

This trend was also driven by the expansion of all-day schools. Until the 2000s, most children were in school for only half of the day. The expansion of teaching hours was designed to enhance the quality of education and to integrate youth welfare services more closely with the everyday operations of schools. It was evident from the outset that additional staffing requirements in schools could not be met solely through government resources. This might have been a major reason why collaboration between all-day schools and civil society actors was encouraged by education policy through various federal and state programs. Since the 2000s, the obligation for all-day schools to cooperate with CSOs has been successively enshrined in school laws and various legal ordinances (Arnoldt and Züchner 2020, 1083; Priemer 2022).

Concurrently, in the wake of the PISA shock, societal stakeholders who no longer wished to leave the design of schools exclusively to the state proliferated. The new educational governance has enabled these stakeholders (e.g. foundations and charities) to become more involved in school policy issues (Hepp 2011, 182). However, school policy has also been shaped by the actions of new CSOs, defined by Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere (2017) as ‘new civil society’. Consequently, civil society has undergone diversification and pluralization in the context of the evolving landscape of public school education. This diversification and pluralization will be described in the following section using Young’s three types of relationships as a framework.

4 New Welfare Mix of School Education

The changes in school governance described so far have resulted in a substantial transformation in the collaboration between schools and CSOs in Germany. This evolution has given rise to three distinct types of relationships, identified in other contexts by Young. Each type reflects a unique mode of interaction, showcasing how CSOs have become integral to the educational landscape in Germany.

4.1 The Complementary Relationship: CSOs as Service Providers for Schools

Complementary relationships between CSOs and schools began to emerge in the 1990s within the context of school social work. As school social work became more integrated in the school system and youth welfare services were incorporated, traditional social service partners like the Deutscher Caritasverband (German Caritas Association) and the Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (German Joint Welfare Association) expanded their involvement. These organizations began providing both school social work and youth welfare services at schools (Arnoldt and Züchner 2020).

A decade later, the scope of collaboration expanded to include other CSOs, such as sports and cultural associations and booster clubs. This was largely a result of the expansion of all-day schools, where CSOs took on roles such as offering extracurricular activities and additional services. In compliance with legal cooperation requirements, schools also engaged other youth welfare organizations, such as scouting groups and youth clubs (Arnoldt and Züchner 2020). By 2018, approximately a quarter of all-day schools outsourced care outside regular instructional hours entirely to external partners, primarily certain types of CSOs (SteG Consortium 2019, 29–35). Moreover, most schools collaborate with CSOs to offer a variety of leisure activities, provide lunches, or deliver specialized instruction (e.g. health education or programming; Arnoldt and Züchner 2020; Behr-Heintze and Lipski 2005, 15–17).

A significant number of school partners are CSOs, mainly voluntary associations such as sports and cultural clubs, which are not strictly educational CSOs. Nonetheless, their role in the education sector is significant. By 2017, one-third of Germany's CSOs (36 %) had partnered with schools, even though most (78 %) did not identify education as their primary focus (Priemer 2024). While not all these organizations are directly involved in school education, they collaborate with schools to provide other services. These actors include museums, independent music and art schools, and forest schools, many of which operate as CSOs. For example, approximately one-third of museums are operated by CSOs (Institut für Museumsforschung 2015, p. 77).

CSOs have also expanded their role as school patrons, organizing, funding, and running private schools. Over the last three decades, the number of private schools in Germany has doubled. As of 2020, there were 5,855 private schools (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021). It is assumed that a significant proportion of them are operated by CSOs, but it remains unclear how large that proportion is, as some private schools operate on a commercial basis. In the German context, the role of CSOs as school patrons raises questions about whether the relationship with the state is complementary or supplementary. On the one hand, these schools are subject to extensive

state regulation and receive substantial public funding, aligning them more closely with a complementary relationship, as they operate within the state's educational framework. On the other hand, many of these schools offer alternative educational approaches, such as reform pedagogy, which enhance or extend the public school system. This focus on innovation suggests they may embody a more supplementary relationship, providing distinctive educational experiences beyond the standard state offerings.

4.2 The Supplementary Relationship: CSOs as Support Organizations for Schools

Until the 1990s, the supplementary relationship was limited to private schools, booster clubs, and a few established foundations. However, they were so few at the time that they could hardly be considered significant within German civil society (Braun, Hansen, and Langner 2013; Hepp 2011; Statistisches Bundesamt 2021; Striebing 2020).

The landscape has since undergone a notable evolution. In 2017, booster clubs, i.e. associations of pupils' parents and alumni whose purpose is to support individual schools, constituted 6 % of all CSOs in Germany. By 2019, approximately 80 % of schools were supported by a booster club (Priemer 2024). The rise of booster clubs appears to have coincided with, and may be linked to, the shift towards financial school autonomy. Booster clubs have proven to be a valuable tool for efficiently mobilizing external funds and managing them in a streamlined, non-bureaucratic way (Weiß and Steinert 2002). Despite their significant role in the German CSO landscape over the past two decades (Freise 2017), there has been little empirical research on the role of booster clubs in CSO-state relations (e.g. Braun, Hansen, and Langner 2013). While financial support remains their main contribution, booster clubs now also provide after-school care and other services (SteG Consortium 2019). The literature offers limited insight into this functional shift and its broader implications.

Alongside booster clubs, other new CSOs have emerged since the late 1990s, offering a broad range of support to schools, students, and teachers through practical assistance and resources that enhance learning experiences. The field of STEM education, for instance, is supported by many CSOs, such as Hacker School, founded in 2014. Other CSOs provide assistance in the growth and development of educational institutions. One example is Education Y, founded in 2005, which develops programs tailored to the needs of children and young people. While some of these newer CSOs, like Teach First Germany, have grown into large national agencies, most began on a small scale. Teach First Germany, a nationwide initiative, improves equal

opportunities by placing university graduates in schools in socially deprived areas to support students during key transitions. Many other CSOs operate on a smaller, local level, often choosing not to accept public funding to maintain independence from the state.

A subset of school-support CSOs focuses on placing volunteers in schools. For instance, Reading Mentors Berlin helps children improve their reading skills, while similar organizations across Germany assist pupils with homework and other school-related tasks (Jakob and Schüler 2024, 9). Some mentoring initiatives, such as MENTOR – The Reading Learning Assistants, have expanded into nationwide networks. However, many smaller CSOs continue to operate independently to maintain their autonomy. While no specific data on the number of such CSOs is currently available, school-support organizations likely constitute a substantial portion of the CSO sector and hold significant potential for mobilizing volunteers (Priemer and Rößler-Prokhorenko 2024).

Foundations have also become increasingly active in supporting public schools. The number of educational foundations, both grantmaking and operating, has grown from fewer than 2,000 in 1990 to more than 8,000 by 2020. Many smaller foundations, often with limited financial resources, rely on volunteers to engage constructively in the education system (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen 2021; Striebing 2017, 24).

4.3 The Adversarial Relationship: CSOs as Advocacy Organizations for School-Related Issues

Traditionally, advocacy in German school education was dominated by teachers' associations and other school-related professional groups, some of which date back to the 1940s and 1950s (Hepp 2011). A few of these organizations have even older roots, such as the Association of History Teachers in Germany, founded in 1913. These established associations have long advocated for the interests of educators and the professionalization of teaching.

Since then, however, the landscape of advocacy organizations has expanded, with many small, primarily volunteer-driven CSOs emerging to engage in school policy advocacy. One early example of this is the Spanish parents' associations, which have been advocating for improved educational opportunities for their children since the 1970s. Over time, other parent groups formed around similar concerns, reflecting Germany's increasing multiculturalism. Today, the interests of these parent associations are represented at both regional and federal levels. For example, the Federation of Turkish Parents' Associations in Germany unites 80 Turkish parents' associations in advocating for better educational outcomes for their children.

Additionally, established organizations have taken on more prominent roles in school policy advocacy. Foundations, in particular, are increasingly involved in influencing education policy, often leveraging their resources and influence to shape public debate. Notably, major foundations such as Bertelsmann Stiftung and Robert Bosch Stiftung, among the most influential in Germany, have embraced a dual role. They not only provide support directly to schools but also actively participate in policy advocacy (Koranyi and Kolleck 2020). These foundations can be seen as both enablers and critics of the system, using their considerable resources to promote reform agendas (Höhne 2020).

Beyond foundations, civil society organizations – such as the welfare associations and umbrella organizations that primarily have had complementary relations with the state – are increasingly involved in school policy. For instance, welfare organizations and sports umbrella groups have worked closely with federal education ministries to develop legal frameworks that facilitate cooperation between CSOs and all-day schools (Priemer 2022, 219).

This evolving advocacy landscape demonstrates how a diverse array of stakeholders, from both within and outside the education field, are now actively engaged in advocating for school reform. It also highlights that certain CSOs fulfill dual roles, not only advocating for change but also providing critical services, as seen in the welfare organizations that play a central role in supporting all-day schools.

In summary, the relationship between CSOs and schools in Germany can be understood through three types of relationship: complementary, supplementary, and adversarial. Each type highlights a different mode of interaction between CSOs and the education system, all of which have evolved over the past three decades. These relationships are shaped by a diverse array of organizations, ranging from small volunteer associations to large foundations and professional advocacy groups. Service-providing, supporting, and advocacy CSOs are now extensively involved in shaping the public school system, a shift that aligns with the new public governance regimes widely adopted in the German education sector.

However, there has been a significant lack of empirical data describing CSOs in the field of education and delineating the three types of relationships and the diversity of organizations involved. To address this gap in the literature, the next section of the article will present a comprehensive overview of CSOs in the field of education policy, based on empirical data, for the three organizational groups discussed above. This will lay the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of the roles that these organizations play within the educational landscape.

5 Methods

The empirical analysis is based on secondary analyses of a representative survey of CSOs in Germany, which was conducted by ZiviZ¹ in 2012, 2017, and 2022. Using a comprehensive questionnaire, the ZiviZ survey collects information on a broad range of topics (basic information including year of establishment, information on activities, members, volunteers, finances, and cooperation). The 2017 ZiviZ survey included a special set of questions on education, in particular about cooperation with schools and specific educational tasks. Except when describing change over time, this analysis thus draws on the 2017 dataset.

The sample for the ZiviZ survey of 2017 was derived from a list comprising all 633,922 CSOs registered in Germany in 2016. Of this total, 71,382 CSOs were randomly selected and invited by letter to take part in an online survey. The resulting dataset consists of 6,334 CSOs, including 5,081 voluntary associations, 824 foundations, 311 non-profit limited liability companies, 111 co-operatives, and seven entities without information about their legal form (Priemer, Krimmer, and Labigne 2017).

Two variables were used to create subgroups for the analyses: first, field of activity and second, type of organization. With regard to the fields of activity, the CSOs were requested to select all of the fields in which they are active from a total of fifteen fields, including education (other fields included, for example, sports, culture, recreation, and social service). Subsequently, they were required to designate a primary field of activity. If they selected “education,” they were included in the analyses for this article. The ZiviZ survey did not distinguish between different educational subsectors. Therefore, the survey results apply to the entire field of education and not only to school education specifically.

In order to form subgroups in accordance with Young’s model, the CSOs were requested to indicate the type of organization they perceived themselves to be. This was achieved by posing the question, “How would you describe your organization’s self-perception?” and offering the following answer choices: “We are a service provider,” “We are a support organization,” and “We are an advocacy organization.” Respondents to this second question gave a score on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Only when the answer was “strongly agree” was the organization assigned to the corresponding category. Due to the form of the query, the three categories are not distinct. Consequently, a CSO may consider itself belonging to more than a single category.

¹ ZiviZ is a German NPO that disseminates knowledge about civil society to the public based on empirical data.

6 Empirical Description of CSOs in the Field of Education

The data shows that education is a relatively new, but growing field of civil society action, with 18 % of CSOs identifying education as a field of action in 2017, up from just 14 % in 2012 (Krimmer and Priemer 2013: 21). This places education alongside sport (22 %) and culture (16 %) among the top three fields of activity, collectively accounting for more than half of all CSOs in Germany. Notably, education CSOs are younger than those in other fields: 74 % of them were founded after 1990 (53 % even after 2000). By contrast, across the entire CSO sector, only 57 % were founded after 1990, and just 39 % after 2000.

The data revealed the presence of all three types of CSOs in the field of education described earlier. As shown in Table 1, 30 % of CSOs marking education as their primary field of activity saw themselves as service providers, while 46 % claimed to be support organizations. Notably, nearly twice as many education CSOs consider themselves support organizations than do those in the total dataset (26 %). Service providers are also more common in the education field than in the overall dataset (30 %). Some 20 % of CSOs engaged primarily in education are advocacy organizations, a proportion similar to that for German CSOs overall.

Notably, many CSOs identify as more than one type of entity, as depicted in Figure 1. Advocacy organizations in particular overlap with the other two groups: 38 % of advocacy organizations also see themselves as service providers and 45 % also as support organizations. Service providing and supporting organizations can be better distinguished empirically: Only 4 % of education CSOs identify as both service providers and support organizations, and only 3 % say they fall into all three categories.

Table 1: Types of organization in the overall dataset and in education.

	All CSOs		Education CSOs	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Service provider ^a	1,358	21	342	30
Support organization ^a	1,637	26	528	46
Advocacy organization ^a	1,372	22	231	20

Source: ZiviZ survey 2017, *n* = 6,334; ^aRespondents were asked to provide a score on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Only when the answer was “strongly agree” was the organization assigned to the corresponding category.

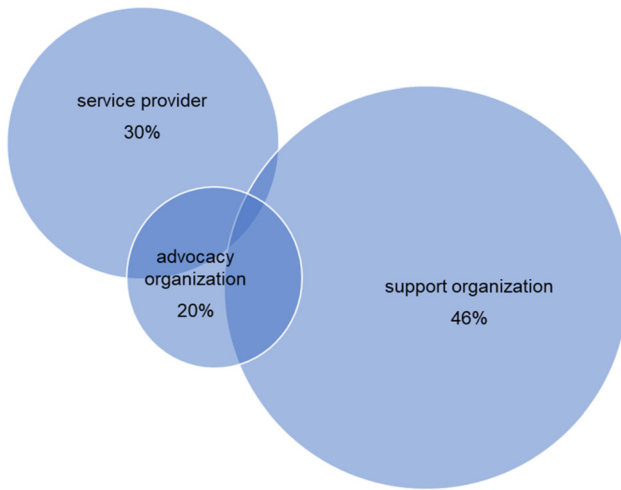


Figure 1: Types of organization among education CSOs. *Source:* ZiviZ survey 2017, $n = 1,153$.

6.1 Functions and Tasks

One effect of extensive government promotion of collaboration with CSOs is evident in the fact that 66 % of all education CSOs **collaborate with schools**. Every second education CSO (median) has been doing so only since 2003. As seen in Table 2, collaboration with schools is widespread among all groups, service providers (73 %), support organizations (67 %), and advocacy organizations (57 %). All three groups provide at least some *after-school care* as part of this collaboration. Beyond after-school care, however, service providers and support organizations make varied contributions to schools and other public educational institutions. Providing educational services by imparting knowledge or training specific skills is a typical task of service providers. Eighty-nine percent of service providers offer education programs, while only 40 % of support organizations do so. Among support organizations, many CSOs are booster clubs (48 %), which often act as financial sponsors of public schools, but this type of CSO is less prevalent among service providers (13 %) and advocacy organizations (21 %). Youth welfare organizations are more frequently represented among service providers (38 %) and advocacy organizations (20 %) than among support organizations (9 %).

6.2 Financial and Personnel Resources

Education CSOs have a median annual budget of EUR 21,075, above the average CSO in Germany (EUR 12,000 median). The differences in annual budget between service

Table 2: Main characteristics of the three types of education CSOs.

		Service provider	Support organization	Advocacy organizations
Founding year	(mean)	2000	2004	2000
Function	Collaborate with schools	73	67	57
 since	2002	2004	2002
	Educational programs (%)	89	40	69
	After-school care (often, %)	42	33	30
Organization type	Youth welfare organizations	38	9	29
	School booster clubs (%)	13	48	21
	Income in 2016 in Euros (median)	194,000	9,400	10,000
Financial resources	Received public subsidies (%)	64	21	44
	Public subsidies as share of income (%)	39	9	24
	CSOs with paid staff (%)	77	18	40
Personnel resources	Average paid staff (median n)	12	5	10

Source: ZiviZ survey 2017, $n = 1,153$.

providers (EUR 194,000 median) and the other two groups (EUR 9,400 and 10,000 median, respectively) are statistically significant. Disparity in the financial resources available is strongly related to the financing mix. Significant portions of the revenues of service providers are made up of public funds (an average of 39 %) and fees for their services (an average of 33 %). In contrast, support organizations are mainly financed by membership fees and donations, which account for an average share of 55 % of revenue, and much less so by public funding (an average of just 9 %). Only 21 % of the support organizations receive any public funding at all, leaving the vast majority of this type of organizations independent of government financing. Nevertheless, the average share of public funding for CSOs in the education sector (22 %) is twice that of the CSO sector as a whole (11 %). Even in social services, the field traditionally most characterized by collaboration with the government and high levels of public subsidies (Zimmer 1999), the share of public funding (5 %) is not as high, although a similar proportion of CSOs receive public funding (38 %).

As salary expense requires corresponding financial resources, substantial differences between service providers and support organizations emerge in terms of human resources as well. While support organizations rely primarily on volunteers, service providers can utilize both volunteers and paid personnel. In addition, service providers tend to have a higher number of paid employees than support

Table 3: Main characteristics of education CSOs in general, education CSOs that collaborate with schools, and education CSOs that provide after-school care.

		Education CSOs	Collaborate with schools ^a	After-school care ^b
Organization type	Youth welfare organizations	24	26	49
	Booster clubs of schools	27	40	27
Financial resources	Income in 2016 in Euro (median)	21,075	34,330	144,000
	Received public subsidies (%)	40	45	73
	Public subsidies as share of income (%)	22	25	45
Personnel resources	CSOs with paid staff (%)	43	48	81
	Average paid staff (median <i>n</i>)	8	10	12

Source: ZiviZ survey 2017, *n* = 1,153; ^a*n* = 706; ^b*n* = 159 (CSOs offering after-school care only “often”).

organizations do: 77 % of service providers have paid employees, on average, twelve employees, which is above the average for the entire CSO sector. By contrast, education support organizations rely mostly on volunteers; their work would hardly be possible otherwise, given their limited financial resources. Only 18 % of support organizations have paid employees, with an average of five paid staff members.

The case of CSOs that offer after-school care demonstrates the extent to which public funding and paid staff correspond with public services (see Table 3). This is evidenced by the fact that more providers of after-school care receive public funding (73 %) than does the average education CSO (40 %). Furthermore, public funding accounts for a higher portion of total income (45 % vs. 22 %). This is closely linked to the financial (EUR 144,000 median) and human resources (81 % have paid staff) available to those involved in after-school care. This trend is observed regardless of whether CSOs are classified as service providers, support organizations, or advocacy groups.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

Since the 1990s, the civil society sector in Germany has expanded into the public sphere of school education in response to the evolving environment of educational governance. CSOs constitute a significant portion of the German CSO sector and encompass a diverse range of organizational types. As described by Young, these organizations theoretically function as service providers, support organizations, and

advocacy organizations. However, in the German case, the categories are not entirely distinct, particularly concerning advocacy organizations. Service providers and support organizations often engage in political advocacy. This overlap is particularly evident among youth welfare organizations, which not only provide essential services for schools but also advocate for their clients. The overlap thus helps explain the high proportion of after-school care provided by advocacy organizations, as the services offered are typically non-adversarial. Given the different roles played by each of the three organizational types in education policy, future analyses of CSOs in this field must take them into account. Including service providers and support organizations in such field analyses is essential, as they represent, at least according to Young's theory, quite different types of relationships with the government. Service providers receive significant public funding, indicating a close relationship with governmental bodies, while support organizations rely on civic resources, such as donations, membership dues, and volunteer labor, as the data show.

This pattern is not unique to Germany. As noted by Berkovich and Foldes (2012), Sagie, Yemini, and Bauer (2016), Nelson and Gazley (2014), and Zimmer and Pahl (2018, 149), other Western countries have also seen increased involvement of all three types of civil society actors in public school education. Addressing these developments in future field analyses is crucial.

The empirical data indicate that all three groups provide after-school care services to at least some degree. However, as proposed by Salamon (1995) and Young (2000), the transfer of public tasks to CSOs – primarily expected for service providers – raises questions about the roles of other education-related CSOs. That other types of education CSOs also take on such public services can be explained by their ability to adapt to new circumstances. Since the 2010s, booster clubs have expanded their activities to include various services for public schools (Braun, Hansen, and Langner 2013). Although originally classified as support organizations, booster clubs are increasingly resembling service providers, with 18 % now offering after-school care. This indicates a shift in their role in education toward a different form of partnership with the government.

Other CSOs are also broadening their responsibilities beyond traditional areas. For example, youth welfare organizations are now actively involved in education. This shift may be attributed to changes in education governance, which have created new opportunities within the public school context, while competitive pressures in social services increase (Pape et al. 2020). Consequently, some CSOs may adopt service provider roles in other fields as opportunities arise. Collaboration with educational institutions provides youth welfare organizations and youth associations with a novel source of financial support and enhanced access to their target demographics – children and young people. Additionally, other CSOs, such as sports clubs, are taking on new responsibilities, including after-school care.

New educational governance may also be associated with structural changes within civil society. After-school care, for example, is primarily determined by financial and human resources rather than Young's defined group assignment, as CSOs that provide after-school care generally have higher incomes, a greater share of public funding, and more paid staff than those that do not. This observation suggests that after-school care may necessitate shifts in financial and human resources, promoting the professionalization of civil society (e.g. Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere 2017; Pape et al. 2020). Consequently, both service providers and support organizations that assume responsibility for public services such as after-school care risk losing some of their civil society characteristics, becoming more like public agencies in a manner similar to other government partners, such as established welfare organizations. Other research has documented similar effects in various contexts (e.g. Harlock 2014; Pape et al. 2020), indicating a potential loss of autonomy for these organizations (e.g. De Corte and Verschuere 2014).

The civil society landscape also changes structurally as entirely new CSOs emerge. Mentoring organizations exemplify this phenomenon. They represent a unique form of support organization, distinct from after-school care providers as they are typically volunteer-run and operate independently of public funding (Priemer and Rößler-Prokhorenko 2024). By proposing their own solutions to problems in the public school system, mentoring organizations reflect a new type of CSO driven not only by changes in public governance but also by broader societal shifts (Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere 2017, 684).

Such developments have not yet been the subject of sufficient scientific investigation, and thus require integration into future theoretical and empirical research in the field of education. The analyses derived from the ZiviZ survey represent an important first step toward a description of the policy field of education, in which more recent developments are now also taken into account. However, there is a pressing need for data tailored specifically to the requirements of education CSOs. It is also important to note that school education is only one sub-area within the broader field of education, albeit a particularly dominant one. Indeed, educational governance may be only one reason for the changes observed among education CSOs, and thus analyses of the policy field of education must also encompass other areas of education such as preschool, dual vocational training, and university education.

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