

# **‘The Relentless Pursuit of Excellence’: A Qualitative Perspective on Indicators of Growth Mindset in the London Effect**

Master’s Thesis of Dominik Harnisch

University of Salzburg

Supervised by:

Dr. Maria Tulis-Oswald

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Roland Bernhard

## **Abstract**

Since the early 2000s, London and other regions in England saw strong improvement processes of schools in disadvantaged circumstances – a phenomenon which entered the scientific discourse under the term ‘London Effect’. In a project funded by the FWF Austrian Science Fund, headteachers from schools that have turned around in the context of the London Effect were interviewed in order to explore what practices contributed to the improvement of quality. In this thesis, a theory-driven approach was employed to identify indicators of growth mindset in the interview data. Mindset theory proposes beliefs about the fixedness or malleability of intelligence and other traits to have an influence on people’s willingness and capacity to learn and to develop. Although headteachers’ growth mindset beliefs were not explicitly assessed in this study, findings of the qualitative analysis suggest that their schools’ improvements were associated with an organizational culture which is centered around individual and collective growth. Four overarching topics were identified and set into relation with mindset theory and other related constructs from the disciplines of psychology and the educational sciences: (1) Establishing a collective culture of responsibility; (2) Relentlessly striving for improvement; (3) Expecting and aiming for the best; and (4) School as a place to flourish and to grow. The findings of this study support and add on previous research about the London Effect as well as mindset theory and provide a myriad of suggestions for making educational practice more effective.