



Supplement to the Article: Data-Based School Improvement: The Role of Principals and School Supervisory Authorities within the Context of Low-Stakes Mandatory Proficiency Testing in four German states

Graf, T., Ramsteck, C., Ugbodu, J., Maier, U., Muslic, B. and Kuper, H. (2014): “Description of the categories”, available at http://www.ewi-psy.fu-berlin.de/einrichtungen/arbeitsbereiche/weiterbildung_bildungsmanagement/projekte/Steuerung_im_Bildungssystem/Ergebnisse/index.html (accessed 25th November 2014).

Description of the Categories

The findings are based on a categorial analysis of the interview data. Each of all cases of the principals’ level and the corresponding supervisory officials’ level are integrated into the analysis of the types and practices of principals. Thus, the supervision of schools is being considered a contextual factor for the use of evaluation results.

To answer the first research question, the interviews were analyzed according to the following categories: *the role of principals*, *communication (related to VERA¹, (un)structured)*, *measures/decisions (for instruction or school development)*, *evaluation*, *contextual factors for data use*, *support systems*, *concluding remarks*.

The category *the role of principals* indicates, whether school supervisory authority in the process of the use of VERA feedback reacts actively or passively. The category *communication (related to VERA, (un)structured)* focusses on the communication resp. reasons for the lack of it regarding VERA-8. The type of communication – structured or unstructured and its development compared to the first interview point are of particular relevance. The category *measures/decisions* contains statements on how measures due to certain VERA results are derived in different areas (e.g. on a personnel level, on a structural and methodical level regarding data use, in preparation and the teaching/learning material). Statements in the category *evaluation* describe in what way the test results are used for the public image of schools e.g. through publication of results and how they influence the self-evaluation and school-development process. The category *contextual factors for data use* collects structural, organizational, and individual conditions that promote or hinder the use of VERA-8 results. The school supervisory authority as a further contextual factor level for the current research project is of particular interest and specified in the following. The category *support systems* collects statements about the existence of support measures regarding VERA-8 at school. The category *concluding remarks* collects ideal-typical ideas for the communication and data use at schools as well as concluding evaluations and requests regarding VERA-8. The analyses of the second research question focus on patterns of behavior of school supervisory authority and its impact on the principals’ actions. Therefore, a closer look was taken at the following categories: *attitudes toward VERA-tests*,

¹ „Vergleichsarbeiten in der 8. Klasse (VERA-8)“ are state-wide standardized achievement tests in 8th grade in Germany.

comprehension of one's own role (support vs. control), VERA-data usage by school supervisory authority.

In the category *attitudes toward VERA-tests*, school supervisory authority's statements that refer to the personal perception and attitude toward VERA-tests were collected. The category *comprehension of one's own role (support vs. control)* bundles statements of the school supervisory authority on one's comprehension of his/her own role. These include subcategories like *supervisory authority* or *supporter*. In the categories that are associated with the *VERA-data usage*, those citations are subsumed that verify VERA-data usage by school supervisory authority. Hereby the subcategories *VERA communication impulse* or *VERA as basis for support measures* are also used. Moreover, school supervisory authority, that is also responsible for the administrative supervision, can use the VERA-test results for *monitoring purposes*. The analysis of the categories firstly concentrated on principal level. On this basis Thiel's (2008) organization models were used. Subsequently the categories of the school supervisory authority's categorial system were added as a contextual factor.