

Dedering, Kathrin

Support systems in school development. Separate or structurally interlocked use?

Die Deutsche Schule 116 (2024) 4, S. e1-e15



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Dedering, Kathrin: Support systems in school development. Separate or structurally interlocked use? - In: Die Deutsche Schule 116 (2024) 4, S. e1-e15 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-326017 - DOI: 10.25656/01:32601; 10.31244/dds.2024.04.10

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-326017>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:32601>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



WAXMANN
www.waxmann.com

<http://www.waxmann.com>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Dieses Dokument steht unter folgender Creative Commons-Lizenz: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de> - Sie dürfen das Werk bzw. den Inhalt unter folgenden Bedingungen vervielfältigen, verbreiten und öffentlich zugänglich machen: Sie müssen den Namen des Autors/Rechteinhabers in der von ihm festgelegten Weise nennen. Dieses Werk bzw. dieser Inhalt darf nicht für kommerzielle Zwecke verwendet werden und es darf nicht bearbeitet, abgewandelt oder in anderer Weise verändert werden.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

This document is published under following Creative Commons-License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en> - You may copy, distribute and transmit, adapt or exhibit the work in the public as long as you attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor. You are not allowed to make commercial use of the work or its contents. You are not allowed to alter, transform, or change this work in any other way.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.



Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS

DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation

Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung

E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de

Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der


Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Kathrin Dederling

Support Systems in School Development Separate or Structurally Interlinked Utilisation?

Summary

This article explores the question of the extent to which support systems (e.g. inspections, counseling) are related or linked to each other in the development process of schools in order to benefit from the resulting synergies. The results of an interview study with school leaders show that the systems are largely used separately and are rarely structurally inter-linked. The provision of integrating support systems by education policy/administration is advocated.

Keywords: support systems; school development; qualitative study

Unterstützungssysteme in der Schulentwicklung

Separate oder strukturell verzahnte Nutzung?

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag geht der Frage nach, inwiefern im Entwicklungsprozess von Schulen Unterstützungssysteme (z. B. Inspektionen, Beratungen) aufeinander bezogen bzw. miteinander verbunden werden, um von entstehenden Synergien zu profitieren. Die Ergebnisse einer Interviewstudie mit Schulleitungen zeigen, dass die Systeme weitgehend separat genutzt und selten strukturell verzahnt werden. Es wird für die Bereitstellung integrierender Unterstützungssysteme durch die Bildungspolitik/-administration plädiert.

Schlüsselwörter: Unterstützung; Schulentwicklung; qualitative Forschung

1 Introduction¹

The design of support systems in the education system has been part of school policy discussions since the 1990s (Fussangel et al., 2016). Since this time, numerous systems have been established in both Anglo-American and German-speaking countries (Webs & Manitius, 2021), such as school inspections, comparative tests, inter-school networks, school development counselling and much more (Järvinen et al., 2015).

¹ The original version of this article was published in German in issue 4/24 of the DDS – Die Deutsche Schule and has been translated using DeepL.

The establishment of these systems took place in the face of a change in ideas about the governance of school systems, according to which schools are, on the one hand, given more far-reaching organisational, content-related and personnel-related design options and, on the other hand, are subject to greater accountability with regard to the achievement of specified goals (Heinrich, 2016). Schools are responsible to develop *themselves* in a systematised, purposeful and self-reflective way and to engage in a continuous learning process that includes developing the ability to generate, collect and share knowledge and to change based on new insights (Stoll & Kools, 2017). Support systems are intended to “cushion” the challenges that arise for schools in a certain way (Webs & Manitiuis, 2021). With their help, the competences of school leaders and teachers for school development are to be strengthened and thus the development capacities of schools increased (Maag Merki, 2020). In this context, support systems are also seen as a response to the challenges of decentralisation outlined above (Arbeitsgruppe Internationale Vergleichsstudie, 2007).

Support systems have been the subject of a great deal of empirical research in recent years, so that considerable findings on the conditions and effects of effective school support are already available (Webs & Manitiuis, 2021). In previous studies, individual support systems have usually been analysed separately; the use of different support systems in school development processes, especially in the longer term, has rarely been considered.

Our own explorative study takes a different perspective here by analysing support systems against the background of individual school development processes. It also examines the extent to which individual support systems of schools are related to or connected with each other in their development process. This question is the focus of this article and will be answered below on the basis of the findings obtained in 16 qualitative guided interviews with school leaders. The intention is to make a contribution to a topic that has hardly been investigated to date.

It is assumed that the different support systems each offer specific assistance and thus provide individual potential for the further development of schools, but that they are also limited in their assistance. For example, comparative assessments can provide information on the level of competences achieved by pupils but cannot offer suggestions for interpreting the extent and causes of these competences. However, school development counseling is able to do this. By combining different support systems – and thus bringing together their respective potentials – the strengths of individual systems can be utilised and their limitations overcome. It is conceivable that this will create synergy effects between the systems and that schools can benefit in their development work from an interrelated or interconnected utilisation of several support systems (including their structural interlinking). For this reason, an examination of the *type of utilisation of several systems in the development process of schools* seems sensible and worthwhile.

The relevance of the coherence of support systems discussed here can be derived theoretically from Anglo-American models of school development. For example, the Co-

herence Framework by Fullan and Quinn (2016) is based on the idea that four components are essential for successful and sustainable change processes in schools, among others, and should be considered (simultaneously): 1) focussing alignment (in the sense of creating a collective goal), 2) cultivating collaboration, 3) deepening learning (in the sense of building different capacities) and 4) ensuring accountability (internally and externally). In the course of working on these components, the (integrated) inclusion of several support systems with their specific services mentioned above can be logically considered (Fullan, 2016; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Support systems in school development are first subjected to a conceptual clarification and theoretical systematisation (Chapter 2), before the current state of research on the use of several support systems in the development process is presented (Chapter 3). This is followed by a description of the research questions and the methodological approach of the study (Chapter 4) and the presentation of the corresponding results (Chapter 5). The article ends with a conclusion and outlook (Chapter 6), in which some limitations of the study and desiderata for future research projects are highlighted and implications for actors in education policy and education administration are formulated.

2 Support Systems in School Development

From a school policy perspective, support systems in the education system are generally intended to provide systematic assistance (Järvinen et al., 2015). Die Arbeitsgruppe Internationale Vergleichsstudie (2007) describes support systems as

“institutionalised services [...] which are intended to contribute to the improvement of school quality and whose services can be aimed at school boards, school administration, school management, teachers and pupils” (Arbeitsgruppe Internationale Vergleichsstudie, 2007, p. 144).

The services addressed refer to a very broad spectrum that includes institutions, actors, measures and procedures in equal measure (Webs & Manitiuis, 2021).

With regard to the individual school, support systems aim to ensure the functioning of everyday school operations (Altrichter & Zuber, 2021) and (as mentioned in the quote) to promote autonomous school quality development (Järvinen et al., 2015). In this context, they are now regarded as an essential prerequisite for successful school development processes (Pfänder, 2021). With regard to the system as a whole, support systems are intended to act as intermediaries according to the educational governance approach,

“to mediate and coordinate between the macro, meso and micro levels of the school system – between politics (with its claim to govern or control) and the subsystems (in which performance production takes place in the narrower sense, in schools and lessons)” (Altrichter & Zuber, 2021, p. 84).

The key characteristics of support systems are firstly their institutionalisation (i.e. the permanence and formalisation of the offer) and secondly their service character (Webs & Manitiuss, 2021). The latter refers to the voluntary nature of utilising the offer. However, the binding nature of the systems is also emphasised in the literature, as these are also introduced to implement educational policy and administrative reforms and projects (Fussangel et al., 2016). This makes it clear that support systems often have a *dual* function – that of supporting schools and their further development *and* that of controlling them. This is historically conditioned, as some systems – such as school inspections and comparative analyses – were introduced in the context of the so-called “new governance” postulated since the end of the 1990s as instruments or procedures of educational monitoring and associated with objectives such as controlling and accountability. This is shown, among other things, by the mention of the instruments and procedures in the overall strategy for education monitoring of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in 2006 (KMK, 2006). The corresponding instruments and procedures were *not* initially (or *not primarily*) introduced as systematic support for schools and their quality development. It was only over time that these control instruments were reinterpreted as support systems (Berkemeyer, 2021). Critically, it could be noted that they can therefore not currently be considered outside of the control hierarchy. The inherent simultaneity of control on the one hand and support on the other implies fundamental tensions in the logics of the respective systems.

Critical contributions from the field of “governmentality”, in which this is understood as an analytical perspective with which power relations can be analysed in a specific way (Foucault, 1991), understand the support systems accordingly as elements of a neoliberal form of government which, as procedures of accountability, contribute to school actors increasingly orienting their thinking towards the ways of thinking associated with the procedures, which are strongly linked to economic ethics, and aligning their pedagogical actions with these. At the same time, the development aspect of the systems fades into the background (e.g. Niesche, 2013).

The literature attempts to categorise the variety of existing support systems by means of different systematisations. The systems are differentiated as follows

- 1) according to the programmatically assumed degree of autonomy in the use of support and the possibility of co-determination and co-design of support services (distinction between compulsory (mandatory, school-externally organised) and optional (voluntary, school-internally co-designed) systems) (Berkemeyer, 2021),
- 2) with regard to the organisation of social relationships between the support system and the school (distinction between cooperation-, control- and competition-based systems) (ibid.; Järvinen et al., 2015) and
- 3) according to their starting points and objectives (differentiation of procedures for quality development via orientation parameters, analysis and feedback as well as coordination and monitoring) (Dederling, 2012).

This article focuses on the following support systems, which are primarily aimed at schools as addressees as procedures for promoting autonomous further development (also: Dederling, 2024):

- *School development counseling* (optional, cooperation-based, based on coordination and support): Forms of work and cooperation between individual schools and teachers who are not part of their teaching staff, in which the latter use targeted, professional approaches to provide school-specific solutions to problems or work on the problem-solving skills of teachers and which vary in terms of content characteristics (objectives, topics) and organisational characteristics (duration, content sequencing, target group, etc.) (Adenstedt, 2016; Dederling et al., 2013),
- *Inter-school networks* (optional, cooperation-based, based on coordination and support): network-like forms of work and cooperation between several individual schools (in the sense of communities of practice coming together), which vary in terms of their nature and orientation (objectives, time perspective, size, distance between network actors, etc.) (Pfänder, 2021),
- *Teacher training* (optional, cooperation-based, based on coordination and support): formal learning arrangements in the sense of content and methodologically well thought-out offers for teachers that vary (depending on objectives/topics) in terms of organisational features (duration, content sequencing, venue, target group, etc.) and methodological/didactic features (social forms, use of digital media) (Webs, 2021),
- *School inspections* (initially mandatory, now optional in many federal states, control-based, based on analysis and feedback): standardised procedures that measure the level achieved in key areas of school quality using existing, internally or externally obtained data and whose results are reported back to the school (Dederling & Kallenbach, 2023); in more recent generations, greater consideration is given to phases of independent school development work before/between school visits (Gärtner, 2021),
- *Comparative assessments* (mandatory (exception: Lower Saxony (in the period from 2019 to 2025)), control-based, based on analysis and feedback): written tests which, based on the requirements of the national educational standards, measure selected subject-related (and interdisciplinary) competences of all pupils in a class at a certain point in time across the board and on a year-by-year basis and whose results are reported back to the school in comparison with the school's same-grade class results and the federal state results (Dederling & Kallenbach, 2023) and
- *Central final examinations* (mandatory (exception: Rhineland-Palatinate), control-based, based on analysis and feedback): written tests that measure the subject-related (and interdisciplinary) competences of all pupils at the end of their school career, i.e. at the end of compulsory schooling (grade 9 or 10) or at the end of the upper secondary school level, and the results of which are reported back to the school (ibid.).

3 State of Research on the Use of Different Support Systems in the Development Process

For some support systems, the conditions and effects of school support have already been researched quite well, such as for school inspections (summarised in Altrichter &

Kemethofer, 2016; Dederering & Kallenbach, 2023), comparative tests (summarised in Dederering & Kallenbach, 2023; Richter, 2016) and inter-school networks (summarised in Pfänder, 2021). For other systems, however, findings are only available to a limited extent – for example, for school development counseling (e.g. Kamarianakis, 2021; Dederering et al., 2022).

The state of research on the individual support systems cannot be presented in detail here. With regard to an assessment of the support potential of school development systems, it can be summarised that the cooperation-based (optional) systems in particular are viewed positively in terms of their supportive contributions to the further development of schools, while controlling systems (which were mandatory in all German federal states when they were introduced and in the first few years thereafter) apparently provide less support (Pfänder, 2021). For a current, systematic review of a large number of systems considered to be central, please refer to Webs and Manitiuss (2021).

The question of linking different support systems (to enable synergies) in the context of individual school development work has only been investigated in one development and research project to date, in which the structural interlinking of different systems to support school development processes was conceptually anchored. The schools (in challenging situations) involved in the “*Potenziale entwickeln – Schulen stärken*” project were required to participate firstly in inter-school networks, secondly in individual school development counseling and thirdly in internal teacher training (Ackeren et al., 2021).

The results of this project indicate that school development consultations promote the transfer between the individual schools and the inter-school networks by increasingly pointing out possible applications for content from the networks in the schools and working together with the school stakeholders on how the content from the networks can be used and concretised in the individual schools. In particular, they encourage the development and expansion of sustainable structures in the schools for the transfer and implementation of content from the networks, for example by working together on a conceptual anchoring in the school programme or the institutionalisation of teams. In addition, school development consultancies support schools in selecting topics for teacher training, finding suitable trainers and clarifying the assignment with them (Kamarianakis & Webs, 2019).

4 Research Questions and Methodological Approach of Our Own Study

In contrast, a separate, explorative study examines the question of the separate or structurally interlinked use of support systems in school development at schools that are not involved in such project contexts and may have to organise interlinking on their own. Against the background of the sparse state of research described above, it aims to provide further insights into the topic.

The study examines the overarching question of the extent to which support systems are included in the development work of schools and adopts an alternative perspective in that it focuses on the individual school development process rather than individual support systems. Central support systems are to a certain extent localised within it and in this way are simultaneously – and also in their interaction – taken into consideration. The study analyses the following in detail:

- the extent to which different support systems are utilised by schools in their development process,
- what specific services the support systems used provide for the development process of schools and
- the extent to which individual support systems of schools are related to each other or linked with each other in their development process.

As already explained at the beginning, this article only refers to the latter question.² To this end, reference is made to empirical findings from an interview study conducted in 2019 in two German federal states in which field access already existed due to a realised study on school supervision (Dedering, 2020, 2021b). Within the area of responsibility of the school supervisory units included, schools and their leaders/principals were selected as interviewees. The schools were selected at the suggestion of contact persons in the school supervisory board according to the criterion of the (broadest possible) experience of the school stakeholders with support systems and with a view to a balanced ratio of the types of primary and secondary school offered in the respective federal states. Such an approach appears justifiable because the study's interest in findings is not an evaluative one, i.e. it is not about an assessment of the actual use of the systems in terms of scope and quality, but about new insights into the *way* support systems *are used*. The broad experience of schools with support systems was therefore the prerequisite for gaining knowledge and recourse to the relevant expert or insider knowledge of the contact persons in the school supervisory authority seemed unavoidable. The potential risk of generating a positive selection of schools, which could possibly bias the results in a certain direction, was considered to be low.

In total, interviews lasting 50 to 75 minutes were conducted at 16 schools. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were presented with an overview of central support systems in school development (Järvinen et al., 2015) and asked to report on how school development had taken place at their school over the past five to seven years and to what extent external support had been utilised. If it was not clear from their descriptions whether the support systems utilised in the process had been used separately or in relation to each other, they were asked about a potential connection between the individual systems.

The interviews were transcribed in full, line by line and in standard orthography (according to the rules of Dresing & Pehl, 2018). The analysis of the interview statements

2 For reasons of space, the other two questions are dealt with elsewhere and with reference to the specific perspective of the concept of school development as a regulatory process (e.g. Maag Merki, 2020) (Dedering, 2024).

was computer-assisted using the word processing programme MAXQDA 20. With the aim of structuring the amount of data, a category system was created – in accordance with the basic technique of the word processing programme – to whose elements (codes) text segments were assigned. The categories were developed both deductively on the basis of preliminary considerations based on the few findings already available on the topic (C 1 and C 3) and inductively from the data itself (C 2) (Mayring, 2015).

Table 1: Overview of categories for the type of use of several support systems in the development process of schools

Category name	Definition of the category	Anchor example
C 1 Separate utilisation	Utilisation of individual support systems to manage different tasks at different points in the development process (or simultaneously)	“We have been supported in this fusion process by a school development consultancy [...] We work together in a network [...] for the promotion of giftedness [...] This [the examination of the changed learning tasks, author’s note] has been our main topic in the last few months, where we have been accompanied within the framework of the focus evaluation [state-specific term for the school inspection, author’s note].” (2GS3)
C 2 Additive use	Parallel/simultaneous, but largely independent use of several support systems to accomplish a specific task	“The school development consultancy worked with the steering group [on the concept of cooperative learning, author’s note].”/“We then also took part in this network [...] colleagues travelled to other schools [...] that was important: ‘What cooperative forms of learning are cultivated there?’ (1GS4)
C 3 Structurally interlinked utilisation	Successive/consecutive or parallel/simultaneous, interrelated and interconnected use of several support systems to accomplish a specific task	“And very early on [after the first school inspection] we also had school development counseling in-house to evaluate the school inspection.” (2NGY2)

Source: Own illustration.

A technique based on the method of structuring qualitative content analysis was used for the analysis (ibid.). Accordingly, the coded interview transcripts were analysed by compiling, paraphrasing and analytically commenting on thematically relevant codings.

5 Results on the Type of Use of Different Support Systems in the Development Process

The findings of our own study indicate that all schools utilise support systems to a greater extent in their development process. School development counseling is used most frequently; participation in inter-school networks is common (although these do not involve joint work in terms of content, but rather an exchange of experiences). School inspections and the information they provide as well as teacher training are

also used in the individual school development process. Finally, the use of comparative tests and centralised final examinations and the information they provide can also be observed to a very limited extent (Dedering, 2024).

Table 2: Overview of the support systems used at the schools in the development process (also: Dedering, 2024)

School	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
SUS																
SDC																-
IN													-			-
TT			-								-	-		-	-	-
SI	-								-	-			-	-	-	
CT				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
CE		-	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	-	(-)	-	-	-	(-)	-	-	-

Note: SuS = support system: SDC = school development counseling, IN = inter-school networks, TT = teacher training, SI = school inspection, CT = comparative tests, CE = central examinations; (-) = support system not provided for school type (primary school)

Source: Own illustration.

In view of the question addressed in this article, it can be stated that in nine, and thus in more than half of the schools analysed, the individual support systems are not related to or linked with each other in the development process. Instead, they are each used separately to fulfil different tasks at different points in the development process (or at the same time). The development of a (new) pedagogical concept, for example, is managed with the help of school development counseling, which imparts new knowledge, provides impetus and moderates the development process; while the school-wide change of a teaching-learning setting is supported by the participation of selected functionaries in a corresponding inter-school network, in which, among other things, best practice examples for the realisation of the corresponding teaching-learning setting are passed on and discussed. Depending on the task, the schools select *one* specific system that appears to be helpful to them with its specific services on an ad hoc or needs-based basis.

At three schools, different support systems are utilised in parallel, but largely independently of one another, in order to accomplish a specific task. At one school, for example, in the course of a school-wide change in teaching and learning settings, the school leader/principal and individual teachers take part in extracurricular, cross-school teacher training courses on approaches and methods of mixed-grade learning, while at the other, a school development consultancy is commissioned to provide long-term support to the teaching staff in the implementation of mixed-grade learning in the classroom. Both systems support the school with the concrete services of imparting/providing new knowledge and passing on best practice examples for the implementation of mixed-age learning in the fulfilment of the task; however, the systems are not related to each other, for example by systematically taking up new knowledge

gained by individual teachers in the teacher training courses and integrating it into the counseling programme as part of the school development counseling service.

At the other schools, in the course of the task of developing a (new) pedagogical concept for the school, the participation of individual functionaries or teachers in an inter-school network on the one hand and the use of school development counseling on the other are similarly detached from each other. The different systems are neither brought together here in terms of their matching concrete support services (reinforcing each other), nor are they linked with each other in terms of their specific concrete support services (complementing each other).

Support systems are structurally interlinked at four schools. At three schools, school inspections and school development counseling are used successively and build on each other: School development counseling sessions are installed at the schools in order to evaluate the inspection results and determine the key areas of work and action plans derived from them. The specific concrete support services of both systems (the provision of (new) knowledge about the level of development achieved by the schools in central areas of school quality in the case of school inspections and the moderation/support of the evaluation process, the breaking up of routines and the setting of new impulses in the case of school development counseling) are combined with each other.

The school leaders/principals themselves also attribute the connection between the two support systems to the structurally inadequate support potential of school inspections: The inspections do not offer any real support for the school in the area of school development; there is a lack of process support, for example in the person of a coach, for further work:

“So an inventory is taken and then the colleagues say goodbye. That’s not a criticism of these people – it’s systematic. And the schools have to see for themselves: ‘How do we continue?’” (2NGY2).

At one school, a school development counselor is involved in order to moderate the process of selecting a topic from five offered topics (including language-sensitive subject teaching) as part of the (now optional) school inspections, whereas at another school the school development counselor initially supports the evaluation of the inspection results and then identifies transfer options for school development work:

“And thanks to our two school counselors, we were clever enough to say: ‘We are not opening up several tracks here, but what we have worked out as a target agreement within [the school inspection] is an essential part of the concept for the [new type of school]’” (1NGY1).

Finally, a simultaneous, interrelated use of different support systems can be found at a school where an external school development consultant provides long-term support to the steering group in the course of creating a new pedagogical concept and participates in the meetings of an inter-school network together with the school stake-

holders. During the individual school consultation process, the design options learned about in the network are analysed and discussed in a moderated manner with a view to the individual school and then adopted or discarded in the individual concept.

6 Conclusion and Outlook

In view of two decades of school policy discussions on the design of support systems and the extensive development and expansion measures in this regard, this article examines the question of the extent to which schools relate or combine different support systems in their development process in order to benefit from any synergy effects that may arise. The findings of an exploratory study on this issue, which has hardly been analysed empirically to date, indicate that individual systems at schools are largely used separately to cope with different tasks at different points in the development process (or at the same time), while a connecting, even structurally interlinked, use of different systems is rare. This can possibly be attributed to the simultaneity of control on the one hand and support on the other, which is inherent to some support systems and illustrates fundamental tensions in the logics of the respective systems.

When assessing the practical relevance of the results, it should be borne in mind that the exploratory study is subject to methodological limitations. For example, the only criteria used to select the schools were their broadest possible experience with support systems and the type of school they belonged to. Other criteria that may influence the use of the systems were therefore not considered. In addition, only the perspective of the school leaders/principals was obtained, which promises an overview, but is nevertheless specific. The views of other stakeholders were not taken into account. Finally, the investigation into the use of support systems in the school development process was conducted retrospectively, i.e. looking back at the process. This meant that any gaps in the interviewees' memories had to be accepted (Dederig, 2024).

Against this background, future studies, where there is a need in any case, should a) systematically select schools according to further criteria, b) consider other actors involved in school development work (steering group members, evaluation officers, etc.) with expert knowledge and c) adopt a process-accompanying perspective, possibly with recourse to further, observation-based survey methods (*ibid.*).

With regard to further criteria for school selection, school development capacity as the ability to react competently to internal and external challenges and to systematically and purposefully develop school and teaching programmes in line with these challenges appears interesting (Maag Merki, 2017). It could be surmised that the type of utilisation is related to the level of school development capacity: For example, an interlinked use of support systems may require a comprehensive school development plan with considerations for the systematic use of support systems, the establishment of which in turn requires a certain level of school development capacity.

Beyond the descriptive perspective adopted in our own study, further studies should systematically analyse the effects of combining individual support systems. This also implies a review of the assumption inherent in this article that a combination of different systems with their respective potentials leads to synergy effects, as well as an investigation of these effects.

However, if one assumes that schools can benefit from the combined strengths of different support systems in more complex tasks (such as the development of a pedagogical concept), at “neuralgic points” in the process (such as in the case of newly founded schools or fundamental reorientation of pedagogical work) and in the face of a lack of capacity at the schools (as is often, but not only, the case at schools in challenging situations), the own study provides initial, interesting findings with practical relevance despite its limitations.

There are then implications for education policy and education administration, because in view of the diverse tasks that schools have to fulfil and the lack of competence in schools in the area of school development in many cases, it seems advisable not to leave it to school stakeholders alone to deal intensively with the potential of the various support systems, to select the appropriate systems for their needs from the complex overall offer and to combine them in a meaningful way, but rather to provide them with an appropriate offer. This means that education policy and administration should develop and provide more comprehensive, structurally related and interlinked support services with different individual systems and publicise them to schools. The concept of the aforementioned development and research project “*Potenzielle entwickeln – Schulen stärken*” (Ackeren et al., 2021) could serve as a guide here.

This fits with the idea of an ideal support system developed by the majority of school leaders in the interviews, in which external, long-term process support takes a systemic view of the school as a whole and maintains a regular, dialogue-based exchange with the school stakeholders about their development work (e.g. with regard to prioritising tasks or developing a strategy for further action) (Dederling, 2021a). Under this “umbrella” of sorting, coordinating, analysing and initiating process support, further support systems can be included and made fruitful as a whole for the development process within the school (ibid.).

References and Internet Sources

- Ackeren, I. van, Holtappels, H. G., Bremm, N., & Hillebrand-Petri, A. (Ed.). (2021). *Schulen in herausfordernden Lagen – Forschungsbefunde und Schulentwicklung in der Region Ruhr. Das Projekt „Potenzielle entwickeln – Schulen stärken“*. BeltzJuventa. <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:21381>
- Adenstedt, K. (2016). *Schulentwicklungsberatung. Zwischen staatlicher Steuerung und einzel-schulischer Entwicklung: Untersuchungen zu Bedarf und Gestalt eines Unterstützungs-instrumentes*. Klinkhardt.
- Altrichter, H., & Kemethofer, D. (2016). Stichwort: Schulinspektion. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 19 (3), 487–508. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-016-0688-0>

- Altrichter, H., & Zuber, J. (2021). Unterstützungssysteme und Governance des Schulwesens: Das Beispiel Bildungsstandards. In T. Webs & V. Manitiuis (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 83–104). wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004853w>
- Arbeitsgruppe Internationale Vergleichsstudie. (Ed.). (2007). *Schulleistung und Steuerung des Schulsystems im Bundesstaat*. Waxmann.
- Berkemeyer, N. (2021). Unterstützungssysteme des Schulsystems – Bestandsaufnahme und institutionentheoretische Perspektiven. In T. Webs & V. Manitiuis (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 19–37). wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004853w>
- Dederig, K. (2012). *Steuerung und Schulentwicklung – Bestandsaufnahme und Theorieperspektive*. VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19534-6>
- Dederig, K. (2020). Die Schulaufsicht als Instanz der Beratung? Zur Realisierung eines neuen Handlungsprinzips im Kontext „klassischer“ Aufgaben. In E. D. Klein & N. Bremm (Ed.), *Unterstützung – Kooperation – Kontrolle. Zum Verhältnis von Schulaufsicht und Schulleitung in der Schulentwicklung* (Educational Governance, vol. 48) (p. 289–311). VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-28177-9_14
- Dederig, K. (2021a). „Also das ist der Punkt: Systemisch und im Dialog“. *Journal für Schulentwicklung*, 25 (3), 24–28.
- Dederig, K. (2021b). Unterstützung von Schulen durch Schulaufsicht – Zur Ausdifferenzierung eines Handlungsfeldes. *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung*, 11 (2), 235–254. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s35834-021-00290-x>
- Dederig, K. (2024). Unterstützungssysteme im einzelschulischen Entwicklungsprozess – Eine Betrachtung auf Basis des Konzepts der Schulentwicklung als Regulationsprozess. *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung*. Online first (accepted).
- Dederig, K., & Kallenbach, L. (2023). Forschungs- und Evidenzbasierung in Schulen. Das Forschungsfeld im Überblick. In K.-S. Besa, D. Demski, J. Gesang & J.-H. Hinzke (Ed.), *Evidenz- und Forschungsorientierung in Lehrer*innenbildung, Schule, Bildungspolitik und -administration* (Educational Governance, Vol. 55) (p. 125–152). VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-38377-0_7
- Dederig, K., Kamarianakis, E., & Racherbäumer, K. (2022). Schulentwicklungsberatung – Begrifflich-konzeptionelle Grundlegung, empirische Betrachtung und (kritische) Perspektivierung. *DDS – Die Deutsche Schule*, 114 (4), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.31244/dds.2022.04.02>
- Dederig, K., Tillmann, K.-J., Goecke, M., & Rauh, M. (2013). *Wenn Experten in die Schule kommen: Externe Schulentwicklungsberatung – empirisch betrachtet* (Educational Governance, Vol. 23). VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-01402-5>
- Dresing, T., & Pehl, T. (2018). *Praxisbuch Interview, Transkription & Analyse. Anleitungen und Regelsysteme für qualitativ Forschende*. audiotranskription.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchill, C. Gordon & P. Miller (Ed.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (p. 87–104). University of Chicago Press.
- Fullan, M. (2016). The elusive nature of whole system improvement in education. *Journal of Educational Change*, 17 (4), 539–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-016-9289-1>
- Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: Putting the right drivers in action*. Corwin Press.
- Fussangel, K., Rürup, M., & Gräsel, C. (2016). Lehrerfortbildung als Unterstützungssystem. In H. Altrichter & K. Maag Merki (Ed.), *Handbuch Neue Steuerung im Schulsystem* (2nd ed.) (p. 361–384). Springer VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92245-4_13
- Gärtner, H. (2021). Wie kann externe Evaluation/Schulinspektion zur Schulentwicklung beitragen? In T. Webs & V. Manitiuis (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 177–192). wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004853w>

- Heinrich, M. (2016). Zum Verhältnis von Schulinspektion und Schulaufsicht. Zwei Institutionen zwischen Ausdifferenzierung und Entdifferenzierung. In A. Paseka, M. Heinrich, A. Kanape & R. Langer (Ed.), *Schulentwicklung zwischen Steuerung und Autonomie* (p. 155–174). Waxmann.
- Järvinen, H., Sendzik, N., Sartory, K., & Otto, J. (2015). Unterstützungssysteme im Kontext von Regionalisierungsprozessen. Eine theoretische und empirische Annäherung. *JERO – Journal for Educational Research Online*, 7 (1), 94–124. <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:11049>
- Kamarianakis, E. (2021). *Schulentwicklungsberatung in schulischen Innovationsprozessen – Empirische Analyse zur Schulentwicklung in der Rhein-Ruhr-Region* [Dissertation]. Technische Universität Dortmund. https://eldorado.tu-dortmund.de/bitstream/2003/40376/1/Dissertation_Kamarianakis_2021_07_09.pdf
- Kamarianakis, E., & Webs, T. (2019). Schulentwicklungsberatung als Unterstützungsansatz bei der Auswahl schulinterner Lehrkräftefortbildungen. In V. Manitiuis & N. van Holt (Ed.), *Transfer zwischen Lehrer(fort)bildung und Wissenschaft* (p. 129–150). Waxmann.
- KMK (Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland). (2006). *Gesamtstrategie der Kultusministerkonferenz zum Bildungsmonitoring*. https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/Beschluesse_Veroeffentlichungen/Bildungsmonitoring_Broschuere_Endf.pdf
- Maag Merki, K. (2017). School Improvement Capacity als ein Forschungsfeld der Schulentwicklungs- und Schuleffektivitätsforschung. Theoretische und methodische Herausforderungen. In U. Steffens, K. Maag Merki & H. Fend (Ed.), *Schulgestaltung. Aktuelle Befunde und Perspektiven der Schulqualitäts- und Schulentwicklungsforschung. Grundlagen der Qualität von Schule 2* (p. 267–284). Waxmann.
- Maag Merki, K. (2020). Das Educational Governance-System im Dienste der Schulentwicklung. Oder: Wie kann Steuerung die Weiterentwicklung von Schulen unterstützen? In I. van Ackeren, H. Bremer, F. Kessl, H. C. Koller, N. Pfaff, C. Rotter, E. D. Klein & U. Salaschek (Ed.), *Bewegungen. Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft* (p. 405–417). Barbara Budrich. <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:19257>
- Mayring, P. (2015). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (12th ed.) Beltz.
- Niesche, R. (2013). Governmentality and My School: School Principals in Societies of Control. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47 (2), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2013.793925>
- Pfänder, H. (2021). Interschulische Netzwerke als Unterstützungssystem der Schulentwicklung. In T. Webs & V. Manitiuis (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 259–275). wbv.
- Richter, D. (2016). Die Vergleichsarbeiten in Deutschland: Eine Bestandsaufnahme. In Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Ed.), *Bildungsforschung 2020: Zwischen wissenschaftlicher Exzellenz und gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung* (p. 87–96). BMBF.
- Stoll, L., & Kools, M. (2017). The school as a learning organization: A review revisiting and extending a timely concept. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 2 (1), 2–17. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-09-2016-0022>
- Webs, T. (2021). Lehrkräftefortbildung als Unterstützungssystem zwischen Bildungspolitik und Unterrichtspraxis. In T. Webs & V. Manitiuis (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 277–307). wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004853w>
- Webs, T., & Manitiuis, V. (2021). Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen: zwischen Entwicklung von Einzelschulen und Steuerung des Schulsystems. In T. Webs (Ed.), *Unterstützungssysteme für Schulen. Konzepte, Befunde und Perspektiven* (p. 9–16). wbv. <https://doi.org/10.3278/6004853w>

Kathrin Dederling, Prof. Dr, Professor of Educational Institutions and School Development, University of Erfurt.

Email: kathrin.dederling@uni-erfurt.de

Correspondence address: University of Erfurt, Faculty of Education, Nordhäuser Str. 63, 99089 Erfurt