Quality Assurance in the German School System

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ABSTRACT Whereas internationally the shift towards quality control of school systems started in the early 1980s, mainly promoted by transnational agencies, this development only began in Germany in the mid 1990s. However, a clear-cut change from an input-controlled and centralised to a more output-controlled, decentralised and deregulated supervision system was initiated in most of the German Länder (the states of the German Federal Republic) no more than at the beginning of the new century. Main triggers were the sobering results of German pupils in international assessment tests like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) compared to other countries which regularly assessed the school system's performance by various means. Now, all 16 German Länder have started model projects with certain groups of schools in each state to try out how self-managing of schools or local management of schools works. They are on their way to an output-controlled steering system of school quality. Due to the federal constitutional system, the progression in this regard is differently advanced and the characteristics of the local management of schools are manifold. Nevertheless, in all Länder several concurrent aspects can be identified. The five structural components on which the new system of quality control is based are: the traditional tasks of the school supervisory authorities, external school inspections, internal self-evaluations, assessment tests for system monitoring combined with regular educational reports, and last but not least, teacher professionalisation. The fundament of this control system is an understanding of school as a self-managing organisation, which is responsible for educational, financial, and personnel matters. In this area of school self-management, Germany is just beginning to reform its highly centralised and regulated school system towards more self-managing structures at its base.

Whereas internationally the shift towards quality control of school systems started in the early 1980s, this development only began in Germany in the mid 1990s. However, a clear-cut change from an input-controlled and centralised to a more output-controlled, more decentralised system was initiated in most of the German Länder [1] only after the sobering results of German pupils in international assessment tests like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), compared to other countries which regularly assess their performances by various means.

This article will mainly describe the system of quality control which is now being established in the German Länder, as well as the influences of transnational agencies on it. It will then provide conclusions classifying the system of control into the internationally common categories of supervision by discussing politics and motives that shape the German system of quality control as well as what the international influences mean to democracy in the German school system. Finally, what should be the core purpose of a system of quality control is explored.

The authors' theoretical foundation for analysis is the notion of 'organisational education' (see Rosenbusch, 1997). In the German-speaking context, this concept refers to the mutual

influence of the structure of the school system and the school as an organisation on the one hand, and the educational processes on the other. Concretely speaking, how does the school system and school need to be designed in order to guarantee favourable prerequisites for education and to support educational work? Hence, the influence of the organisation on the teaching and learning process needs to be acknowledged. Administrative and organisational structures have to be brought in line with educational goals. Thereby, the unbalanced relationship (which is historically conditioned in many countries) between education on the one hand and organisation and administration on the other can be clarified.

The System of Quality Control in Germany and the Influences of Transnational Agencies

To understand the German system of quality control it is necessary to know that each of the 16 federal states (Länder) has its own individual school system, educational-political goals, and its education and administration traditions. Each education administration is organised in a more or less centralised way regarding school structure, school types, curricula etc. In order to align the variations, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz [KMK]) was established. The actual influence of the KMK depends on the subject of debate and its political dimensions. Its influence in matters of quality control has risen since the results of PISA 2000, which caused concern and manifold discussions among the German public about the federally structured school system. Since then, studies of transnational organisations have not only influenced German development by raising political and social awareness of the problems in the school system, but their results concerning characteristics of successful school systems serve also as a yardstick for the reform process. PISA 2000 not only revealed the mediocre performance of German pupils in general in comparison to other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states (see Schümer et al, 2004), but also considerable differences in school quality among the German Länder themselves.[2] Especially, those pupils from immigrant or socially deprived families have much lower chances of achieving a sound educational career than those with a 'stable' background. Due to this situation, the KMK has aimed to align the education policies of the Länder according to the key features of successful PISA countries, for example, by setting national education standards for all 16 Länder, by agreeing on regular national system monitoring, and on teacher professionalisation (see KMK, 1997, 2001a, b; 2002a, b).

The German case shows how international developments can influence a country's policies in education. Yet, an education system, and as a part of it the system of quality control, must not only be seen in relationship to international educational developments, but also to the broad context in which a national school system and its schools are operating: politics in general, economics, society, culture, ecology, technology, etc. As schools are embedded in their communities, and the country's educational system, and this again is embedded in society, schools have to anticipate, to react to, sometimes to counteract, to cope with and to support economic, social and cultural changes and developments. Altered social environments as well as a growing multicultural world based on the versatility of a pluralistic, postmodern and globalised society, result in an increase in complexity in many areas. The accumulation of knowledge, a vast information market, an ever-increasing supply of extracurricular information opportunities and a growing diversity and specialisation of the working environment are further aspects of this radical change (see Naisbitt, 1982; Coleman, 1986; Beck, 1986; Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990; Krüger, 1996). Hence, the school system in general and the individual school in particular need to renew themselves continuously in order to take present and future needs into account. What is needed is a school system which supports schools to develop towards a learning organisation (see, for example, Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992; Fullan, 1993, 1995).

To make this process of continuous change happen, the configuration of the system of quality control plays an important role. Internationally, a mega-trend that can be identified is to base this kind of quality control on the self-managing school as its core instrument. In line goes the tendency to broadly decentralise decision making for improvement on the one hand, and to foster centralised

legal and administrative measures of quality assurance on the other. Of course, this development has a considerable impact on democratic structures and the democratic culture of a society.

It is this change of paradigm that all 16 Länder in Germany are now undergoing. Schools are increasingly granted greater responsibility in educational, human resource, financial and organisational matters (see Wenzel, 2000; Huber & Gördel, 2006). Thus, schools are not being reformed 'top-down' to improve their quality, but they are expected to individually develop it from the 'bottom up'. This process started with school projects, and has recently led to new school legislation. Yet, many practitioners claim that this process of decentralisation is far too slow, and the schools are not yet empowered sufficiently. Some argue that some of these centralised instruments of quality control may be opposing the decentralising approach. Others argue that both approaches belong together and are just like two sides of the same coin. In addition to the stipulations on new responsibilities of schools, new regulations on (new) means of quality and accountability control have been added since PISA 2000 (AVENARIUS, 2004).

Due to the federal constitutional system, the progression to an output-controlled steering system of school quality is differently advanced and the characteristics are manifold. Nevertheless, in all Länder five concurrent structural components can be identified: the traditional school supervisory authorities, external school inspections, internal self-evaluations, assessment tests for system monitoring combined with regular reports about the educational system (Bildungsbericht Deutschland), and last but not least, teacher and school leadership professionalisation.

The fundament of the control system is an understanding of school as a self-empowered and self-responsible organisation, which is in charge of educational, financial and personnel matters. Common features are described in a synopsis that we conducted recently (see www.bildungsmanagement.net, www.EduLead.com).

Systems of Quality Control

School Supervisory Authorities

The traditional assessment system of school quality in Germany consists of school supervisory authorities, which supervise public as well as private schools (general education and vocational schools). Subordinate school supervisory authorities (Schulämter, similar to the level of English local education authorities) are given the power to check the regulations of quality supervision. These supervision regulations cover three areas of the teaching profession and school administration. Schools are supervised by (1) academic supervision (Fachaufsicht) of teaching and educational work; however, supervisory authorities are not permitted to intrude into the pedagogical responsibility of the individual teacher; (2) supervision of the staff at public sector schools (Dienstaufsicht); and (3) legal supervision (Rechtsaufsicht). Although the supervision regulations of the 16 Länder are similar concerning their stipulations, the organisation of the supervision system differs slightly from state to state.

The role of this supervisory system is changing, because the Länder are introducing school accountability, self-evaluation and quasi state-independent school inspection systems of supervision in order to meet the new needs of the self-responsible schools. Therefore, the Länder are untangling the supervisory responsibilities of the inspectorate (see below) and the school supervisory authority. Interfaces of their work will be the consulting and support service for inspected schools. Hence, they have to transform into 'authorities' of school support or school improvement. Whereas the inspectorate will have the task of evaluating and advising, the new school supervisory authorities will have to take on the position of 'quality institutes' that support the self-responsible school in its improvement measures. Thus, after an inspection, in many Länder, schools will be obliged to seek agreement on development measures with their school supervisory authority. Yet, at the moment, neither school authorities nor school leaders are sufficiently qualified for their new areas of responsibility. For school leaders, we argue, in line with many practitioners, there is particular need for training prior to appointment and in the first years of principalship or headship, and for support and continuous professional development. Moreover, these new tasks also demand the restructuring of the school supervisory authorities. As far back as 1994 Vogelsang proposed to reform them into independent service and supervisory agencies and to

give them a status similar to the former HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) in Great Britain or of the IGENs (Inspecteur Général de l'Education Nationale) in France.

Inspection

Inspections are to evaluate schools as self-responsible schools in their educational and organisational matters. These inspection visits are carried out by an inspection team, often coming from a quasi-independent quality institute of the respective Land. In all Länder, inspectors not only observe the relevant areas of school quality and report the results to the ministry of the respective school supervisory authority, and/or the legal body in charge of the maintenance of the school, but they also discuss the problems and possible areas of school development with the head teacher and the teachers. Thus, they seek to combine both roles, namely, to provide evidence for the purposes of accountability and to facilitate school improvement. Common in all Länder, too, is that – although the inspection is a public process – the results are not published (nor do pupil achievement tables or 'league tables' exist).

The inspection system of Lower Saxony serves as a general example for the practice in Germany, although they are just developing their model. The expert report of Lower Saxony on the organisation of inspections emphasises that the inspections should be focused on school as a systemic organisation, organised in a similar way and that they should be based on comparable evaluation criteria (see Arbeitsgruppe 'Schulinspektionssystem', 2005). Inspections are meant to serve as a monitoring system for the school system of Lower Saxony. The inspectorate on the one hand fulfils the task to evaluate the quality and needs of schools, and on the other hand, to survey certain areas of the school system in Lower Saxony in order to identify the fields in which improvement is urgent and what has to be changed in the long run. Once a year, the inspectorate reports to the ministry, so that it is able to conclude options for steering strategies aiming at improved quality management in the school system. Thereby, the focus of inspection always is the quality of instruction. Schools and practitioners are assessed on the basis of a quality framework, which exists in different versions for the various school types, as well as in inspection manuals. The quality framework of Lower Saxony encompasses 16 quality criteria and about 100 sub-criteria varying according to the school type (see Table I).[3] During the inspection itself, the inspectors contextualise the school and they evaluate teaching according to the evaluation criteria that are based on the aforementioned quality framework. The inspectorate emphasises that only the quality of instruction of the school as a whole is evaluated.

Inspections are carried out in four phases: (1) information about the school and preparation of the inspection team; (2) school inspection; (3) distribution of the report to the various stakeholders (school supervisory authority, school administration, teachers, the staff council, the parent and pupil council, and the legal body in charge of the maintenance of the school); and (4) if necessary, the head teacher has to improve certain areas of schooling. If a school is assessed to be 'below standard', the head teacher needs to consult the newly reorganised school supervisory authorities, and within one year, the school is inspected again.

In many Länder that have started a system of school inspections there is no sound assessment system of the inspection service itself, i.e. of the impacts of the inspectorates' work, their inspection teams, their frameworks of quality – comparable to the quality framework of Lower Saxony, which serves as a yardstick for the quality criteria being measured – as well as of the quality improvement measures in the schools. However, some judge this – purely democratic and therefore indispensable – aspect to be crucial for the quality of inspections. By assessing the inspectorate, on the one hand inspections may be improved, and on the other hand, credibility, trust, acceptance and support of school administrations and teachers may be gained, which is also highly important for the effectiveness of inspections. To consider this psychological aspect when building up a system of inspections seems for the German Länder to be highly essential.

In Germany, teachers are more used to working on their own than cooperating in teams. This work habit is now being altered, as the new responsibilities of schools and the demands on pupil-centred instruction methods require a change towards teamwork. The second aspect influencing the attitude of German teachers is the fact that teaching is by law defined as a profession in its own right; teachers enjoy autonomy in their teaching as there is the 'institution of

educational freedom'. School supervisory authorities and school leaders are only allowed to interfere to a certain extent in teaching as long as the teacher keeps to the stipulations of the curriculum (see academic supervision). These two characteristics probably will impede the process towards a 'culture' of quality control that consists not only of inspections but also of self-evaluations and assessment tests. At the moment, new demands are very likely to be refused or seen as a burden, and 'comparisons' between teachers, classes and schools – even if not published – may be rejected. Hence, at first, school inspections will probably further the teachers' loyalty to the teaching profession and hinder their loyalty to school as an organisation, as inspections seem to weaken the position of teachers. Lower Saxony has taken preventive measures by integrating internal and external assessments of the inspectorate in their system of school inspections.

Quality characteristic	Clues (examples)	Key indicators (proposals)	Instruments/methods (examples)
Support of the pupils in their learning processes Quality criteria (1) conditions that support learning and working (2) systematic support of intellectually weaker or stronger pupils (3) support of pupils with specific talents (4) regular individual assessments of the individual pupil progress			questionnaires, guided interviews, classroom observations, photo documentations and the analysis of documents, pupil assignments and statistics
Quality Area 1: Processes & Outcomes of Instruction Descriptive text			
Quality Characteristic 1.1: Formation of the Personality			
Self-confidence/	…	…	…
self-competence	…	…	…
1.1.2. Willingness to take on responsibility, social commitment and tolerance	…	…	…
1.1.3. Openess for future challenges			

Table I. The Quality Framework of Lower Saxony (our translation).

In Lower Saxony, internal and external evaluations of the inspectorate have the foremost objective of improving the institute's processes, methods, and instruments regarding the control of school and classroom quality, i.e. to improve the learning achievements of the pupils (Arbeitsgruppe 'Schulinspektionssystem', 2005). Hence, the quality requirements for the inspectorate are the same as for schools. Also, schools are included in the assessment of the work of the inspectorate. External evaluations are planned to be carried out at the same intervals as those for schools, i.e. every four years.

Quality Frameworks: a way to standardise inspections and a yardstick for self-evaluations

Quality frameworks provide orientation for school inspections and self-evaluations of schools and can serve as guidelines for schools for quality development processes and the formulation of school profiles.

The quality framework of Lower Saxony was inspired by those of other countries, for example, Austria, Scotland or the Netherlands, as well as the by the evaluation concept of the INIS-project of the Bertelsmann Foundation [4] and the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model for quality management. It is based on six quality areas, which are relevant

for the control and improvement of school quality. These areas are (1) processes and outcomes of instruction; (2) professionalism of teachers; (3) school leadership and management; (4) school and class atmosphere; (5) contact with non-school partners; and (6) quality management (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2003). These quality areas are described by 32 characteristics of quality, which are in turn specified by 90 criteria. By providing examples, these characteristics and their criteria are illustrated in situations that may occur in schools or classrooms. Furthermore, indicators are assigned to each of the 32 quality criteria. These indicators can be observed and evaluated with certain instruments in order to assess whether the quality criteria have been fulfilled or not. All information is provided in a table that makes the quality framework easily applicable for self-evaluations (see Table I).

Self-evaluations

The latest changes in the school legislations of the Länder also reflect this development of the supervisory system moving away from centralised and external assessments towards cooperative and internal means of quality assurance. In return to the higher degree of administrative and academic self-responsibility granted to schools, they have to set up school-specific profiles, in which values and pedagogical principles and the objectives and measures of classroom and school development, etc. are laid down. Moreover, in a development planning document schools are obliged to regularly evaluate their work for their self-defined programmes, because they are held accountable for the development of their work to themselves, to the supervisory authorities, to pupils and parents as well as to the public.

This approach to self-evaluation within the quality control system demands a change of the role (and duties) of the school supervisory authorities: external check ups are replaced by internal self-evaluation and by external evaluations such as meta-evaluations of the school reports on self-evaluation as well as by inspections. As mentioned before, the task of the school supervisory authorities in future will increasingly be to assist schools to interpret the results of tests, evaluations and inspections on school quality, as well as to advise and support them in their efforts towards school and classroom improvement. Moreover, the Länder are building up support systems consisting of further training and development opportunities, counselling, supervision, etc. to help school leaders and teachers fulfil their new responsibilities in the field of quality control and quality development. Without external assistance, the implementation of a system with self-assessment would probably fail because of the potential resentment of teachers and school administrations (see Wenzel, 2000; Hopkins & Lagerweij, 1996). What is regarded as highly essential is that strategies have to take the individual school into account.

Research on self-evaluation supports the efforts in the German Länder to combine self-evaluation with considerable support for schools in school development measures. Experimental studies have shown that schools have problems in fulfilling both tasks of self-evaluation at one time: to evaluate and be held accountable for school and classroom quality as well as to improve and develop it (Clift et al, 1987). Additional contra-productive aspects for effective self-evaluation that leads to a process of improvements are, for instance, public pressure on schools and teachers, a poor school atmosphere, an incompetent school management or a lack of qualifications and competences (see Huber, 2004). In these cases, the real circumstances of the particular school are often covered up, weaknesses are not seen as a potential for learning, and thus, improvements do not take place. This situation could easily become real for Germany, because schools and teachers are not used to this. An institutionalised evaluation culture that is not seen as a threat for the teaching profession but as an opportunity for schools is still a desideratum in the German school systems.

Assessment Tests

Until 2004, the German school system was an input-oriented control system based on political and administrative regulations for school education. However, in 1997, the 16 Länder agreed to introduce an output-oriented control system in order to improve the quality of school education as well as make it comparable among the Länder. With the school year 2004/05, all 16 Länder began

to implement nationally binding standards in schools. Based on competence areas of the respective subjects, regarding the knowledge, abilities and skills pupils are expected to have at a certain stage of their school career, pupils will be assessed against these educational standards. These results of quality supervision – both individual (of classes and schools) and general (of regions, Länder, or certain pupil-populations) – will serve a Land as a starting point for specific strategies of quality development in classrooms, schools and its education system. Alongside the participation in various international assessment tests, testing is expected to start no later than 2007 in all Länder.

Each Land is on the way to building up its own monitoring system. However, in 2004, the Standing Conference KMK founded the Institute for Quality Development in the Education System (Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen [IQB]), a quasi-independent scientific quality institute at federal level linked to the Humboldt University in Berlin. The IQB aims to work closely with the respective institutions of the Länder in order to assist them in their measures for the development of school quality, to further develop, to standardise and to evaluate the attainment according to the national educational standards, as well as to scientifically survey their implementation process in the Länder.

On one hand, especially teachers, but also school supervisory authorities, judge the benefits of student assessment tests as problematic. It is argued that standardised assessment tests would be likely to foster cognitive competences in classroom teaching – because they are easily measurable – and the teaching of other important competences such as methodological skills, critical thinking or taking on responsibility for oneself and for society would be neglected. In the German Federal Republic the notion that education has to assist young people in their development of their own personality, that they take on an emancipated attitude towards the political and social system, always has played an important role due to Germany's specific history of having experienced two authoritative states in the last 70 years. Therefore, great emphasis has always been put on teaching methods that help develop these competences.

On the other hand, representatives of the business world, parents, politicians and the public, demand more transparency in the processes in schools and classrooms, and their quality, as well as in the education system on the whole. Educationalists therefore argue in favour of standardised tests, because they make it possible to evaluate knowledge and skills at a high level of objectivity despite the defects in measurement. Moreover, they point to the fact that inspections and self-evaluations would consider aspects of education that are not measurable. Hence, system monitoring would also take into account the 'soft' criteria and social components.

However, both sides critically see that school leaders and teachers need to be specially instructed in order to derive the correct conclusions from test results for classroom and school development measures as well as for the promotion of the individual pupil. At the moment, the vast majority of German teachers and school administrations do not possess these statistical skills. Professional development institutes are just at the beginning to qualify school personnel in these matters. Moreover, a finite knowledge base, how the system level can use results from education monitoring, so that they would be able to govern the education system effectively and to adjust the policies according to the problems in the schools (see Böttcher, 2003; Döbert, 2003), does not exist.

Education Reports

The system of education reports was decided upon in 2003 by the Federation and the Standing Conference KMK. The reports aim to inform the public systematically and comprehensively on important data and performance indicators in education. The first educational report for Germany was published in May 2006.

Teacher and School Leadership Professionalisation

Although the Länder are moving from an input-controlled to an output-controlled education system, there still will be elements of an input-oriented education system. Supervision of curricula and textbooks, standardisation of school-leaving examinations and the regulation of university modules and state examinations of teacher education – to guarantee its quality – will still be an important part of the supervision systems in the German Länder.

The systems of teacher education have a strong academic orientation. With 6-8 years of training, it is the longest education for teachers in Europe. Teacher studies are divided up into two parts. First, there is an academic study period at university which is around 4-5 years. This is followed by school-based teacher training, which generally takes two years. After each phase, student teachers need to sit a state examination, the so-called first and second state examination. It is considered as problematic that there are neither special programmes at university – tailor-made for schooling – but student teachers take part in the seminars and lectures of the different subjects that may prepare for a university position or other occupations as well, nor a curriculum for the instruction courses of the teacher training. As well, the pedagogical and practical aspects of the university education are regarded as of only inadequate relevance and quality (see Oelkers, 1994).

For teachers and school leaders, state-run teacher training institutes offer professional development courses. Lately, a shift in school legislation has taken place that makes continuous professional development compulsory. Furthermore, it has been decided that school leaders are held responsible for the planning and organisation of in-school training for teachers in order to meet the needs of the individual school. Thus, a trend is developing towards context-oriented, school-based seminars. Hence, staff development is one important aspect of the local management of schools.

School leader candidates most often do not need to complete a qualifying course before, but usually only after their appointment to the position (see Huber, 2004). For these leadership courses, there exists no common curriculum among the Länder. It is common among the Länder that school leader recruitment emphasises teaching competences (the grades in the state examinations or the official assessments by superiors) rather than leading and management skills.

There is public agreement that the German teacher qualification needs to be updated according to the new challenges and work areas of teachers, such as school development and school management. Hence, in order to make teacher education comparable and accountable, the KMK defined standards for teacher education (KMK, 2004). The standards are aligned to the developments in educational research, pedagogy and other sciences that contribute to the progress of teaching and learning, the school and the education system. From 2005 onwards, these standards are obligatory for the four stages of teacher formation in all Länder. Moreover, the Länder agreed on evaluating their teachers against these standards in the future. Emphasis is put on the core competences of 'teaching, educating, assessing/diagnosing and innovating'. Moreover, a teacher needs to be an expert in his/her school subjects and must commit himself/herself to continuous professional development.

In terms of contents, the standards set the following accents (areas of competences) for the curriculum of the teacher studies:

1. Teaching and education: reasoning and reflection about the institutional processes (see Table II for the respective competences);
2. Profession and role of the teacher: teacher professionalisation, situations of conflict and decision making, the conditions of schooling;
3. Didactics and methods;
4. Aspects and processes of learning, human development and socialisation;
5. Motivation for learning and achievements;
6. Differentiation, integration and support of individual pupils;
7. Diagnosis, assessment and counselling;
8. Communication: interaction, moderation and conflict resolution;
9. The professional application of media for teaching;
10. School development: history, structures and development of the education system and school;
11. Educational research: objectives and methods, interpretation and use of research results.

At the moment, there is a debate about whether to identify teaching as a profession in its own right or not. This discussion is interlinked to the process of decentralisation of the school system, because the new responsibilities of schools and teachers call for their qualification and professionalisation as well as their self-evaluation by peer groups. If teaching is defined as a profession in its own right, it would imply that quality control and quality development of the teacher professionalisation should become independent of the supervision of the state. Instead, self-controls by self-governing bodies would have to be set up with chambers at the different system-

levels similar to those of medics or lawyers. Hence, the self-government bodies and chambers would then be responsible for the development of an ethos of the teaching profession and of quality criteria for their qualification as well as for controlling them (Schlömerkemper, 2001; Bronder, 2003, 2004). Thus, the question of defining teaching as a profession comprises new possibilities of professionalisation, evaluation and quality control, which might be more effective than the existing ones by the state (see the previous section).

Competence 1: Teachers thoroughly plan a lesson in terms of the subject matter, didactics and methods and are able to teach the lesson correctly.	
Standards for the theoretical part of the teacher education (university study)	*Standards for the practical part of the teacher education (in school teacher training)*
Teacher graduates: – know the various theories in the field of education and didactics and are able to critically reflect them – know didactics in general as well as for their specific subjects and know how to plan a teaching unit – know the different teaching methods and types of questions in the different situations and know how to use them – know concepts of the pedagogy of media and of the psychology of media as well as the possibilities and limits of instruction with such media – know the means of assessment of teaching and the classroom quality.	Teacher-training graduates: – combine their knowledge of the respective subject and its specific didactics and plan and conduct lessons – choose topics and methods, forms of teaching/learning and communication – integrate modern information and communication technologies in a appropriate way – assess the quality of their own teaching.
Competence 2: Teachers support the learning process of their pupils by creating productive learning situations. They motivate their pupils and enable them to establish correlations and to use their newly learned knowledge.	
Comptentence 3: Teachers promote their students' abilities to become "self-responsible learners".	

Table II. An example: Area of Competences 1: Teaching and Education (KMK, 16 December 2004) (our translation).

Conclusions

Classification of the German System of Quality Control and the Distribution of Authority – politics and motives

At the moment, internationally, three general kinds of quality control categories can be identified and are discussed, which depend on the supervisory institutions prevailing: (1) the inspection-based system (regulatory-controlled), (2) the monitoring-based system, and (3) the professionally controlled system. All three systems can be organised in various ways, and they can be combined in various ways in order to complement one another. Out of these different configurations and combinations, various types of accountability control may emerge, depending on the specific emphasis. One differentiates between a bureaucratically, politically, legally, ethically, professionally or a market-oriented type of accountability control (see, for example, Moos, 2005). At least one of these types prevails in a quality control system. The respective emphasis reveals to a considerable extent not only how the authority is distributed among the institutional players but also which politics, objectives and interests shape the control system.

The German supervisory system can be classified as a system combining all three types of quality control systems. Whereas it once was dominated by aspects of regulatory and professional control defined by the state, it is now being shifted to a more monitoring-based system run by the state. As a consequence, schools are accountable for the quality of their work to school supervisory authorities. Schools assess their quality by a mixture of internal and external assessments. External assessments, such as large-scale assessment tests and school inspections, are not directly subordinate to the state but they are carried out by quasi state-independent institutions. Hence, the main task of the state-run school supervisory authorities will be no longer to control regulations

but to advise schools in their quality development. This system can be characterised as a mixture of a bureaucratic and a legally oriented type of accountability control. Moreover, the aspect of professionalisation plays a considerable part in the German systems of quality control. However, this professionalisation is highly dependent on state legislation and regulation. There is no pressure resulting from a free market for the modernisation of schools and of teaching methods or for continuous professional development, as it is, for instance, the case for the medical profession or for lawyers. The system described discloses that it paradoxically depends on two poles: centralisation and decentralisation.

In the German systems of quality control, four different institutional players and stakeholders can be differentiated. These are the state, state-subordinated political and academic institutions, schools, i.e. teachers, and the public. Authority and power lies either in the hand of the state or of the public. Nevertheless, the state (i.e. the ministries of education) is going to distribute its power among other institutions. In charge of quality control are or will be institutions such as the supervisory authorities, quality or teacher training institutes, academic institutions e.g. the IQB, or the schools themselves. This trend towards decentralisation means that not only the ministries of education themselves but also directly subordinate state institutions like the school supervisory authorities are losing power, whereas schools and teachers are about to gain authority. Moreover, through the monitoring and reporting system, the state has strengthened the influence of the public in the control system and thus on the developments in the education system in general.

Due to the different stakeholders in a supervisory system, Kogan (1986, 1996) classifies systems of quality control with regard to the actors, i.e. the stakeholders instead of the institutional configurations (see above): (1) state control and accountability by bureaucratic means and legal regulations, (2) professional control and accountability, and (3) consumer control and accountability. These models can be realised and combined in various ways, as well. However, the essential aspect of this classification lies with the question *where* is the locus of control over evaluative decision processes located? Altrichter & Heinrich (2005) thus come to the following matrix of accountability control:

Dominant actor	Decisions on evaluations are primarily made	
	Internally	Externally
State	School leaders (as legal/bureaucratic superiors)	School supervisory authorities, inspection teams, external achievement tests, accreditation
Profession	Self-evaluations (school leaders as considerate coordinators)	Peer review
Consumer	Participation of the parents/pupils (e.g. decisions in school councils, partaking in the evaluation process as independent observers (school leaders as consumer oriented managers))	Competition, consumer decisions (e.g. voucher system, transparent information about the schools` performances, private schools)

Table III. Models of accountability (Altrichter & Heinrich, 2005; our translation).

Political motives for the new balance in the German supervisory systems between centralisation and decentralisation are the economic and bureaucratic overloads of the central state institutions. Moreover, their policies and actions do not seem to be as successful in terms of quality assessment, improvement and innovation as those pursued at the grass-roots level close to the very problems. This is shown by the results of two studies conducted by the German Institute for International Educational Research, Frankfurt am Main (DIPF) on the school systems of successful PISA countries (Döbert et al, 2004; Döbert & Sroka, 2004). Therefore, the objective behind the new German quality system is firstly to enhance the quality of education in order to be internationally competitive. Secondly, it is about bureaucratically and financially assisting the education ministries. A third objective is that the administration aims to encourage and support the professional groups in a civil society to take over responsibility within the education system. This political move goes in line with the general objective of a democratic state bound to the internationally prevailing principle of good governance; that is, to strengthen the democratic culture in society by furthering its partaking in the shaping of the public sphere.

However, teachers do not get a similar role in the system of quality assurance of teacher education and further professionalisation as they get when it comes to the accountability of schools. In this domain, the Länder prevent a market-oriented system as well as the distribution of their authority. The motive is the states' responsibility for education, as general education plays a major role in guaranteeing equal quality in order to turn the constitutional objective to provide equal opportunities into reality. Therefore, the Länder argue that the quality of teacher education and professionalisation should not be left to diverse suppliers and a market system. Yet, the example of Hesse has shown that accreditations might be a favourable solution to the problem.

Core Purpose

The central question regarding a system of quality assurance is whether it fulfils its purpose. This requires reflection on the role, function, and goals of the school, and consequently on the role, function, and goals of an adequate quality control system. Hence, what Huber (2004) claims for school leadership, namely, 'a multi-stage adjusting of ... aims', can also be demanded from a quality control system. A multi-stage adjusting of aims requires putting forward the following questions. The first question would be: what are the essential aims of education? From this, the corresponding aims for schools and schooling in general can then be derived: what is the purpose of school and what are the aims of the teaching and learning processes? Considering the perspective of the new field of 'organisational education' (Huber, 2004; Moos & Huber, forthcoming, Rosenbusch, 2005), one should ask: how does the school organisation need to be designed and developed in order to create the best conditions possible so that the entire school becomes a deliberately designed, educationally meaningful environment? This in turn would enable effective and substantial teaching and learning to take place as well as multifaceted and holistic educational processes that would lead to achieving the schools' aims. Consequently, we should ask: how can this aim be realised through teaching and through the communicative everyday practice in schools and the culture of a school? This means that all quality control activities ought to be brought in line with these fundamental premises.

The principle that 'school has to be a model of what it teaches and preaches' (Rosenbusch, 1997b) has consequences for schools, school leadership and quality control. It implies that a quality control system needs to be based upon certain principles, which are oriented towards the constitutive aspects of a fundamental educational understanding as well as upon general democratic principles (see Rosenbusch, 1997): school inspectors, supervisory authorities, and all institutions in charge of quality control should adjust their educational perspective; educational goals dominate over administrative requirements, and assessments and control measures only serve an instrumental function. Moreover, in a democracy, control systems must be made legitimate in society and above all to those who are 'controlled'. Power must be handled carefully, and the balance between influence and trust has to be maintained. The main principles of education in schools have to be respected: maturity has to be encouraged when dealing with pupils, teachers, and parents, acceptance of oneself and of others has to be practised, autonomy has to be supported, and cooperation has to be realised. Quality control systems should be aligned to these beliefs, too.

So far, in many countries bureaucratically determined school administration has concentrated on avoiding mistakes, on controlling, detecting, and eliminating weaknesses instead of – as would be desirable from an educational point of view – concentrating on the positive aspects, reinforcing strengths, and supporting cooperation; it should be about 'treasure hunting instead of uncovering deficiencies'. Admittedly, a quality control system cannot define itself as a 'treasure hunter' alone. Nevertheless, its activities should follow the 'logic of trusting oneself and others' (see Huber, 2004; Rosenbusch, 2005): it is necessary to have trust in the abilities of the schools and those working within them. Then, mistakes can be addressed more openly. And finally, all individuals involved have to be respected and appreciated, and special emphasis has to be placed on a shared collegial obligation regarding the shared goals.

Notes

[1] The Federal Republic of Germany comprises 16 states; in German: Länder. (Singular is: Land.)

[2] The performance of the German Länder was evaluated in an additional assessment study, PISA-E (PISA-Erweiterungsstudie; see Baumert et al, 2001).

[3] This Quality Profile is found on the Concept for School Quality of Lower Saxony (see below)

[4] www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

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