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Working with data: Both an opportunity and challenge for school leaders

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Abstract

The article analyses the concept of data, presents various purposes of working with data in schools and deals with the readiness of people at school to work with data. In the final part the article summarizes selected results of a pilot survey carried out in Czech schools and abroad, focused on finding out how and with what data schools work, which attitudes school leaders adopt towards this activity, how those respondents evaluate their own readiness for work with data and which needs they express in this respect.

Keywords: *working with data, school leaders, accountability, school leadership, school development*

Introduction

In many countries it has long been considered necessary to acknowledge the importance of the use of data in the operation of schools (OECD, 2007). While earlier efforts for school development were mainly based on general managerial recommendations, today the stress is on development based on concrete data, relevant for specific schools. Thus, data are a means of fulfilling the multilateral obligation of accountability and, at the same time, a source of school development (Earl, LeMahieu, 1997; Pol, 2007; Davidsdottir, Lisi, 2012; and others).

In the opening part this paper defines the term data and describes various kinds of data, the purpose of working with data and leaders' readiness to work with data in schools. Part two offers results of a pilot survey aimed at how people work with data in schools, what attitudes school leaders adopt towards this activity, how these