Performing the RuN

Appropriation of evaluation data and management by objectives in the saxon school system

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   - Problematize the usage of evaluation data

   - Management by objectives / institutional target agreements: experiences, attitudes, processes

   - Writing objectives

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1. Context of the ‚RUN‘-Study

Context of the ‚RUN'-Study

- reform of the educational system in the late 1990s
- new ‚will to empirical knowledge' (Höhne, 2011)
- governing schools with data
- quality as a dispositif of modern societies
- expansion of audit systems and contract management

2. Research Design

Main research questions

- What is talked about school inspection and management by objectives?

- How do school members and members of school administration talk about school inspection?

- What effects do these talks produce?

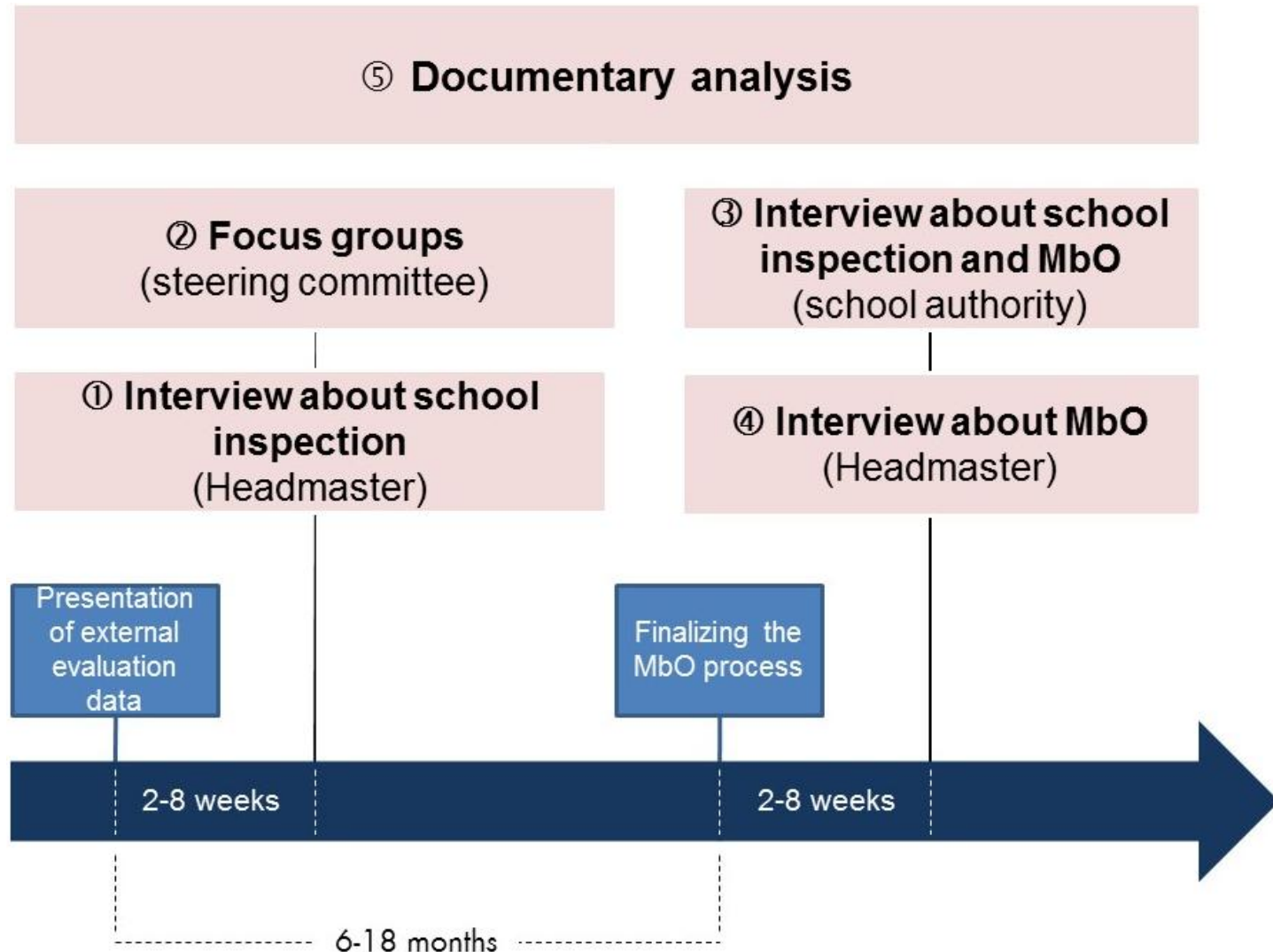- How are these talks related to the development of schools?

Doing research with qualitative data - What's special about this?

- exploring a yet rarely explored field of research topics
- Being open to find out something that's new
- the basic goal is to understand (and not to quantify) the research topic, findings shall be generalized (not representative)
- pay attention to the people who are regarded as research objects and their subjective views, backgrounds, experiences
- reconstructing different perspectives on a research topic
- acquire valid results by comparison of data
- texts serve as an empirical data basis

The ‚RUN'-Study

- qualitative design
- rarely pre-structured methods:
  - Interview data,
  - Focus groups
  - analysis of documentaries
  - interpretative and hermeneutic data analysis
- sample: 30 schools
- time period: April 2010 – December 2012

Research design

⑤ **Documentary analysis**

② **Focus groups** (steering committee)

③ **Interview about school inspection and MbO** (school authority)

① **Interview about school inspection** (Headmaster)

④ **Interview about MbO** (Headmaster)

Presentation of external evaluation data

Finalizing the MbO process

2-8 weeks | 2-8 weeks

6-18 months

3. Results

School inspection reports

5.1 talking about school inspection

- Concepts:
  - school inspection = examination practices
  - school inspection = instrument of economization: establishing (new) performance norms?
  - production of ‚normality' by standardizing school inspection: who's ‚in' and who is ‚out'?
  - school inspection = inherent part of pedagogical practices
  - school inspection = scientific practices of (re-) cognition: what's the ‚truth' of a school?
  - school inspection = instrument of development: Old habits die hard?

Functionalizing the evaluation data:

- recognising good practices and proving them to others
- identifying the pedagogical terrain: putting schools in a spatial order
- evaluation results seem to be risky: playing hide and seek
- requesting help: communicating with the administration
- enhancing motivations to continue good working practices
- supplementing the principal's work
- ‚learning' something specific about oneself („where we stand", blind spots)

Reading evaluation data

- time and complexity as strategies of ordering
- productions of subjective realms of experience: adjusting compliances
- questioning the truth of the evaluation data
- standardization vs individualization
- ‚making sense': searching for explanations on the evaluation results

Working on evaluation data

- strategic publication practices: What works for the specific school?

- talking about circular developments: taking actions, defining goals

- mind the „red caskets": focussing on poor performances

- authorizing own projects through evaluation data

- bringing up classroom interactions as the main focus of development

Management by objectives

Management by objectives: Experiences and attitudes

- MbO is framed by political and economic conditions

- contracts as occasions for problematize schools quality

- MbO functions as communicator of organizational norms

- Materiality matters: Paperwork – paper vs. work?
  - documenting objectives
  - accepting an obligation
  - delegitimizing objectives
  - rationalizing one's practices
  - balancing accounts with the school authorities

Producing objectives

- dilemma between personalization and institutionalization

- contradictions between systemic aims and institutional aims

- re-framing hierarchy

- objective agreement between commitment to oneself and imposed order

- practicing management by objectives: It's up to the boss?

Writing objectives

- formatting objectives: content follows form
- undermining format directives and re-structuring objectives
- chrono-logical orderings of schools
- timing objectives: the role of school year plans
- de-thematize school authority
- (re-)citing school inspection reports
- producing organisationality

4. Conclusions

Conclusions

(1) school inspection evokes certain school actors (headmasters) to take a central role in development processes

(2) school inspection results are used strategically as a part of the micro politics of schools

(3) school inspection reports are an important source which frame the quality discourse at schools but the appropriation is marked by (semantic) shifts and fractions

We're happy to answer your questions