Hessische Lehrkräfteakademie

HESSEN

# Internal and external evaluations of schools:
## What is their impact on (individual) school development?

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# Outline

- External evaluation  of schools / school inspection in Germany
  - » Characteristics
- Internal evaluation of schools:
  - » Overview of situation in Hesse and beyond
  - » Compared to external evaluation of schools
- Evaluation of schools and school development:
  - » Lack of competencies in schools to conduct effective internal evaluations
  - » Role-mixing of external evaluation

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# External evaluation of schools – school inspection

# School inspection in Germany – Characteristics I

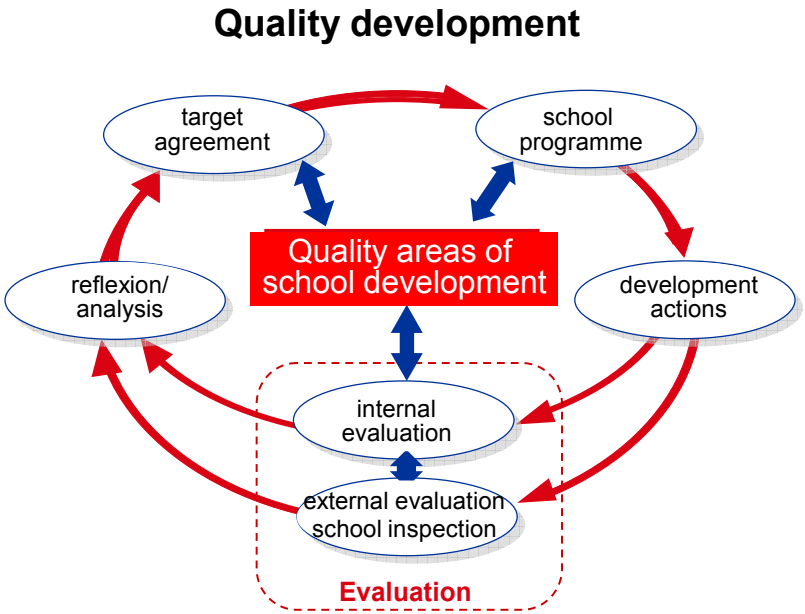
- are conducted as part of wider reform strategy to build a comprehensive system for quality assurance and quality development of schools
- integration into system in addition to traditional education authorities
  - » Different ways of integration: independent institution, part of a bigger institution, department within ministry of education…
  - » mostly formal cooperation with education authorities when it comes to target agreements with schools
  - » Unlike evaluation conducted by school authorities, school inspection use scientific research methods

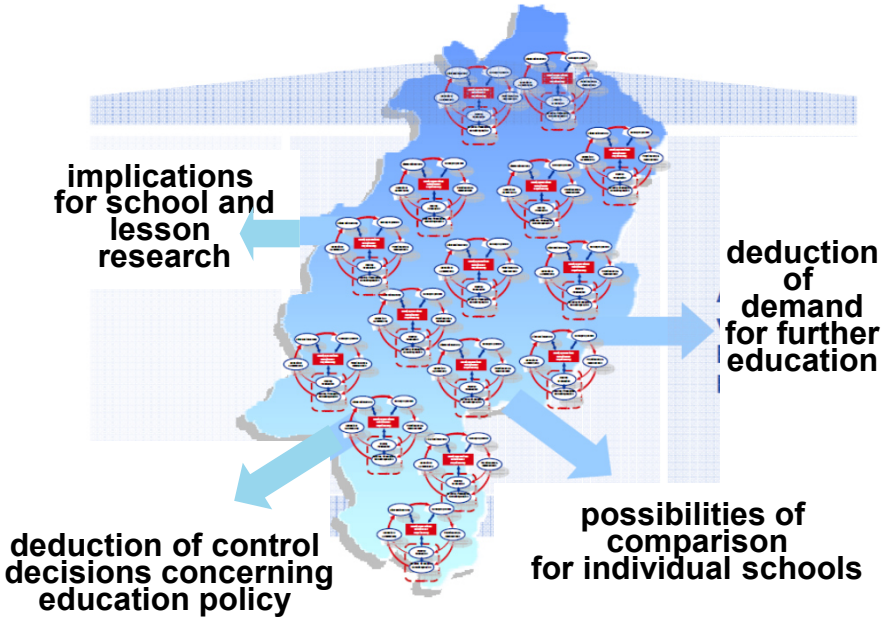
# School inspection in Germany – Characteristics II

- focus on school as a (learning) system; evaluation reports addressed to the schools, primarily addressing school headmaster
- reference frameworks give a definition of school quality and provide the criteria to be evaluated
- provide feedback on wide range of criteria covering scope of reference frameworks
- provides feedback to individual school and school authority in evaluation reports
  - » Recommendations
  - » Performance data
  - » Publication

# School inspection in Germany – Characteristics III

- External evaluation of all schools (individual level)
- trigger individual school development
- evidence-based feedback for education policy-makers (accountability)
- Support in decision-making (e.g. on teacher-training-programs)



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# Internal evaluation of schools

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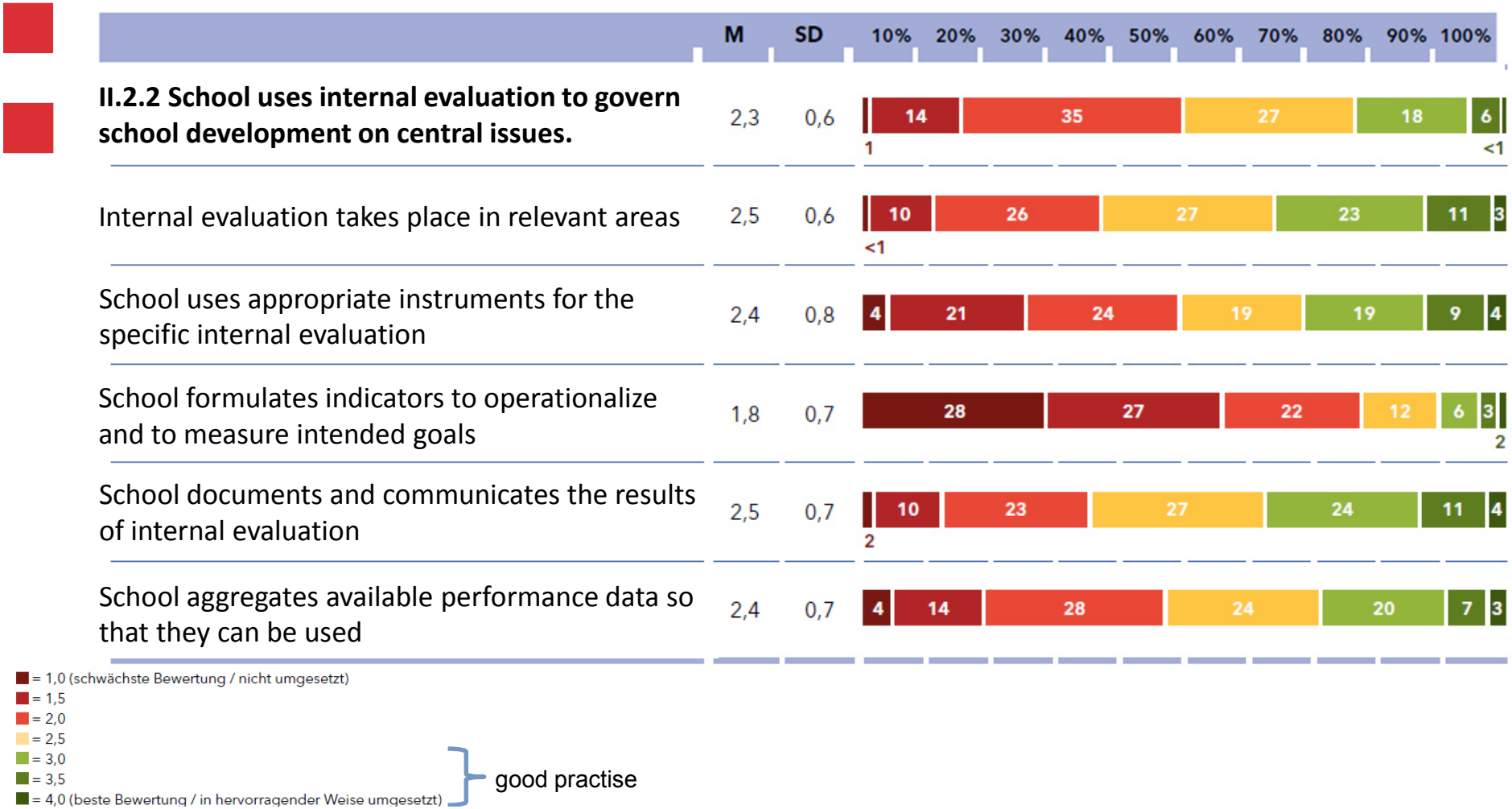
# Internal evaluation of schools

- obligatory by education law and linked to *school program*
- to ensure that schools independently and continuously monitor quality of their work and use results to govern their internal school development as part of their quality management

# Internal evaluation of schools: Hesse (results of school inspection, 2013, N = 748)



# Internal evaluation of schools in Hesse

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- More than half of schools add school-specific questions to criteria of school inspection
  - » 1/3 requested evaluation of one additional school-specific focal issue
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  - » 1/3 requested evaluation of one additional school-specific focal issue
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  - » Feedback on usefulness of the results to promote school development doesn´t differ between school-specific focal issue and regular evaluation results

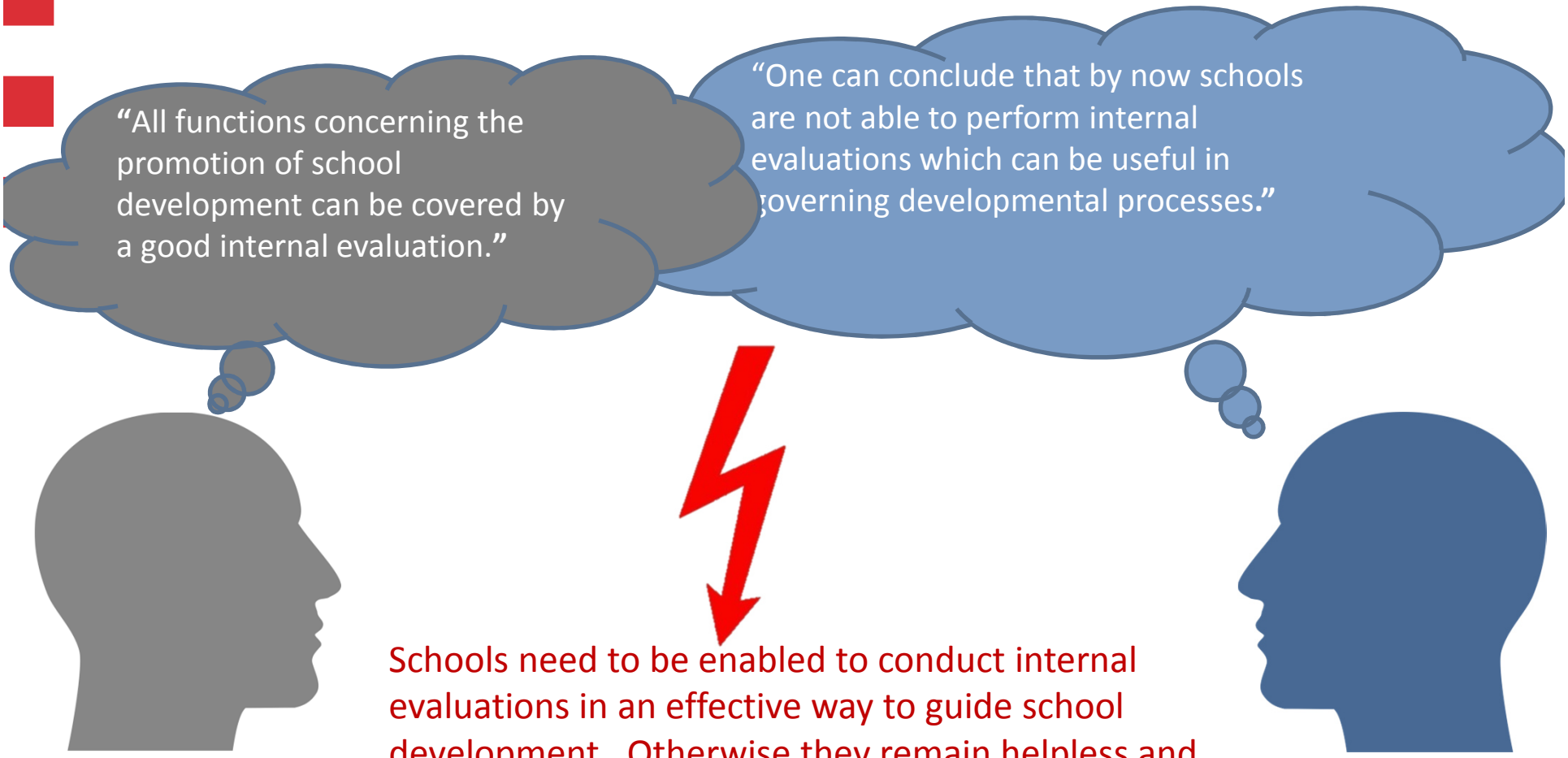
## Impact of internal evaluation on school development:

# Helplessness of schools

- Difficulties with internal evaluation: (Janssens & van Amelsvoort 2008; Blok et al. 2008; Blok et al. 2008; Schildkamp & Visscher 2010; Vanhoof et al. 2011).:
  - » lack of knowledge why and how to conduct internal evaluation
  - » problems with interpretation of qualitative and quantitative results
  - » often not connected to developmental goals of school; not embedded in a comprehensive strategy for quality management
  - » mostly result in a description rather than a rating of quality
  - » lack of involvement of the people concerned
  - » actions that (should) be taken in response to the results often are described but not clearly planned
  - » Most are consumer satisfaction surveys
  - » (…)

# Comparison of internal and external evaluation of schools

| Internal Evaluation | External Evaluation / school inspection |
|---|---|
| Focus on highly individual school-specific topics | Same criteria for all schools normatively grounded in reference systems defining quality of schooling |
| Concentrate on a very narrow school-specific question | Wide range of criteria evaluated |
| Broad participation of school staff | Mostly head of school is involved |
| Formatively integrated in school development activities | Functions as a summative status report following a restricted time cycle |
| Individual concerning conception, operation, and processing of results | Highly standardized |
| Primary aim to promote school development as part of school program work | Functional hybrid form, intended to promote school development and accountability |
| Within schools, staff mostly unable to perform evaluations in an effective and useful way | Trained and qualified evaluators conform to evaluation standards |
| Methodological competencies and evaluation instruments are not sufficiently available | Combination of methods and instruments from social sciences |




(Landwehr, 2011)

(Gärtner, 2013)

Schools need to be enabled to conduct internal evaluations in an effective way to guide school development. Otherwise they remain helpless and ineffective in using internal evaluation as an instrument of school development.

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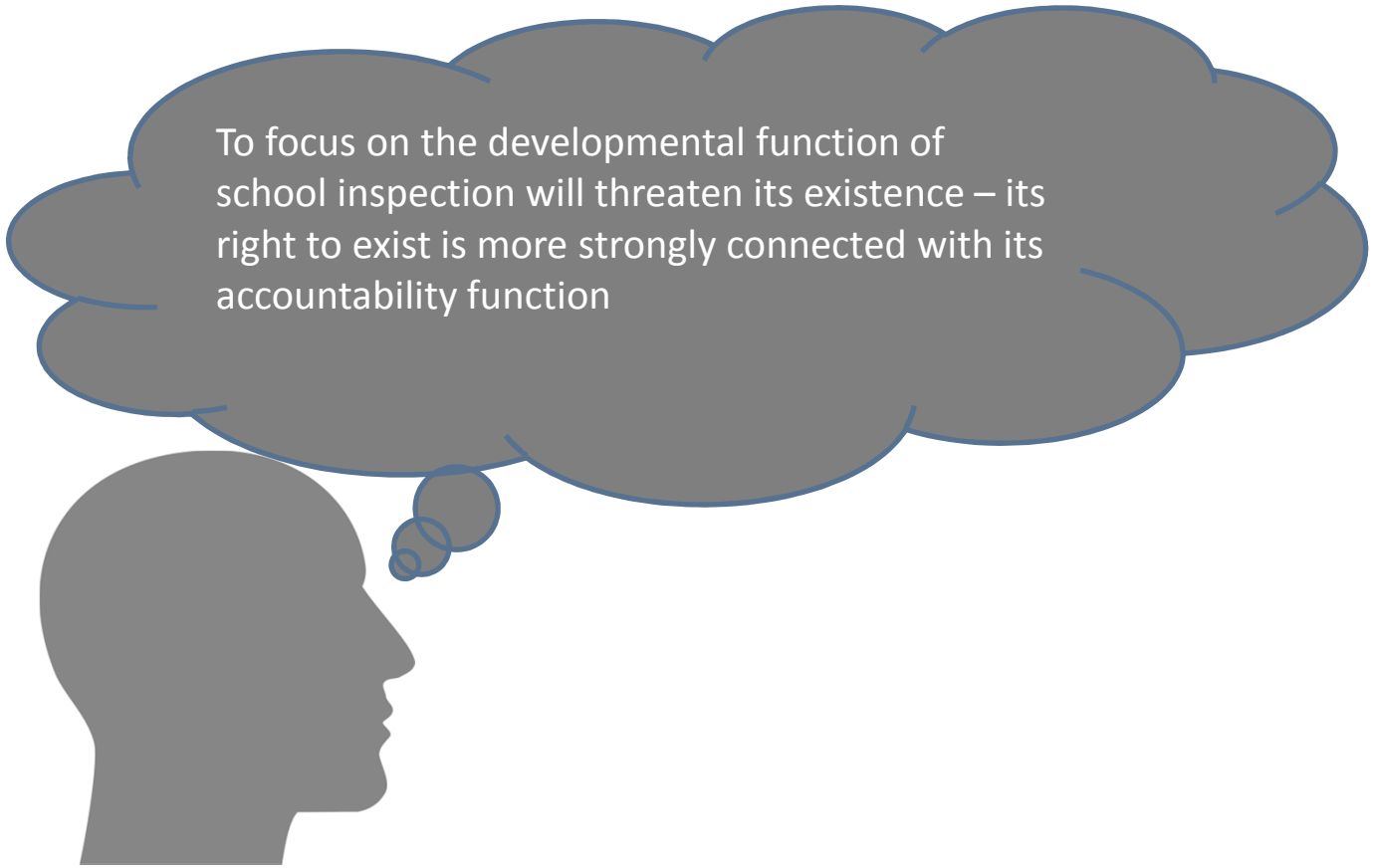
# „Role-mixing-expectation-focusing dilemma ” of school inspections in Germany

- School inspection operates in an area of conflict concerning it´s role in the wider context of educational government:
  - gives impetus for every single school to develop
  - instils accountability with respect to normative reference frameworks

- School inspection models (methods, reports) are designed to fit both functions – which results in “hybrid evaluation forms” (Maritzen, 2012)

- Hybrid form of conceptualization conflicts with the one-sided focus on school development regarding its effectiveness




(Landwehr, 2011)

# Assumptions about effects and impact of external evaluation of schools (Landwehr, 2011)

**knowledge**
(based on data) of quality – related issues

**accountability**
report on quality to government and public

**school development**
impetus to overcome quality deficiencies and consolidate strengths

**setting norms**
turn norms and government expections into quality practices

# Assumptions about/expectations of effect and impact

- Schools develop and improve through school inspection
- Schools learn and develop through insight and reflection of **feedback**
- Evaluation reports motivate schools to overcome quality deficiencies and to consolidate strengths
- The more school inspection and its results are accepted by schools, the more the schools will process and reflect on the results, which leads to school development (Ehren & Visscher, 2006)
- The better school inspection is in terms of evaluation standards, the more it will encourage schools to develop

**school development**
Impetus to overcome quality deficiencies and to consolidate strengths

# Empirical evidence

- School inspection is widely accepted by schools especially by head of schools
- Schools recognize and appreciate a high level of quality of school inspection
- Subsequent to school inspections only little developmental actions can be seen within the schools

**school development**
Impetus to overcome quality deficiencies and to consolidate strengths

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# Assumptions about/Expectations of effect and impact

- School inspection as a means of accountability - it transports governmental norms into schools and sets expectations
- Examination of norms by external evaluators leads to their effectiveness
- Schools adapt to external pressure to comply with standards/norms; they prepare for external evaluation and discuss norms within the schools
- Schools develop as a reaction to sanctions or to fear of sanctions resulting from school inspection

**norm-setting**
turn norms and government expections into quality practices

# Empirical evidence

- **Announcement** of school inspection stimulates internal school discussion about school quality and leads to developmental actions (Gärtner & Wurster, 2013, Ehren et al., 2015)
- Setting expectations through the communication of norms gives more impetus for school development than the providing feedback (Altrichter, 2016)
  - » School development is more a process of anticipatorical adaption to norms than a data-based reflective process subsequent to feedback
  - » When the mechanism of norm and expectation-setting is „active“ ,schools spend less attention to feedback
- The more expectations are communicated with normative pressure (high stakes-systems), the more they give impetus for developmental activities
  - » Unexpected side-effects

**setting norms**
turn norms and government expections into quality practices

# Empirical Evidence - Summary

- School inspection is not ineffective in promoting school development at all, but…
- …evidence challenge our former understanding of **how** school inspection promotes school „development“
  - » School inspection is  a very effective means of  communicating and examining norms
  - » Schools might see inspection as governmental instrument to set norms and not as an offer of feedback to reflect upon
  - » The kind of „development“ school inspection promotes is an extrinsically motivated, pressure-driven **adaption** to norms – before school inspection gives feedback

# Summary

- Internal evaluation and external evaluation have different problems in promoting school development
  - » Internal evaluation **could be** an effective means to promote school development on the basis of evaluative data, but…

  …lack of resources, competencies, and professional culture hinder its potential effectiveness

  - » External school evaluation does not lead to insight-driven data-based school development that is intrinsically motivated, but...

  … puts schools under pressure to adapt to effectively communicated norms
- What kind of school development do we want – and which kind of evaluation could be supportive?

# Conclusion

- Internal evaluation and external evaluation have to be orchestrated by the government in a way that is meaningful with respect to their potential for school development and governmental accountability

**„Internal evaluation is for the schools“**

» Internal evaluation needs to be fostered and established as a central part of innerschool profession

» Internal evaluation should be supported by experts to assure that it is effectively embedded in school´s developmental cycles

**“external evaluation is for the government”**

» External evaluation should change its hybrid form and be established as a legitimate means of communicating and examining norms in „relevant areas“

» By effective ways of monitoring (whether schools meet the standards) it should assure a basic functioning of schools and govern actions of decision-makers to support this

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# Thank you…

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