

Werner Specht

National Educational Reporting in Austria

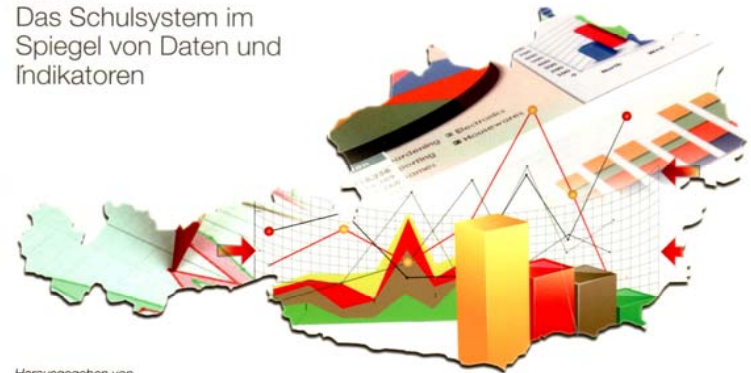
History – Conception – Reception



Austrian National Educational Report

NATIONALER BILDUNGSBERICHT ÖSTERREICH 2009

Band 1
Das Schulsystem im
Spiegel von Daten und
Indikatoren



Herausgegeben von
Werner Specht

Bundesinstitut
bifie
Bildungsplanung, Innovation & Entwicklung
des österreichischen Schulwesens

bm:uk Bundesministerium für
Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur



Volume 1

„Das Schulsystem im Spiegel
von Daten und Indikatoren“

Description of the Austrian
School System, its context and
its outcomes by means of data
an indicators

Austrian National Educational Report



Volume 2

„Fokussierte Analysen
bildungspolitischer
Schwerpunktthemen“

The second volume is of a more content-related and analytical kind. It deals with so-called “focussed analyses of key issues of educational policy” in Austria.

Structure of my contribution

- Historical Background
- Conception
- Reception and Adoption



Historical Background



Traditions of scientific counselling of politics

- relatively close co-operation between educational politics and administration on the one side and parts of the educational sciences on the other
- expert-opinions serve as a knowledge base for large scale reforms
- many important scientific publications in the field of education have their origin in contracts awarded by educational politics and administration



Traditions of scientific counselling of politics

- **Examples**

- Posch / Altrichter: School Autonomy in Austria (1992)
- Specht / Thonhauser: School Quality (1996)
- Posch / Altrichter: Quality development and quality assurance – the school in the centre (1997)
- Eder et al.: Quality development and quality assurance – a multilevel approach (2002)
- Haider et al.: Commission for the future (2005)
- National Educational Report – Pilot Version (2007)



From Governance by inputs to evidence-based policy

Input Orientation

Legislation,
Decrees,
Resources



Quality of
school and
instruction ?



Learning
results,
outputs ?

- „Classical“ Austrian Model
 - based on assumptions
 - uncontrolled
 - open for arbitrary policy decisions
- Changes often by
 - policy for clienteles
 - economic constraints
 - „Zeitgeist“
 - ideological presumptions



From Governance by inputs to evidence-based policy

- TIMSS & PISA cast doubt on the adequacy of the input-model
- Eder et al.: proposition for an integrated, data-based system of quality assurance and quality development across all levels of the educational system
- Milestone of change: Educational standards
- New minister in 2006: commitment to a more evidence-based conception of politics
 - foundation of a Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development (BIFIE)
 - consequent implementation and measurement of educational standards
 - mandate for the first national educational report



Empirical educational research

- week traditions in quantitative empirical research
- emphasis on quantitative empirical research only at the University of Salzburg and at the “Institut für Höhere Studien (Institute for Higher Studies)” at Vienna
- In this area, too, the foundation of the BIFIE has been a milestone during the last decade
 - central switch point for the production and the use of data about the educational system
 - core organisation for the support of empirical educational research by providing data and by promoting and supporting the further analysis of these data by other institutes and universities
 - collaboration of a wide range of educational researchers from all over the country in the preparation of the notional educational report



Conceptions and approaches for educational reporting

- 1998 (University of Salzburg): first indicator-based educational report based on an individual initiative
- 2002 Eder et al.: hierarchical educational reporting system from the individual school, to the regional educational administration up to the system level
- little regard and support from the political sphere
- appearance of the educational reports of Switzerland and Germany led to a rethink
- The decisive event, however, was the change of government. In the programme of the new minister the concept of – as it was called – a fact- and data-based educational policy was of great importance
- Foundation of the BIFIE; commission to work out the National Educational Report



Conception of the report



The working process

- Commission in Fall 2007
- Preliminary structure by the editor
- steering group consisting of high-level educational researchers
 - collaboration in the further planning
 - responsibility for quality assurance



The working process

- Two features that could not be realised
 - close co-operation between the main institutions in charge of the generation and analysis of data
 - Reduction of the themes of the second volume



Quality assurance

- Text Type
 - high scientific standards
 - comprehensible for educated non-professionals
- Policy analysis: Each chapter of the thematic volume should essentially be comprised of two parts
 - scientific analysis of the subject
 - current tendencies of the political discussion of the subject; point out possibilities and options for the enhancement of the current situation
 - modest and cautious statements. Not a catalogue of claims but a recommendation of strategies



Quality assurance

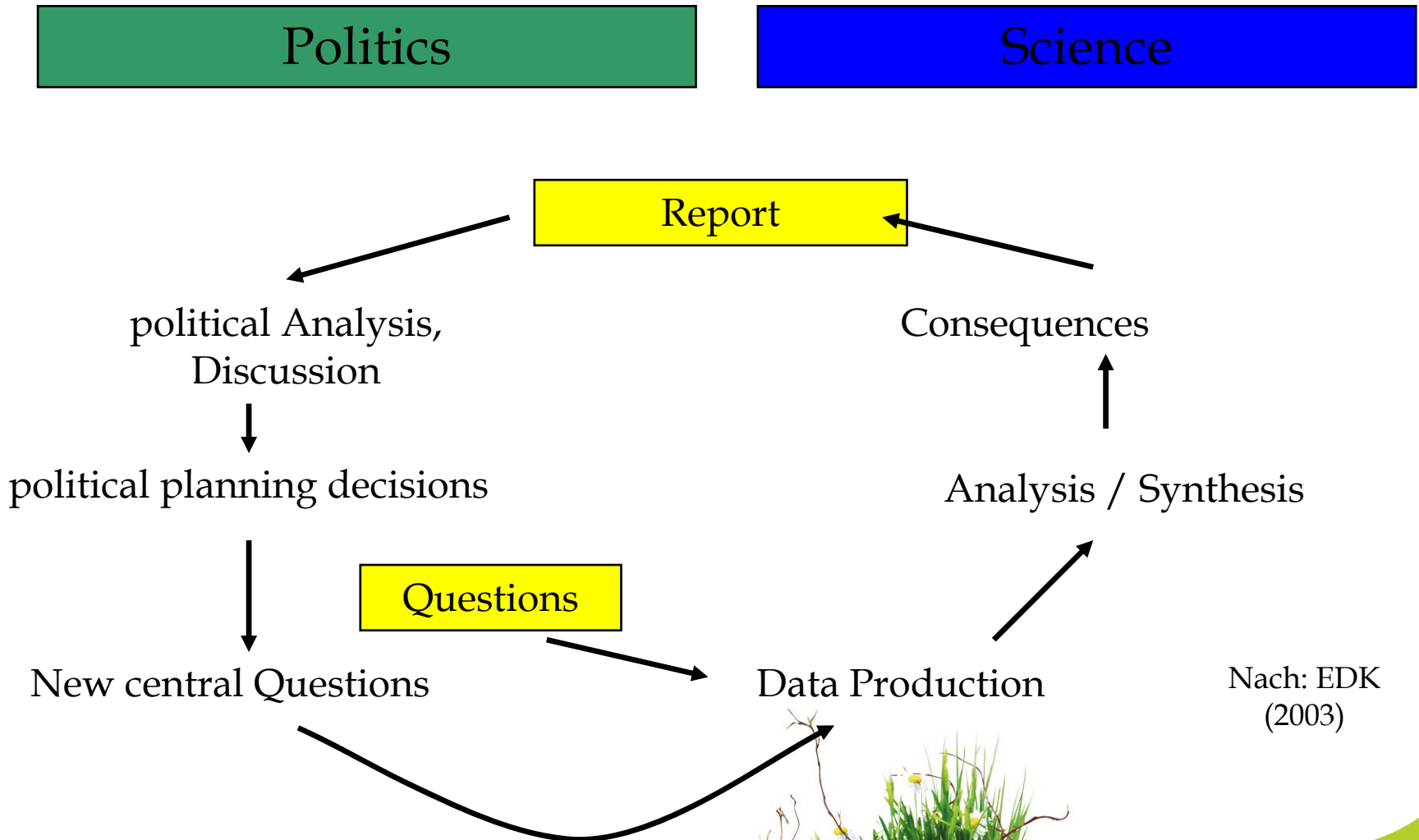
- Structure of the thematic reports
- Aim: to assure a uniform structure of the articles
 1. Problem analysis: Policy relevance of the subject area
 2. Situation analysis: Data, Indicators and results from research and evaluation
 3. Research questions
 4. Policy analysis and options for further development



Reception



Concept for the collaboration of politics and Science



Nach: EDK
(2003)

Problems of the first cycle

- Political level: Lack of experience to put meaningful questions
- Scientific level: Lack of experience to think in political, systemic, implementation-oriented terms
- Interaction: mode how the report can be transferred into the political sphere



Dissemination strategy

- The report was conveyed to the minister, the cabinet and all delegates of the National Assembly
- Subsequently it was dispatched to a wide range of stakeholders of different areas
- available for download on the internet sites of the BIFIE and of the federal ministry of education
<http://www.bifie.at/buch/657>; <http://www.bifie.at/buch/773>
- Besides the report can be purchased in the book trade
- The freely disseminated edition was 1000 copies altogether



Public reception

- In June, the report was presented to the press for the first time by the minister - in the absence of editor or authors.
- After this conference there was a short boom of reporting and coverage in the national press
- three themes have been singled out obviously arbitrarily
 - The international comparison of the costs of public education (headline: “Austrian pupils among the most expensive in Europe”)
 - The dubiousness of pupil grading by teachers: (“lack of comparability and transparency; lack of consideration of pupil commitment”)
 - A critique that in the data- and indicator-volume there have been used data that have been already known: (“partly outdated, and from other studies like PISA already known data”)



Public reception

- “Background talk” in the ministry with the minister herself, the editor and several authors, and the leading educational journalists of the country
- Messages:
 - The report doesn’t lend itself to put single results boldly into the foreground.
 - The report as a whole must be seen as a differentiated diagnostic of the situation of the Austrian school system, in which the diversity of this system – with its strengths and weaknesses – finds expression.
- The big newspapers reported objectively and unexcitedly about the themes of the “background talk”.
- With those reactions the public reception of the National Educational Report ended.



Political reception

- During the media conference, the minister committed again explicitly to a data- and evidence-based policy.
- There was no official treatment of the report in the ministry, however
- In October a subcommittee of the National Assembly was supposed to discuss the report. Nothing is known about the results of this discussion.
- Some departments of the ministry made the report a subject of differentiated discussions in closed meetings for future planning.
- The supervision of schools, too, concerned and concerns itself with different chapters of the report.
- The editor and some of the authors have been invited to planning meetings, discussions, symposia and panel discussions.
- Nevertheless it must be said that all in all the political and the public reception of the report has been noncommittal up to now.



Questions regarding the receptions

- Are the kind and the extent of the public reception an indicator for the quality of the report, for the efficacy of public relations, or for both?
- What can an optimum public reception look like in a media landscape where obviously applies that only “bad news” are “good news”?
- What are the main reasons that educational politics and partly the administration have ignored the report by and large?
- How can, and how must an educational report look like that is adopted from politics and administration as an important knowledge base?
- What is needed to persuade politicians not only to speak about “evidence-based policy” but also to practice it and to use the available instruments and documents?



A View to the north

DIE ZEIT

Nachts um drei

Zum ersten Mal debattiert der Bundestag einen umfassenden Bericht über den Zustand von Kitas, Schulen und Universitäten. Doch öffentliche Aufmerksamkeit scheint unerwünscht zu sein

Mehr als ein Jahr hat es gedauert, bis sich das Berliner Parlament überhaupt mit dem *Nationalen Bildungsbericht 2006* im Plenum befasst – und dann mitten in der Nacht, gegen drei Uhr. Dieser obscure Zeitpunkt für die »Bearbeitung« im Bundestag erinnert an den obskuren Ort, an dem die Bildungsminister der Bundesländer den Report vor einem Jahr vorstellten: fernab der Öffentlichkeit im norddeutschen Städtchen Plön. Schleswig–Holstein, das turnusmäßig der Kultusministerkonferenz vorsaß, hatte den Ort bestimmt.



Consequences

- Improve the indicator volume (theoretical foundation, content-systematics, and political actuality)
- Reduce the chapters of the analytical part, but extend them with respect of their theoretical and empirical foundation and their political focus
- Involve the political sphere into the finding and generation of themes and key questions.





*Thank you for
your attention !*