

Bringing Sustainable Feedback to Higher Education

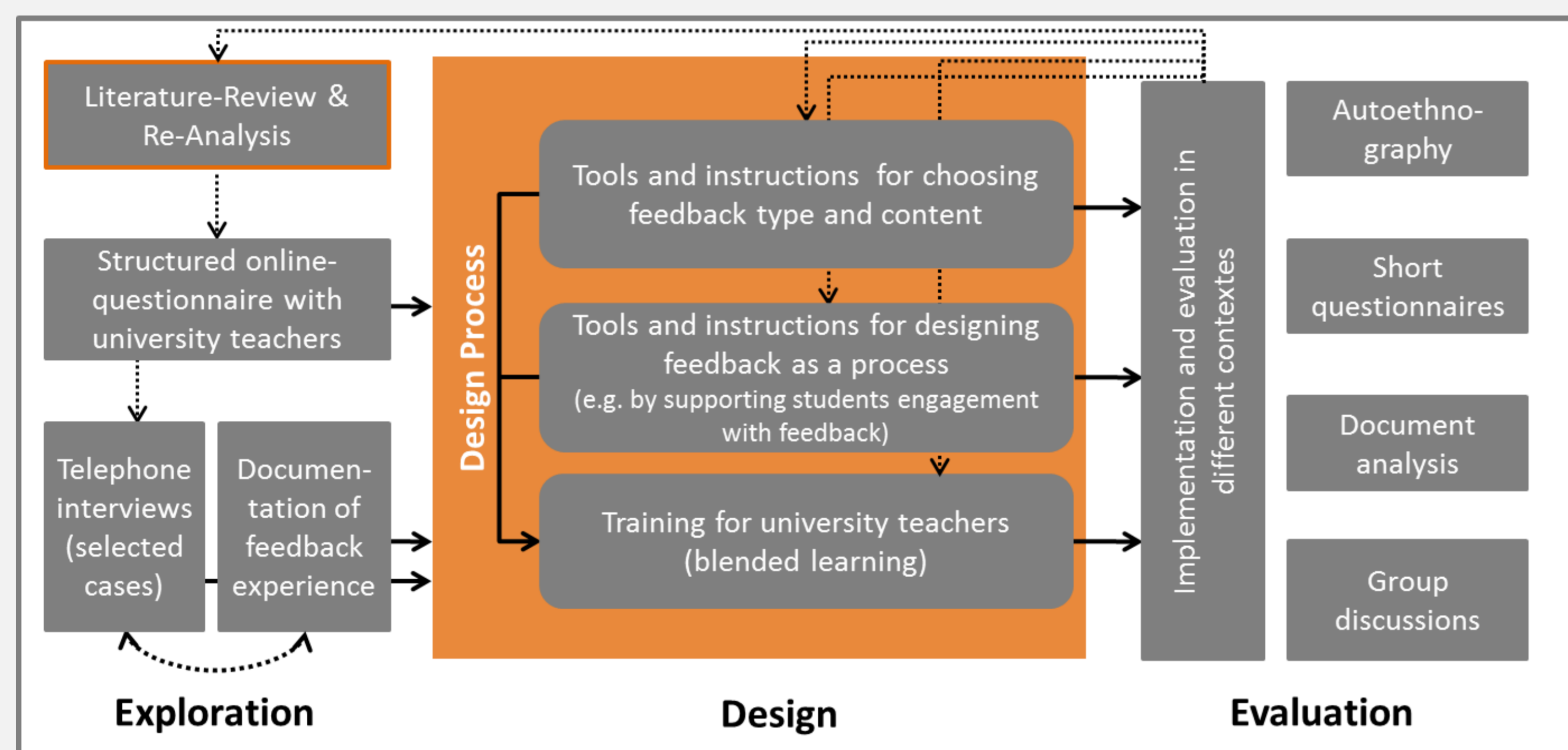
A Design-Based Research Project on the Qualification of University Teachers

Background

- Feedback to students is an important part of quality teaching in higher education – especially in the context of an assessment for learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Biggs, 2003). But what's seen as good feedback practice has changed in the recent years. It's no longer sufficient to deliver a well designed "feedback product" because student engagement with feedback is a critical issue (Evans, 2013). Concepts such as "dialogic feedback" (Yang & Carless, 2013; Beaumont, O'Doherty & Shannon, 2011) or "sustainable feedback" (Carless, 2013) promise to activate students through e.g. peer- and self-assessment and help them to develop their abilities as self-regulated learners.
- German students' satisfaction with the amount and quality of the feedback they receive is very low (only 44% rated this item with "(very) good" in the survey "Studienqualitätsmonitor"; Willige, 2015, p. 13).
- Current feedback practice in German higher education doesn't match the state of research. And: there are only a few university didactic trainings for university teachers yet (and if: with an emphasis on simple rules like the "feedback sandwich" or with a focus on evaluative feedback).

Research Design

The research project follows the ideas of **design-based research** (=DBR; McKenney & Reeves, 2012) with an emphasis on qualitative methods. DBR attempts to bridge theory and practice in education and wants to understand how, when and why educational innovations work in practice. The illustration below shows the study's research design. Phases of exploration, design and evaluation have been conducted five times so far.



Issues to discuss

- Due to the fact that the study was conducted in an authentic context the sample and the amount of collected data is very small (in design stages 3-5). What impact does this have on the (perceived) quality of my study?
- It's challenging for me to bring such a complex, iterative research process into a written form. Do you have any suggestions?

References

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Research Goals

Practical Goals

Design of an intervention that introduces university teachers to the concept of sustainable feedback and enables them to use this information to re-design their courses.

For this purpose it should...

- support them in decision-making for a feedback strategy
- offer reusable materials (e.g. templates)

Theoretical Goals

Development of design principles as sharable theories that help communicate the implications to practitioners as well as researchers.

Inquiry of the reception/acceptance of the concept of sustainable feedback in german-speaking higher education (especially in relation to assessment).

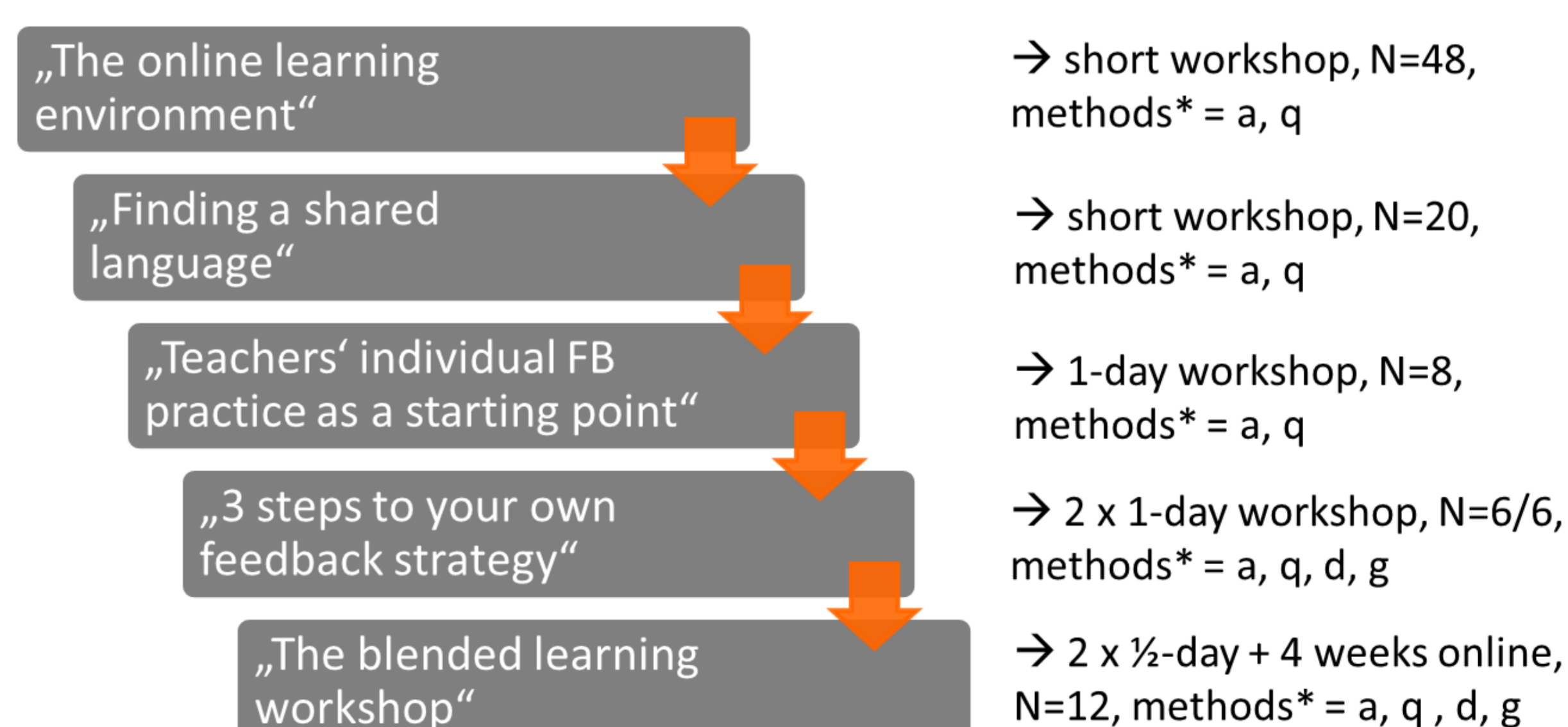
(Some) Research Questions

1. What methods and strategies for sustainable feedback are discussed in the literature? Is there any empirical evidence on their effect?
2. What are criteria/information and additional materials university teachers need to make informed choices about a feedback strategy for their course?
3. Which course design and materials support the achievement of the defined goals and is accepted by the participants?
4. To what extent are participants able to apply the principles of sustainable feedback to their own course design at the end of the course? (paper-pencil)
5. What design principles can be derived from the project?

Preliminary Results

- The intervention went through five stages of development. The current design as a blended learning workshop promotes participants' use of all course materials (such as design patterns and templates). Almost all teachers were able to apply the principles of sustainable feedback to their own course design (in a paper pencil mode).

5 Design Stages



*Methods used: a=autoethnography, q=short questionnaires, d=document analysis, g=group discussion

- One result of the in-depth experience in the field is that the term "assessment" isn't easy to introduce to the participants because the German term "Prüfung" focuses almost exclusively on summative assessment.
- To achieve better results the workshop should be combined with workshops on constructive alignment as well as assessment task design. Knowledge on these topics is essential for a holistic feedback design.