

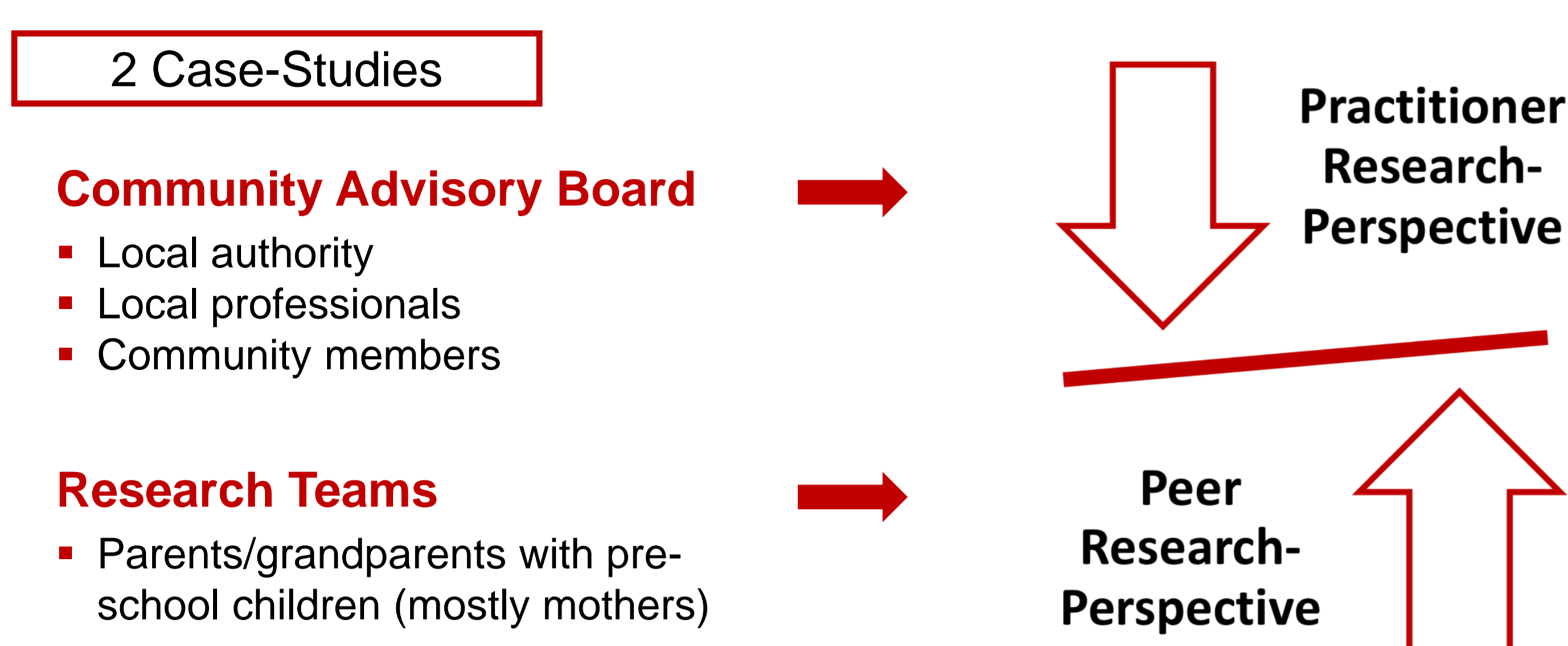
Background and targets

In Germany, there is growing interest in combating health inequities at the local level. The project 'Parents asking Parents' (in German: „Eltern fragen Eltern“ – ElFE) is part of the publicly funded PartKommPlus consortium and aims at fostering local co-operation in the health field through peer research. Embedded in the overall objective of supporting health equity in early childhood, the project targets were:

- To enhance the participation of vulnerable families in developing integrated municipal strategies (IMS) in health promotion.
- To develop and refine methods which can be used by the municipality to implement peer research.
- To create an advisory tool on the state level, especially for Health Equity Co-ordination Centers (in German: Koordinierungsstellen Gesundheitliche Chancengleichheit), in order to support the rollout of IMS focused on early childhood.

Project structure

There were two basic working forms in two local case studies: A community advisory board, which realized 'Practitioner Research' as an expert dominated process to a greater extent, compared with the peer-research teams, which were established as partner models in the tradition of CBPR (Roche, Guta & Flicker (2010)).

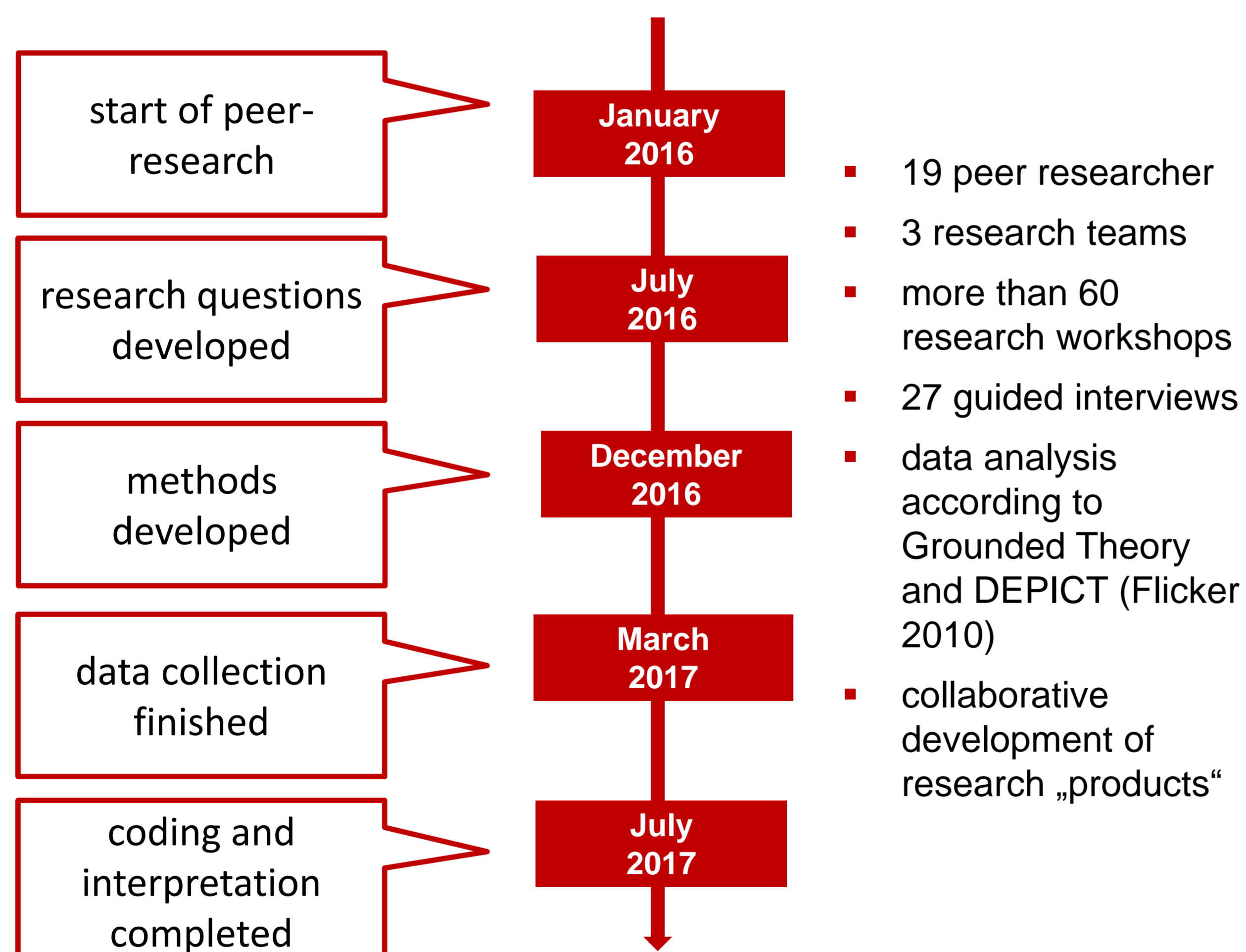


Strategies to integrate both perspectives

- develop a culture of conflict management – mediating diverging opinions
- integrate members of the research team into the advisory board
- invite members from the advisory board to individual meetings of the research teams
- clarify the – changing - role of the advisory board throughout the process

Peer research process

Shared power to decide was the leading principle of the whole research process (see ladder of participation by Wright, von Unger & Block 2010). Each research team defined their own research question. The overarching theme was the relationship of parents to their childrens' pre-school teachers.



Results and recommendations

- Pre-schools should be further strengthened, as a key setting for supporting health equity. This enhances their integration in the IMS.
- Well-established organisations (e.g family centres) are important to integrate all relevant groups. Staff members need to be open to participation and to encouraging all parents.
- The evolving communication between the community members and the local authorities must be based on trust. Information about the progress of the research process is indispensable. „Parallel tracking“ (Laverack 2012) can be helpful for facilitating liason between all involved parties. This fosters their confidence in the usefulness of the results.
- A selection of research “products“ is needed to communicate the results to parents, child care professionals and policy developers.

The peer research in ElFE leads to different recommendations in relation to the parents:

- communication and collaboration on the part of parents,
- establishment and support of parents' participation -especially vulnerable ones- to develop IMS, and foster health equity in early childhood.
- realization of participatory research, especially in terms of data collection and data evaluation.

Researcher and co-operations

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References: Please ask for them: ina.schaefer@ash-berlin.eu