JUST ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOL
– a context-sensitive comparative study of pupils’ conceptions in Sweden and Germany

Bettina Vogt
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This thesis examines pupils' justice conceptions regarding educational assessment. Due to the context-dependency of norms and values as well as of assessment, the study compares the justice conceptions of pupils in two different 'socio-educational' contexts: Sweden and Germany. The main interest of the study is to understand and to reconstruct pupils' own relevance structures and what just assessment means from a pupils’ point of view. Here, the study aims to reach beyond the level of mere description by providing theoretical conceptualisations of pupils' justice conceptions regarding assessment. Thus, the study’s methodological foundation is characterised by a combination of a context-sensitive comparative approach on the one hand, and on the other hand a pragmatist Grounded Theory approach. Data were mainly generated through focus group interviews with pupils attending the last year of the lower secondary level in the Swedish comprehensive school as well as in different school types in the German school system. In total, the sample consists of 95 pupils, who were interviewed in 21 focus group interviews. In addition, other sources of data were included, such as regulations and guidelines that supported a context-sensitive analysis of pupils' conceptions. The theoretical conceptualisation that explains pupils' justice conceptions is 'meta-assessment'. 'Meta-assessment' refers to pupils' evaluation of the assessment they experience in terms of justice and represents the shared, abductively derived and overlying analytical category regarding pupils' conceptions. Pupils' 'meta-assessment' is based on normative justice conceptions as well as on justice conceptions that are related to pupils' situation and context-bound experiences with assessment. The first ones are about the ethico-moral character of pupils' justice conceptions. The second shed light on the contextual conditions and consequences of the logics and practices underlying educational assessment as experienced by pupils on an everyday basis. This implies that just assessment from a pupils’ perspective needs to be understood in its wider contextual embedment; and in relation to teaching and learning in order to understand the complex interrelations of what just assessment 'is', and 'should be' from the perspective of those, who are mainly affected by it.

Keywords: assessment, comparative education research, context-sensitive comparison, conceptions, focus group interviews, grading, Grounded Theory Methodology, meritocracy, pupil research, standards-based reform, justice.
Abstract


This thesis examines pupils’ justice conceptions regarding educational assessment. Due to the context-dependency of norms and values as well as of assessment, the study compares the justice conceptions of pupils in two different ‘socio-educational’ contexts: Sweden and Germany. The main interest of the study is to understand and to reconstruct pupils’ own relevance structures and what just assessment means from a pupils’ point of view. Here, the study aims to reach beyond the level of mere description by providing theoretical conceptualisations of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment. Thus, the study’s methodological foundation is characterised by a combination of a context-sensitive comparative approach on the one hand, and on the other hand a pragmatist Grounded Theory approach. Data were mainly generated through focus group interviews with pupils attending the last year of the lower secondary level in the Swedish comprehensive school as well as in different school types in the German school system. In total, the sample consists of 95 pupils, who were interviewed in 21 focus group interviews. In addition, other sources of data were included, such as regulations and guidelines that supported a context-sensitive analysis of pupils’ conceptions. The theoretical conceptualisation that explains pupils’ justice conceptions is ‘meta-assessment’. ‘Meta-assessment’ refers to pupils’ evaluation of the assessment they experience in terms of justice and represents the shared, abductively derived and overlying analytical category regarding pupils’ conceptions. Pupils’ ‘meta-assessment’ is based on normative justice conceptions as well as on justice conceptions that are related to pupils’ situation and context-bound experiences with assessment. The first ones are about the ethico-moral character of pupils’ justice conceptions. The second shed light on the contextual conditions and consequences of the logics and practices underlying educational assessment as experienced by pupils on an everyday basis. This implies that just assessment from a pupils’ perspective needs to be understood in its wider contextual embedment; and in relation to teaching and learning in order to understand the complex interrelations of what just assessment ‘is’, and ‘should be’ from the perspective of those, who are mainly affected by it.

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APO-SI: Ausbildungs- und Prüfungsordnung für die Sekundarstufe I
BASS: Bereinigte Amtliche Sammlung der Schulvorschriften, NRW
GES: Gesamtschule
GTM: Grounded Theory Methodology
GYM: Gymnasium
HS: Hauptschule
IQB: Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen
KMK: Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Lgr11: Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011
LGy11: Läroplan för gymnasieskolan 2011
MSW NRW: Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen
NRW: Nordrhein-Westfalen
NAE: National Agency for Education (Skolverket)
RS: Realschule
SALSA: Skolverkets arbetsverktyg för lokala sambandsanalyser
SchulG: Schulgesetz für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen
SFS: Svensk författningssamling
SIRIS: Skolverkets internetbaserade resultat- och kvalitetsinformationssystem
SKOLFS: Skolverkets författningssamling
SOU: Statens offentliga utredningar
ZAP: Zentrale Abschlussprüfungen
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The years that I worked with this project have been years of academic and personal growth. Many people inside as well as outside academia have contributed to this enriching process. To all of you, I want to say a heartfelt thank you! Some people have been especially important along this way.

First of all, I am most grateful to the young people, who participated in this study. It's easy: without your trust and your openness, I could not have written this thesis! I also want to thank the headmasters and teachers who provided me with the opportunity to meet their pupils.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Daniel Sundberg at Linnaeus University and Professor Florian Waldow at the Centre for Comparative and International Education at Humboldt University, Berlin. It has been a great privilege to be given to opportunity to learn from the two best ones! Daniel and Florian, your razor-sharp analytical abilities and your impressive knowledge that you always have been willing to share in such a constructive way, have helped me uncountable times to move on with my work and to improve. Thank you for believing in me, for always taking the time to listen, for reading 161 pages of findings within one (1!) week and for giving me the freedom “to do it my way”. I am also grateful to Professor Leif Lindberg, who has been my supervisor during the first year and who followed my work with great interest. Thank you also Gabriella Höstfält for the valuable and insightful discussions regarding the challenges of doing a pragmatist Grounded Theory study. I also want to thank Professor Per Gerrevall, for always asking me of how it is going and for the helpful advices regarding my work. Thank you also Professor Leif Lindberg and my colleague Kristina Henriksson for your important remarks on my text at my 50%
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Värnamo, October 2017

Bettina Vogt
I. OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Assessment and justice – the meritocratic allocation of life chances

Getting assessed and receiving grades is a general experience for most pupils, which is one of the most fundamental components of modern educational systems (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Luhmann, 2002). Grades exist on certificates, sometimes on single tests, in different kinds of databases, in statistics, in tables, in laws and legal regulations as well as in the minds of pupils, teachers, examiners, administrators, parents, employers and politicians. Grades are allocated and distributed, received and accepted, calculated and constructed, criticised and defended, negotiated, discussed and interpreted, shown up and hidden, rewarded and punished. They are also remembered and forgotten, written down, compared and talked about. Grades also worry and relieve, stress and motivate; they validate, attest, prove and enable.

Grades permeate not just only the everyday experiences of pupils, but they also reach beyond the walls of the school-building. Grades reach into family life, youth centres, companies’ human resources departments, university’s registration offices and into the offices of educational ministries and school departments and thereby, they also carry a geographical dimension. Grades received in the role of a pupil follow the pupil, even if the roles are changing and the pupil turns into a family-member, a friend, an applicant or a student. This also implies that the timely dimension of grades is extended. Grades are not only just here and now; they also are in the future and in the past – often following the individual through time and space.
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In relation to this tremendous presence and relevance of grades in individuals’ lives, it seems reasonable that researchers talk about our society in terms of the “assessment society” (Broadfoot & Black, 2004) and the “audit society” (Power, 1997/2013), in which the assessment of pupils and the allocation of grades and certificates play a central role.

Against this background, the questions that arise from a research perspective about the denaturalisation of this phenomenon, which otherwise is less questioned: what are grades and why do they have such a great impact on our lives? What constitutes the power of grades? First and foremost, grades are in their external and visible manifestation usually a number or a letter, which are written down on certificates for example, and certified by an authorised person. When it comes to grading, pupils’ school performance is evaluated in relation to a certain point of reference, which means that a certain value is ascribed in relation to this performance (French ‘évaluation’: action of valuing). Consequently, it is obvious that it is not the number or the letter per se that has such a great impact on our lives. Rather, the power of the grade as a symbol lies in the value ascribed. Thus, on the one hand, assessment tells pupils something about what our society values: certain kinds of knowledge, competences, abilities and skills; but first and foremost and the formal certification of it (Sacher, 2011; Solga, 2005b). On the other hand, the grade also tells pupils something about how well they meet these societal expectations that are related to these values - also in relation to other individuals. In a broader perspective thus, assessment and grades can also be understood as a modus of socialisation in school (Fend, 1980; Parsons, 1959; Ulich, 2001), which means it prepares the next generation for a life within a performance oriented society.

In addition, grades also play a decisive role regarding the access to further educational opportunities. That means that the societal decisions about which individuals are seen to be particularly well suited to occupy certain societal positions and areas of responsibility, also become a question of location in the sense of ranking, selection, and allocation (Dohse, 1977). Grades are seen as a prescriptive indicator for how well different individuals are assumed to fit these different societal areas of responsibility. Hence, grades are ascribed a prognostic value with regard to future selection and allocation (Ingenkamp, 1977). Against this backdrop, allocated grades serve as a “quick language” (Lundahl & Waldow, 2009) between different administrative levels and societal institutions, since they contain a lot of complex and relevant information in a condensed form regarding an individual’s qualifications (Lundahl & Waldow, 2009). This makes it possible to decide quickly about whether an individual shall be allowed to gain access to certain educational pathways, even if the decision-makers and gate-keepers do not personally know the aspirant, and without the need to obtain comprehensive information
repeatedly. Grades as a summary of complex information, and the certificate as a summary of the summative assessment’s results, thereby represent an “organisational tool for simplifying the selection of applicants” (Dohse, 1977, p. 42, Transl. B.V.)\(^1\). According to this, grades can be seen as the “basic currency of the educational field” (Deutsch, 1979, p. 391), which individuals can use at different transition points within the educational system in order to gain access (Weiss, 1977).

This underlying logic of allocation is fundamentally interwoven with the “normative self-definition” (Solga, 2005a) of societies, following the normative ideal that a just allocation necessarily means an allocation beyond an individual’s beneficial background variables (Waldow, 2014, 2016; Hadjar, 2008). Such background variables, usually perceived as an illegitimate basis for allocation, are for example gender, nationality, culture, religion, place of residence or socio-economic status. This idea of legitimate variables for allocation can also be understood in relation to the historical development of societal transition and societal transformation. While the societal allocation process mainly was a matter of inherited status and societal power until the transition to the late modern era, the successive educational expansion, compulsory schooling and the formalisation of education have also contributed to a reinterpretation of certain selection criteria’s legitimacy (Dohse, 1977; Titze, 2000; Urabe, 2009). Hence, an allocation that is not based on ascriptive criteria needs other variables for a legitimate allocation – merit (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970/2008; see also Allen, 2011; Hadjar, 2008; Waldow, 2016). And here, the educational system and certainly the assessment system in the modern society come into play, since merit is seen to be represented by an individual’s school performance, which in turn, is seen to be expressed by grades (Allen, 2011; Goldthorpe, 1996). Consequently, from a normative point of view, education, certificates and grades are the legitimisation modus of allocation and selection in modern societies (Solga, 2005b).

However, this normative ideal is challenged, if for example international large-scale assessments such as PISA or TIMMS repeatedly point out that pupils’ background and gender are relevant to the results that are achieved. During the last two decades, this has been for example the case in Sweden (Skolverket, 2010b; 2012b; 2016c; 2016d) as well as in Germany (Baumert, 2001; Klieme et al., 2010; Prenzel et al., 2007; Prenzel, 2004). The same applies for research done in this field, which continually highlights that the educational system is not succeeding in levelling out pupils’ different backgrounds. Instead, recent studies point out that the educational system still

\(^1\) In this regard, Luhmann (2002) for example also talks about grades as "organisational artefact" (p.65, transl. B.V.)
maintains and aggravates social inequalities (e.g. Andersson, Östh & Malmberg, 2010; Krüger, 2010; Solga & Dombrowski, 2009; Trumberg, 2011). In addition to this, it also has been shown repeatedly and for a long time, that grade allocation is by far not such an objective operation as the meritocratic ideal necessarily would claim, but rather influenced of other aspects, (e.g. Ingenkamp, 1977; Kalthoff, 1996; Klapp Lekholm, 2008; Lindahl, 2007; Schrader & Helmke, 2008; Walton & Spencer, 2009; Wikström & Wikström, 2005).

With this presentation of the relationship of assessment and justice, the first thematic foci of the study in terms of a description of the research problem are outlined. In the following, it is taken a closer look on another essential thematic focus first - which is pupils’ conceptions - before the basic foundations of the study’s contribution to the field of comparative education are introduced in a second step.

1.2. A pupils’ perspective on just assessment

While the relevance of assessment for the reproduction of social inequalities (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008)² and the normative legitimisation of the same (e.g. Solga, 2005b) have already been outlined above, the focus shall now lie on the question why a pupils’ perspective on just assessment is seen as crucial in this study.

1.2.1 Pupils as ‘productive processors of reality’

Basically and in addition to the above presented aspects, pupils are more than the target group in focus. In the present study, they are also seen as key-actors, comprehensively involved in diverging ways.

Due to mandatory schooling, pupils are unavoidably involved in the normative logic of meritocracy and the related modi of allocation and selection, which our society is built upon and in which school and educational assessment are embedded and have their given relevance and interdependencies (regarding the thematic interface of socialisation and school as societal institution, see e.g. Parsons, 1959; Fend, 1980). The same applies for the increasing

² For the Swedish context see e.g. also Korp (2006).
competition, output orientation and standardisation as well as the growing amount of diverse assessments on different levels during the last decades (Helsper & Böhme, 2002). Consequently, besides the family and the peer-group, school is one of the major arenas where children and young people also learn something about the rules, the norms and the values of our society (regarding the process of norm internalisation, see e.g. Coleman, 1990). Hence, school can be seen as an institutionalised setting contributing to pupils’ socialisation and personality development (e.g. Fend, 1980; Ulrich, 2001). Thereby, school also matters for pupils’ moral development and the maturation of their sense of justice (see Kohlberg, 1969; Damon, 1975; Edelstein, 2001; Keller, 2005).

However, it is important to note that socialisation and the internalisation of norms and values cannot be seen as a simplistic one-way process, where norms and values are merely accepted, adopted and integrated. Instead, this process needs to be understood as an interdependent, active and reciprocal one, fraught with tensions and contradictions (Fend, 1980; Tillmann, 1995) – which certainly applies with regard to the societal changes since the 1960s that came along with what Beck (1986) called the “individualization boost” (p.116). Consequently, if pupils as “productive processors of reality” (Hurrelmann, 1988) during this dynamic process of socialisation develop “relatively stable dispositions of perception, evaluation and action on a personal as well as on a collective level” (Hurrelmann, Grundmann, & Walper, 2008, p.15, Transl. B.V.), then it is vitally important and fruitful for education research to gain a deeper understanding of what pupils know and think about the allocation of life chances on the basis of grades and how they perceive it and deal with it.

This actors’ perspective within the social sciences also has the potential to challenge and to critically examine widely accepted and apparently self-evident ‘truths’, such as the meritocratic myth (Waldow, 2016), and helps us to understand and to see an issue from the perspective of those, who are mainly affected by it. For the present study, that means to give pupils voice and to understand how the issue of just assessment, which is located at the interface of the above outlined aspects, appears to those who are (due to mandatory schooling) automatically in the center of our efforts and the societal logics and modi of allocation and selection. Hence, pupils’ role in this study can be said to be enlarged: pupils turn from the final target-group of all educational research per se, to the central actors examined. Pupils as key-actors in school and in particular as the key-actors of educational assessment are thereby put from the periphery of the research interest into the very focus of investigation. What pupils know about just assessment and what it means to

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1 See also the ‘Thomas Theorem’ (Thomas & Thomas, 1928).
them, is thus examined from the inside - by tracing and by trying to reconstruct and to understand the subjective meaning-making and sense-making of those, who actually get assessed, receive grades, who have to deal with it in some way and who personally and individually are affected by assessments’ and grades’ wide-reaching consequences.

On the basis of these introductory thoughts as a starting point, the present study will therefore focus on pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment.

### 1.2.2 Pupils’ conceptions

The above described research desideratum regarding assessment paying special attention to the perspective of pupils has been repeatedly highlighted (Brown, 2008; Forsberg & Lindberg, 2010; Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015; Lundahl, Klapp, Hultén, & Mickwitz, 2015). Overall, the limited amount of research particularly applies to empirical studies located at the interface of justice and assessment from a pupils’ perspective. This may seem surprising since justice issues per se could be shown to belong to pupils’ everyday experiences in school (Fan & Chan, 1999). Published studies on pupils’ justice conceptions mainly focus on such aspects, which in a wider sense can be said being related to teachers’ actions and their teaching practices (Tierney, Simon & Charland, 2011; Tierney, 2013; Dalbert, 2004; Dalbert, 2010; Dalbert, 2011; Molinari, Speltini, & Passini, 2013; Resh & Sabbagh, 2009; Thorkildsen, 1997, Thorkildsen, 2000; Thorkildsen, Sodonis, & White-McNulty, 2004). However, some studies also indicate that assessment might play a vital role for pupils in regard to justice (Peter, Kloeckner, Dalbert & Radant, 2012; Dalbert & Resh, 2007; Dalbert, Schneidewind, & Saalbach, 2007; Fan & Chan, 1999).

As already mentioned, the amount of research regarding how pupils perceive assessment in school in terms of justice is quite limited. The existing studies are mostly based on theoretical concepts derived from social justice research such as the just world theory (Lerner, 1980). These studies for example, could show that the more pupils generally believed in a just world (BJW), the more they perceived their teachers’ behaviour in the classroom as just and the better grades they received (Peter et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is also suggested that the above mentioned aspects have effects on pupils’ perception of distress in school as well (Dalbert & Stoeber, 2005). Moreover, gender differences were found with regard to the relation between pupils’ personal belief in a just world and their judgements on how far an allocated grade is perceived as just (Dalbert & Resh, 2007). Here, cultural parameters also could be shown to matter (Dalbert & Resh, 2007; Jasso & Wegener, 1999). Pupils in market-oriented societies, which are characterised by a high level of individualism
and competition, were more likely to perceive such a grade allocation as just, that followed the meritocratic principle, than pupils from more collectively organised societies, which are characterised by solidarity relations and ascriptive status allocation (Sabbagh, Faher-Aladeen, & Resh, 2004). Additionally, there is also evidence that the relation between pupils’ expected outcome and the actual received grade matters on how different pupils perceive assessment in different ways in terms of justice (Resh & Jasso, 2002). All of these studies examine, in one way or another, different aspects of justice and how far these aspects are important to how pupils perceive assessment in school.

On the one hand, that means that we have some insights how far certain theoretical concepts from social justice research correspond with and are able to describe particular aspects of how pupils perceive assessment in terms of justice. On the other hand however, it is argued that there is a substantial need for research that pays special attention to pupils’ own perspectives, their actor-specific knowledge, experiences, foci and relevance structures or in other words: their own conceptions of just assessment.

Here, the question arises of what is meant by ‘conceptions’? Based on the literature review made in this study in order to capture and to define more closely what is meant by the concept of ‘conceptions’, it can be concluded that the concept of ‘conceptions’ is mostly interchangeably used to other concepts such as ‘beliefs’ or ‘perceptions’ (see e.g. also Pajares, 1992; Trautwein, 2012; Brown, 2008 regarding this conclusion). Moreover, other concepts as for example ‘semantic representations’ (e.g. Thorkildsen, Sodonis & White-McNulty, 2000), ‘social representations’ (e.g. Moscovici, 1988) or ‘subjective theories’ (e.g. Dweck & Legett, 1988) can also be seen to belong to the same conceptual category, slightly differing in its semantic meaning with regard to the associated academic discipline and thereof resulting focus. Brown (2008) for example provides a comprehensive overview of concepts used in literature regarding the term ‘conceptions’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-sense</td>
<td>Belief (System)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 See Trautwein (2012) for the German-speaking context with regard to the variety of the conceptual categories of ‘teacher beliefs’ and ‘teaching conceptions’.
In 1992 that we deal with a “messy construct”, which still seems to apply (see e.g. Trautwein, 2012). Considering that the highlighted conceptual 'messiness' refers to the comparatively more developed research on teachers' conceptions and thereby often to teachers' role of a professional, the case seems to be even more difficult in regard to pupils' conceptions, since per se, it also poses the question of what a pupil 'is' and where the lines of differentiation are drawn between the pupil and the individual, the adolescent or the peer. The present study will thereby to some extent also suggest how pupils' conceptions can be contoured, as exemplified by pupils' justice conceptions regarding assessment.

Based on the literature review and the sources presented above as well as on the understanding and knowledge successively gained during the research process along the empirical material in this study, pupils' conceptions are in this study understood as complex mental representations of what is true and relevant to pupils, and which might to some extent also inform their actions as well as their response to educational efforts. Pupils' conceptions are based on experiences and subjective knowledge, which are interpreted in an intersubjective process of meaning and sense-making. Since pupils are actively producing and reproducing meaning in an interactive and reciprocal process between themselves and their (social) environment (see Hurrelmann, 1988), pupils' conceptions do not necessarily need to be consistent or definite, “yet they represent what the person understands, knows, believes, thinks and feels about a domain at any one time” (Brown, 2008, p. 2) – which is in this study about just assessment in school with pupils being pupils in the era of increasing standardisation, outcome orientation and evaluation.

Consequently, pupils' conceptions of assessment with a focus on justice understood in this sense means that it is not predetermined which aspects of justice one is looking at or what the relevant aspects are. Rather, this needs to be kept open as an empirical question, which has to be answered throughout the process of analysis. Thereby, we are enabled to understand and to gain valuable insights regarding the phenomenon of just assessment from a pupils' perspective without determining in advance the relevant lines of analysis. What just assessment means for pupils, what it includes and what it can be related to, is thus consequently seen to be “in the eye of the beholder” (Walster & Walster, 1975, p. 22). Based on the limited amount of research regarding this issue, the present study seeks to contribute with the development of a theoretical conceptualisation of pupils' justice conceptions, which is based on a consequent pupils' perspective6.

6 The emphasis of the pupils' perspective does not imply that the co-constructive character of the research process is neglected. The possibilities and limitations of reconstructing and representing other's meaning- and sense-making, are especially discussed with different foci in ch. 2.1.3 and ch. 2.2.1.

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Regarding this overview, Brown (2008) explains:

“Terms used in literature for conceptions describe two elements; that is, the non-expert aspect of the holder and nouns for the mental phenomena (table 1). One could almost play mix-and-match with the adjectives and nouns to develop new labels for how people conceive of any phenomenon.” (p. 5)

If one, in extension to those concepts, is adding different concepts used in different language contexts, such as ‘Überzeugungen’ (e.g. Falkenberg, 2017) or ‘Konzeptionen’ (e.g. Oehme, 2015) for the German-speaking context or ‘uppfattningar’ (e.g. Marton & Svensson, 1978) as an example for the Swedish context, then one might easily agree with Pajares, who already stated

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5 Here, it shall be highlighted that the idea of ‘mix-and-match’ in the quote shall not indicate that the present study assumes arbitrariness in this conceptual regard. Rather, the diversity and variety of attempts to grasp the phenomenon of ‘conceptions’ in diverse conceptualisations are seen as an expression of a still developing field of research, emphasising different aspects of the term that is called for ‘conceptions’ in this study and depending on the academic discipline, the research foci as well as the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions.
in 1992 that we deal with a “messy construct”, which still seems to apply (see e.g. Trautwein, 2012). Considering that the highlighted conceptual ‘messiness’ refers to the comparatively more developed research on teachers’ conceptions and thereby often to teachers’ role of a professional, the case seems to be even more difficult in regard to pupils’ conceptions, since per se, it also poses the question of what a pupil ‘is’ and where the lines of differentiation are drawn between the pupil and the individual, the adolescent or the peer. The present study will thereby to some extent also suggest how pupils’ conceptions can be contoured, as exemplified by pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment.

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6 The emphasis of the pupils’ perspective does not imply that the co-constructive character of the research process is neglected. The possibilities and limitations of reconstructing and representing other’s meaning- and sense-making, are especially discussed with different foci in ch. 2.1.3 and ch. 2.2.1.
For this purpose, a methodological framework needs to be applied, which is idiographic as well as to in certain ways also nomothetic in character. On the one hand, this implies that the framework needs to enable openness, supporting the visibility and appearance of pupils’ own relevance structures and their own meaning and sense-making. On the other hand, it is necessary that the methodological framework also allows going beyond the level of mere description in order to provide the basis for developing a theoretical conceptualisation.

1.3 Exploring and explaining the pupils’ perspective by comparison

As already intended by the title of the thesis and mentioned in the subchapters before, this study seeks to make a contribution to the field of comparative education. The until now presented thematic foundations of this study, which are located at the interface of empirical justice research, assessment research and pupil research, shall now be complemented with an introduction to the foundations of the context-sensitive comparative approach in relation to the thematic focus.

1.3.1 Exploring and explaining pupils’ conceptions

Based on the above presented reflections, the methodological frame of this study seeks to be both, explorative as well as theoretically explanatory in character. That means that the concept of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment first needs to be exploratively studied and described in order to enable a theoretical conceptualisation with explanatory value of middle range.

One of the most common methodological approaches serving the purpose of theory development on the basis of empirical explorations is the Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a; Corbin & Strauss, 1990b). To put it shortly, the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) can be said to aim for the development of theoretical conceptualisations about certain phenomena, which are grounded in empirical data. This does not imply that the GTM follows a sort of naïve inductionism, rejecting all kinds of deduction. Rather, the GTM is based on an abductive logic, where the iterative research process stands for a constantly ongoing comparison between empirical data, theoretical inference, and theoretical
concepts used in a sensitising but not guiding way (Reichertz, 2010, see also ch. 3.1). Due to the systematic iterative process of analysis, the level of abstraction and theorisation is successively increased until theoretical saturation is reached. The grounding of the theoretical conceptualisation on empirical data thereby promises a theorisation along those lines of relevance, that are the important ones for pupils, the key-actors in this study.

A more concrete presentation of the methodological framework and its concrete application in this study will be presented in chapter 2. Nevertheless, it already shall be highlighted here that the analytical and processual openness that allows for examining just assessment from a pupils’ perspective, necessarily also means a certain logical structure regarding the presentation of the study. This implies that the iterative and non-linear research style needs to be presented in a linear format.

1.3.2 Comparing pupils’ conceptions

The so far presented points of departure implicate that pupils’ conceptions also can be assumed to be context-dependent (Dalbert & Resh, 2007; Jasso & Wegener, 1999; Stobart, 2005). That applies for the normative idea of justice, for the logics underlying the structural and functional organisation of education as well as for the interpretation of guiding ideas and concepts in the educational sphere:

From the research on norms and values, we know for example that norms and values function in certain ways in certain cultures (Geertz, 1973/2000). Furthermore, we also know that they are developed, constructed and reconstructed in the context of socialisation (Coleman, 1990). The normative idea about a just allocation of life chances on the basis of educational merits expressed in grades is an example for such a societal norm that is culturally dependent (Sabbagh et al., 2004). In addition, the systems for assessment and examinations are differently formed and follow different logics regarding their normative idea of meritocracy (Waldow, 2010; 2011; 2014; 2016). Consequently, justice as a normative societal conception is also to some extent interrelated with how pupils, being within that system, experience, interpret and think about just assessment. On a continuum, this may reach from the cross-societal level of norms until the very local level, as for example justice norms and values within the family, the classroom or the peer-group (Anderson-Levitt, 2012; Ostrom, 2014). This also implies that pupils’ justice conceptions do not necessarily need to be identical or even consistent. The normative idea of meritocracy for example, can be seen on a cross-societal level as:
“the ‘meritocratic minimum’ shared” in terms of “that individual merit should be decisive for the allocation of life chances, not ascriptive criteria such as ethnicity, social background or wealth” (Waldow, 2016, p. 313).

However, the concrete experiences of individuals and certain groups of actors, such as pupils, may deviate in concrete situations, at certain points of time or in particular local contexts from this otherwise generally supported normative principle (Kluegel & Mateju, 1995; Liebig & Wegener, 1995). Hence, what just assessment and just allocation means, seems thereby far from being self-evident or generally valid for all groups of actors in all contexts under diverse conditions.

Pupils are for example located within a certain context-specific educational system that includes certain logics, rules, structures and functions (Luhmann, 2002; Parsons, 1959). These systems can differ in terms of e.g. differentiation, inclusion, selection, allocation and regulations for access and transition (Black & Wiliam, 2005). These functional structures necessarily also mirror a certain set of societal norms and values, such as justice, and “contribute both to the socialisation of individuals and to their allocation to roles in society” (Parssons, 1959, p. 318).

Hence, the contextual structures and functions of an educational system, together with the specific contextual ideas of socio-historically grown logics, rules and norms of justice, of assessment, of allocation and of selection, thus can be assumed to matter for pupils’ justice conceptions as well.

In addition, another dimension of context also plays a vital role when examining pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, which has to do with the contextually determined interpretations of concepts and ideas. That means that ‘global’ concepts and their related ideas, such as ‘competences’ (Nordin & Sundberg, 2016), ‘knowledge’ (Wahlström, 2016), ‘assessment’ (Black & Wiliam, 2005), ‘assessment system’ (Lundahl, Hultén & Tveit, 2017) or ‘student-centred learning’ (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006) travel across time and space and are differently interpreted and connotated in different contexts (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). In the course of reforms, ‘global’ ideas often are imported, locally transformed and recontextualised (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012; Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012). In this regard, Schriewer (2000) for example also talks about ‘hybridisation’. Hence, a sensitising concept such as the concept of ‘formative assessment’ or ‘standardisation’ does not necessarily mean the same thing in all contexts (see Maier, 2010 regarding the first one). Consequently, what just assessment means for different actors in different contexts, making different
experiences on the basis of differing structures, practices and frames for action, is assumedly far from being self-evident or universal.

Thus, an increase of contextual variables will help to enlarge the context-sensitive understanding regarding the range of possible variations of pupils’ conceptions in relation to their contextual embedment; as well as it will broaden the validity scope of the generated theoretical conceptualisation – which is of special relevance when having in mind the heterogeneity of educational systems in general, and of assessment systems in particular (for an overview, see e.g. Lundahl, Hultén & Tveit, 2017).

Based on this, it seems plausible and valuable to examine pupils’ justice conceptions of assessment in the form of a comparative study across different educational contexts. The context sensitive approach will in addition deepen the understanding of the contextual conditions, which are, certainly in large-scale studies, often and necessarily excluded. In turn, this also implies the risk that the opportunity of understanding ‘the bigger picture’ and the broader ‘conditional matrix’ is missed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990). Consequently, this study contains both: on the one hand a context-sensitive comparative approach7 (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010) and on the other the GTM (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990)8. Hence, the present study applies a methodological framework including vertical as well as horizontal comparisons9, across but also within different educational contexts.

1.3.3 Choice of comparative units

Regarding the contextual comparison, the choice of comparative units plays an important role. Since the focus of this study is on pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, the choice of the comparative units has to mirror relevant lines of comparison. Based on previous research, it is assumed10 that pupils in the Swedish educational system and pupils in the German

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7 Steiner-Khamsi (2010) talks about context-sensible approaches. In this study, the term context-sensitive is used in relation to what Corbin & Strauss (2008/1990a) suggested regarding the multidimensional sensitivity of doing qualitative research studies that are especially well suited for cross-cultural research studies (p. 32-35).

8 The GTM is also known as “constant comparative method” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a), since empirical data, sensitising theoretical concepts and successively developed theorisations are constantly compared in an iterative research process.

9 For a more detailed presentation of this issue see ch.2.1.1.

10 Since this study is based on a qualitative methodology, these assumptions are necessarily heuristic in character.
educational system are as units of comparison particularly well suited for generating valuable insights on the research interest of this study\(^{11}\).

During the last years, an increasing amount of international comparative studies have been conducted, focusing on Sweden and Germany as comparative units. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that both systems have relevant aspects in common, which enable for a comparison and allow for a determination of a ‘tertium comparationis’ - the shared “third of comparison”\(^{12}\). On the other hand, the Swedish and the German contexts are at the same time different in regard to these studies’ relevant and interesting aspects, which qualify these both contexts as promising units of comparison.

Some of these studies examine normative differences from different angles as e.g. justice conceptions regarding assessment as expressed in regulations (Waldow, 2014), scientific discourses about the legitimacy of excellence initiatives (Dodill, 2016) or the distinct realm of social justice in the nexus of education and welfare (Busemeyer, 2015). The latter categories of studies are often inspired by the well-known study of “The three worlds of welfare capitalism” by Esping-Andersen (1990). The different logics of legitimacy also become obvious with regard to how Germany and Sweden reacted towards the PISA results during the 2000s respectively, as well as in which ways PISA was used as an argument with regard to educational reforms in the respective context (Ringarp, 2016; Rothland & Ringarp, 2010). There is also evidence of differences concerning the teaching profession in terms of professional development and autonomy (Wermke, 2013) as well as in terms of what discipline means in Swedish and in German classrooms and how the professional teacher is understood in relation to this (Billmayer, 2015). Moreover, Falkenberg (2017) could show interesting differences and similarities in Swedish and German teachers’ justice conceptions regarding assessment in relation to how they try to balance official assessment requirements, practices and professional beliefs.

However, for this study it is assumed that the aspects mentioned above also matter in different ways for a deeper examination of pupils’ conceptions, of justice as well as for assessment, since they indicate relevant differences in the educational contexts on different levels and regarding different groups of actors. This includes also differences with regard to norms and legitimacy, which in turn, there is evidence as well that these are mirrored in the different logics of the variations regarding the structural level. By a careful and systematic comparison of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment as well as their contextual embedment, differences and similarities regarding the

\(^{11}\) A more detailed description about the character of the comparative units is provided in ch. 2.2.1.

\(^{12}\) See also ch. 2.1.
patterns of the underlying logic of justice in the two different educational contexts can be made visible. Consequently, the choice of units is theoretically and empirically informed.

1.4 Interim résumé - a context-sensitive comparative study about just assessment from a pupils’ perspective

Based on the outlined foundations of this context-sensitive comparative study, one can summarise its main purpose as to examine the thematic issue of just assessment in school from a consequent pupils’ perspective. Moreover, by using a theory generating approach, the Grounded Theory Methodology, the study seeks to develop theoretical conceptualisations about the phenomenon that are grounded in pupils’ own relevance structures without determining a strictly guiding theoretical framework in advance as a starting point. Since the study is also comparative in character, the consequent pupils’ perspective examined through a theory generating approach, seeks to some extent to provide a platform “to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions” (Broadfoot, 2002, p.5) that may exist about just assessment. By this, the study makes use of the strength of “mak[ing, B.V.] the familiar strange” (Broadfoot, 2002, p.5) and thereby to generate new and valuable insights regarding the interface of assessment and justice.

This can be illustrated by the following figure, which gives an initial overview of the study:

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13 Regarding the role of theoretical prior knowledge in this study, the abductive research process and the use of sensitising theoretical concepts from assessment research and justice research, see ch. II and III.

14 The comparison in this figure may not be misunderstood as dealing with a simplified dualistic comparative perspective. The particularities of the inter and intracontextual comparison are described more in detail in ch. II.
31

Based on the starting points as well as the findings, this study thus has its particular thematic interrelations with assessment research, empirical justice research and pupil research and thereof resulting intersectional thematic foci. The research questions guiding this study will be presented in the following and are characterised by the analytical and theoretical openness that is typical for theory generating studies in general, and for Grounded Theory studies in particular.

1.5 Purpose and guiding research questions

Based on the premises and foundations outlined before, the study's overall purpose is to understand just assessment in school in its contextual embedment and from a consequent pupil perspective. More concretely, the study aims to reconstruct the differences and similarities of pupils' justice conceptions with regard to assessment within and across different contexts.

In relation to this aim, the study seeks to provide answers on the following overall research questions, which are necessarily formulated in a descriptive-processual way, due to the study's purpose and explorative-reconstructive character:

1. Which aspects characterise just/unjust assessment for pupils?
2. What are the conditions that determine if assessment is perceived as just/unjust by pupils?
3. What are the consequences that arise for pupils from assessment in terms of justice?
4. What are pupils' strategies and actions that arise from their justice conceptions regarding assessment?
5. How are these aspects related to each other?

15 van Ackaren and Klein (2016) for example mean that “in contrast to many other sub-disciplines of education research (e.g. School pedagogy [Schulpädagogik, B.V.], intercultural education, media education or etc.), comparative education (CE) refers not to a more or less contoured thematic area but to an approach, which is comparison (…).” (p. 49-50, Transl. B.V.). However, it is important to note that this may not be misinterpreted as if comparative education exclusively would be a ‘method’. Waldow (2015) for example highlights the field-specific character of CE research (with its own...
make a contribution to the field of comparative education\textsuperscript{16}. Based on the starting points as well as the findings, this study thus has its particular thematic interrelations with assessment research, empirical justice research and pupil research and thereof resulting intersectional thematic foci.

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\emph{What are pupils’ strategies and actions that arise from their justice conceptions regarding assessment?}

\emph{How are these aspects related to each other?}

\textsuperscript{16} Regarding a presentation of comparative education from a Swedish perspective, see e.g. Husén (1985), Lindblad & Wallin (1983) and Landahl & Lundahl (2017).
These research questions should not be understood as guiding in an exclusive way, pinpointing partitioned areas of research focus. If this study is imagined as a research map named “pupils’ justice conceptions of assessment in Sweden and Germany”, the research questions rather mark certain ‘research complexes’, which are interrelated and interdependent. Thereby the research questions need to be more understood as the constitutive frame of the study providing a platform for orientation, than single, segregated elements of the same.

One of the measures to ensure comparability is that the study initially focuses on pupils, who attend lower secondary level in public schools and, with regards to the German system, even on pupils attending different school types (see also chapt.2.2.3).

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Due to the particular methodological design, the outline of the thesis is hereafter organised in the following way:

The chapter ‘Methodological framework and methods applied’ presents the methodological underpinnings of the study and its methodical design in a more detailed way. This includes a presentation of the context-sensible comparative approach used in this study as well as the principles of the pragmatist GTM applied. In addition to this, the benefits and challenges of a combination of both approaches are discussed, as well as how this combination can be mastered in a beneficial way. Furthermore, particular methodological issues are addressed that almost automatically arise in comparative studies, which are context-sensitive, multi-contextual and multi-lingual in character. This especially applies for studies that seek to understand and to compare ‘others’ making of meaning and sense. Hereafter, the therefrom following methodical challenges regarding the translation problematique are discussed and concrete steps of their handling presented. The next section then sheds light on diverse issues related to the generation of data. This includes reflections about the basic foundations of doing research with pupils. Moreover, the method used for data generation is presented, as well as a description of the sample and the sampling strategy applied. Here, also ethical considerations are presented. The section then concludes with a presentation of the additional sources of data used in order to enhance context-sensitivity. Finally, the chapter will present and discuss the process of analysis and the concrete procedures applied.
The next chapter ‘‘Assessment’ and ‘Justice’ as heuristic concepts’ will focus on the heuristic embedment of the study, which is about the theoretical concepts that sensitised during the research process for “what is going on in data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 16). The thematic ‘sensitising concepts’ that are in focus here are “Assessment” and “Justice”, which are presented from the theoretical angles of assessment research and social justice research. Regarding assessment, the presentation will include the theoretical differentiation between formative and summative assessment as well as a presentation of the purposes and norms of reference of assessment and in particular of grading.

After this follows the chapter ‘Contextual embedment’, that provides a comparative presentation of certain contextual aspects that are relevant in relation to the study’s research focus, which will also include their socio-historical embedment. Along functionally equivalent tertia comparationis, the chapter sheds light on both systems’ structure and logics of transition and access, where grades are of vital importance for pupils. Hereafter, the chapter provides a comparative presentation of both systems’ regulatory frames for assessment. Thereby, the chapter represents the contextual background against which the findings of pupils’ justice conceptions in the following chapter can be understood in a more context-sensitive way.

Hereafter, the empirical part of the study is presented, starting with a short introduction. The empirical findings are presented in four chapters which represent the theoretical conceptualisations that were systematically and successively developed during a period of three years. The first three chapters stand for the analytical main categories ‘Believing in meritocracy’, ‘Ascribing responsibility’ and ‘Understanding as imperative’. Here, the character and logics of the theoretical conceptualisations are presented, as well as a comparison of the similarities and differences in pupils’ conceptions across and within contexts. This implies exemplifications with original quotes and excerpts from the interviews that are representative for the empirical data corpus, on which each analytical category is based upon. Each chapter concludes with an interim résumé. The last chapter then presents the theoretical conceptualisation of just assessment in school from a pupils’ perspective, namely ‘pupils’ meta assessment’. Here, the character and the components of ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ are conclusively discussed. Finally, suggestions are provided regarding the areas for further research.

In addition, the thesis also provides summaries in Swedish and German as well as an appendix. The Appendix contains different materials, providing additional information about the research process as well as a glossary, where German and Swedish terms are explained and their respective translations in English are presented as used in the context of this study.
It is important to note, that this outline does not necessarily mirror the procedural order of the research process per se. Rather, the research process can be described as a non-linear and iterative one that is characterised by an abductive approach. For reasons of clarity, this linear outline rather represents the thematic structure of the research process than its procedural structure. With regard to the latter, when necessary, this is more concretely explained within respective chapters.
II. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS APPLIED

This chapter provides a presentation of the methodological framework underlying the research process in this study. The chapter thereby seeks to present the underlying methodological principles and their concrete application in this study regarding the following components: the context-sensitive comparison and the premises of Grounded Theory Methodology as well as how certain methodological and methodical challenges in this international comparative study were addressed. Moreover, the methods and procedures of data collection and of the comparative-reconstructive data analysis are presented. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the ethical dimensions of this study and their concrete application.

2.1 The context-sensitive comparative approach in this study

This subchapter will present the two methodological cornerstones of the methodological framework of the study. First, the context-sensitive comparative approach will be presented, including a specification of the comparative units. Hereafter, introductory remarks and an overview regarding the Grounded Theory Methodology is provided. The concrete application is addressed in the following sub-chapters instead, describing the concrete
conduction of data-collection and analysis. The present sub-chapter finally concludes with a detailed discussion of the methodological and methodical challenges regarding the understanding and reconstruction of ‘others’ making of meaning and sense, which is common to all qualitative studies but particularly important to be addressed and to be made explicit in a context-sensitive and multi-lingual comparative study.

2.1.1 The comparative approach

During the last decade, the need for context-sensitive studies examining assessment from an international comparative perspective has been repeatedly pointed out in research overviews on assessment (Forsberg & Lindberg, 2010; Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015; Lundahl, Klapp, Hultén, & Mickwitz, 2015). This need is also indicated by the growing popularity of international comparative studies applying a qualitative design comparing only a few contexts (e.g. Alexander, 2001; Crossley, 2007; Hummrich & Rademacher, 2013; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006; Troman & Jeffrey, 2007; Vulliamy & Webb, 2009).

All of these studies have in common that they pay special attention to the contextual aspects of educational phenomena. In contrast to large-scale studies, which necessarily need to decontextualise the ‘big data’ used, these so-called ‘small-N’ comparisons are characterised by an increase of contextual variables since they intend “to understand – rather than to abstract from the context” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, p. 326). Consequently, this allows for comparisons made in a context-sensitive way (Osborn, 2004). The present study is situated within this field of comparative education.

With regard to the previously presented goals and guiding research questions, the applied context-sensitive approach refers initially to the following two dimensions:

First, context plays a role with regard to the phenomenon per se, since neither pupils nor assessment are assumed to be detached from the context. Rather, the educational system as a whole, as well as pupils and assessment as certain parts of this system are seen as embedded in a wide-reaching, societally influenced and historically grown context. This context is also characterised by particular norms and values and is interrelated with global, inter- and transnational educational phenomena like e.g. increasing standardisation or individualisation. Therefore, it is suggested to understand pupils’ justice
conceptions regarding assessment as interrelated with a certain ‘socio-educational context’\(^{17}\) that stretches over different dimensions and levels.

Following this, it would be improper to make comparisons along the comparative units of nation-states or cultures as such in terms of generalising national or cultural ex-ante ascriptions (Anderson-Levitt, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Seipel & Rippl, 2013)\(^{18}\). Hence, the present study explicitly does not compare ‘German pupils’ with ‘Swedish pupils’ – which anyway would be hardly possible to define as a meaningful variable with regard to pupils’ multi-dimensional diversity. Instead, what is compared in this study can be broken down in the following way:

This study compares pupils’ justice conceptions, as expressed by pupils who are situated within certain socio-educational contexts, which in turn consist of an interdependent relational web, from which assessment is one thread, and along the relevancy patterns as pointed out in the aim and in the research questions of the study.

It is assumed that the context-specific interrelatedness and interdependencies, which underlie the relational web, necessarily need to be understood in order to make the overlying similarities, the ‘tertia comparationis’\(^{19}\), visible (see e.g. also Matthes, 1992; Waldow, 2015). The interrelatedness and interdependencies thereby also imply the necessary identification of “functionally equivalent indicators” (Schriewer, 2006, p. 310) in order to be able to compare the above outlined relations as well as “to put these relationships into relation with each other” (Schriewer, 2006, p. 310; see also e.g. Schriewer, 2014).

Therefore, context-sensitivity also refers to the interrelated embedment of pupils as well as it refers to assessment in the previous outlined way. Hence,

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\(^{17}\) The concept ‘socio-educational’ enables a broader understanding of what a pupil, school and assessment in school means in this study and highlights the interdependent societal embedment as well as the double task of school in terms of Erziehung/Fostran and Bildung/bildning.

\(^{18}\) This is for example the case, when comparative studies use ‘nations’ or ‘cultures’ are more or less natural and self-evident units of comparison, leading to assumptions of territoriality or ethnicity as general causal explanations (see e.g. van Bargen, 2016).

\(^{19}\) A ‘Tertium comparationis’ is the ‘third part of comparison’, which means that it is that overlying part of comparison that is the “common denominator” (e.g. Hilker, 1964).
the study aims to contribute with more than context-sensitive descriptions\(^{20}\) of pupils’ justice conceptions. The intention is instead to provide context-sensitive theoretical conceptualisations of pupils’ justice conceptions, which are successively developed from empirical data.

Secondly, the meaning of context in this study is also increased since the study belongs to a major research project about just assessment in and of schools. The research project “Different Worlds of Meritocracy? Educational assessment and conceptions of justice in Germany, Sweden and England in the age of ‘standards-based reform’”\(^{21}\) examines justice conceptions regarding assessment on a regulations’ level (Waldow, 2014) and from the perspectives of school-inspectors (Oehme, forthcoming; Oehme, 2015), teachers (Falkenberg, 2017) and pupils (this study). Through the integration of different levels in different educational contexts as well as of different group of actors, international as well as intra-national comparisons are possible. Consequently, this project design and the collaboration contribute to a contextual sensitivity that is mutually accumulative.

For the present study, this means that the contextual frames of reference are further extended. The contextualisation of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding grading and assessment is even more promoted, due to the study’s interlacement with the wider relational web of the project’s dimensions, levels and group of actors. This allows for an extended context-sensitive comparison of pupils’ justice conceptions, where “sites and levels of analyses are interrelated in order to capture the implications of an actor’s situatedness within them” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, p. 326).

Besides these two dimensions of context-sensitivity in this study, context-sensitivity also refers to ‘openness’ as a paradigm of qualitative research with regard to pupils’ own conceptualisations of what assessment (and in particular of what just assessment) means to them. That implies that the study enables for content-related contextualisations in terms of meaning-making relations, relevance structures and associations from a pupil perspective\(^{22}\). From this follows, that ‘justice’ is not conceptually predefined as for example “equality” or ”equity” in this study. What just assessment means and can be related to is instead assumed to be ”in the eye of the beholder” (Walster & Walster, 1975, p. 22). However, this study seeks to go beyond the descriptive level. In

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20 Regarding an introduction to the methodical aspects of comparison see e.g. Adick (2008).
21 The project is financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and located at the Centre for International and Comparative Education, Humboldt University, Berlin. For a closer description of the project, please see the project’s webpage: https://www.erziehungswissenschaften.hu-berlin.de/en/view-en/forschung/unterschiedliche-welten-der-meritokratie [2017-03-20]
22 Regarding the actors’ perspective, see also the so-called ‘Thomas theorem’ (Thomas & Thomas 1928).
addition, the aim is to contribute to a conceptual theorisation of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment. Such theorisation necessarily always entails an abstraction from the context. The intended conceptual theorisations of the present study will represent such abstractions, but with the difference that the abstractions are empirically grounded and developed out of rich contextualisations.

For this purpose, the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a) is chosen as a second methodological point of departure for this study.

### 2.1.2 The Grounded Theory Methodology approach in this study

Besides the context-sensitive comparative approach, this study is characterised by the additional use of a content-related theorising approach, in which theorisation is based on empirical data. For this purpose, the Grounded Theory Methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a) is applied.

Since its broader introduction in 1967, the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has successively gained in popularity during the last decades and is today one of the most applied qualitative research approaches (Strübing, 2008, p. 7). During the same time, GTM has also undergone some major changes and further developments. These developments and differentiations cannot be traced in detail here and the interested reader is instead referred to the publications of e.g. Annells (1996, 1997), Hall, Griffith and McKenna (2013), Heath and Cowley (2004), Mey and Mruck (2012) or Strübing (2008, 2012). Nevertheless, it shall be pointed out that it hardly can be referred to ‘the’ GTM in singular. Rather, GTM is a collective term for different sub-approaches, which common denominator is their aim to develop theoretical conceptualisations out of empirical data. To some extent, these are based on differing epistemological and ontological assumptions leading to different methodological conclusions and methodical procedures. Therefore, GTM cannot be referred to as a mere method but a methodology that needs to be understood against the background of its philosophical foundations. The main sub-approaches of GTM are represented by the work of Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, 1990b), Barney Glaser (Glaser, 1978, Glaser, 1992), Katie Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006, 2008) and Adele Clarke (Clarke, 2005).

This study is mainly influenced by the approach represented by Corbin and Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, 1990b), having its roots in Pragmatism and Symbolic Interactionism as typical for the Chicago School.
and being influenced by postmodernist and constructivist ideas in later editions of the book “Basics of qualitative research” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a; for a more detailed reading on the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying this approach, see Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, ch. 1). Based on these underlying assumptions, the methodological implications of this approach can be summarised by the following quote:

“The world ist very complex. There are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex. We believe that it is important to capture as much of this complexity in our research as possible. At the same time knowing that capturing it all is virtually impossible. We try to obtain multiple perspectives on events and build variation into our analytic schemes. We realize that, to understand experience, that experience must be located within and can’t be divorced from the larger events in a social, political, cultural, racial, gender-related, informational, and technological framework and therefore these are essential aspects of our analyses.” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990, p.8)

As already intended in the quote above, is the Strauss and Corbin approach explicitly more of a guideline for doing theory-developing qualitative research than a sort of orthodox script of procedures and rules (Corbin & Strauss, 1990b, p. 6). While the concrete application of the principles of the GTM in this study are more concretely described along the description of the research process in the following sub-chapters, the essential general cornerstones of the GTM (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, 1990b) can be shortly described as follows:

First of all, the overall aim is the systematic and successive development of theoretical conceptualisations about pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment out of empirical data. The aim is thereby more than the mere description of the phenomenon under study – it is a theoretical abstraction that explains pupils’ justice conceptions on a higher level, but based on empirical data.

Therefore, the research process has to be organised in an iterative way, which can be compared to an oscillation movement since the research process moves back and forth between data collection, analysis and theorisations that are developed along the way. That means that instead of following a linear research process of theoretically derived hypotheses, data collection and
analysis; the research process is characterised by the constant comparison of
data and developed theoretical concepts that are preliminary in character. This
comparison is made across but also within diverse sources of data.

Already existing prior knowledge; may it be derived from everyday
experiences, diverse research literature or any other source; is explicitly not
excluded from this process. Instead, this prior knowledge is seen as necessary
contextual knowledge and used as a heuristic frame. Thereby, such so-called
7) support the research process without determining or limiting it.

Moreover, this process is guided by certain coding procedures that help ‘to
break apart’ (Corbin & Strauss, 1990/2008, p. 195) and to conceptualise data
as well as they facilitate the generation of categories with explanatory power
on a more abstract level.

The preliminary analysis results are steering the next sampling for
theoretically relevant information, which means that sampling is characterised
by successivity, theoretically informed and focusing on theoretical concepts.

During the ongoing theorisation, characterised by increasing abstraction, the
successively developed theoretical assumptions need constantly to be
reconnected to the data itself in order to enable the ‘grounding’ of dense
theoretical conceptualisations. This also matters in terms of constant
verification.

In order to support and to assure the abductive process characterised by
increasing complexity, it is indispensable to document the research process,
the preliminary findings and upcoming associations in so-called ‘memos’
(Corbin & Strauss, 1990/2008).

This process of theorisation is continued until the core-category; that means
the category that is able to theoretically explain pupils’ justice conceptions
regarding assessment; is found and theoretical saturation is reached. Out of
this core-category, the theoretical conceptualisation about pupils’ justice
conceptions is formulated. Based on the two methodological approaches
underlying this study, certain challenges arise. These are addressed and
discussed below.
2.1.3 Lost in translation of meaning? Methodological and methodical challenges in a context-sensitive and multi-lingual comparative study

This chapter focuses on two problematiques that almost automatically arise in this comparative study. The first one is linked to the fact that the study is qualitative in character and therefore aims to understand and to reconstruct ‘others’ meaning. The second challenge has to deal with the situation that the understanding and reconstruction of ‘others’ meaning moreover also includes more than one language23. Before it is presented how these challenges were handled in this study, my own professional background shall be shortly outlined in order to enhance the understanding for the particularities of the research process with regard to the previously mentioned challenges.

In 2008, I moved from Germany to Sweden and I am a citizen of both countries today. I have in total 9.5 years of pedagogical education before attending the Ph.D. program at Linnaeus University and a varied long-term working experience with children, adolescents and adults in both countries, both in- and outside a school environment. My last employment before attending the Ph.D. program was at a Swedish Upper Secondary School. During a three-year period, I worked as a teacher and led a vocational program for pedagogy and social work24. Both languages, German as the first language as well as Swedish as one of the second languages, were already spoken fluently before the start of the research project. Consequently, more or less of the ‘typical’ challenges regarding a qualitative comparative research design are relativised – at least to some extent. What this concretely meant for the research process in this study is illustrated below.

2.1.3.1 Understanding and reconstructing ‘others’ meaning in a context-sensitive comparative study

The challenge of understanding meaning in this study is twofold and applies to the handling of multiple languages as well as to the qualitative approach used, where the data are mainly based on language. Especially with regard to aspects of the qualitative research paradigm, such as research as communication and explanation (Kruse, 2009; Lamnek, 2010), the meaning of understanding and of language as such is stretched further.

23 See also Corbin & Strauss (2008/1990a, p.34-35), who highlight this challenges for cross-cultural studies and who refer to Eva Hoffman’s book "Lost in translation" (1989).
24 ‘Barn- och fritidsprogrammet’.
Understanding then, refers to an interrelated understanding of ‘the other’ meaning-making in a process of reconstruction and interpretation. Qualitative research thereby implies the ‘methodical controlled understanding of the other’ (Schütz, 1974). Consequently, understanding of the other’s meaning is not exclusively a matter for comparative studies in terms of mere language problematiques, but it applies for all research (Kruse, 2009, 2012)\(^\text{25}\). Hence, the understanding of other’s making of meaning and sense means in this study not only to understand ‘others’ meaning per se, it also means to understand the meaning of pupils’, who are part of another generational context, and who shape their own ‘(peer-)culture’. Furthermore it also means the understanding of pupils living their lives in a certain way and making experiences that probably are far from my ‘own’ way of growing up and different from my own personal and professional experiences of what it means to be a pupil. These and other relevant aspects of what it means to ‘understand other’s’ meaning and sense-making, are part of the necessary self-reflective character in the research process of qualitative studies like the present one.

Moreover, it needs to be highlighted as well that the understanding of my own meaning-making; which is how I interpreted what pupils said and discussed; is basically dependent on how and how far the reader understands my meaning-making. In addition, this meaning-making is necessarily presented as a written text in English, which is my third language. And of course, it also matters how far I succeed in transforming reflections and thoughts into written language and the related linear form that is inseparable from it. This is especially true with regard to the fact, that the study is mainly based on data from interviews with pupils. Thereby, the data that are also transformed into a ‘scientific language’ and thereby also into a ‘scientific indexicality’, which in turn is in the need of decoding of what ‘the other’ means.

However, qualitative research studies, which in addition also are designed as comparison, have in some way to deal with the complexity that arises from the aim to understand the meaning-making of ‘the other’ in different contexts, as well as to compare it (Alexander, 2001). The methodical and methodological challenges that result from this have come more and more into focus in comparative education research during the last years, as well as particular ideas and certain practices have been developed in order to handle these challenges (Cappai, 2008; Crossley, 2007; Hummrich & Rademacher, 2013; Matthes, 1992; Osborn, 2004; Troman & Jeffrey, 2007; Vulliamy & Webb, 2009). Though these challenges that arise from the ‘understanding of other’s meaning-making’, which in principle are also challenges of the recent study, many of the methodical and methodological pitfalls and difficulties identified \(^\text{23}\) Within the school of ethnomethodology, this fact is also described as the “indexicality” of language (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970).
in the literature on this issue are based on the assumption that most comparative researchers compare units of which at least one is more or less ‘foreign’ to them and which the researcher examines from an ‘outsider perspective’ (e.g. Fritzsche, 2013; Kruse, 2012)\textsuperscript{26}.

This assumption is only partly true for this study with regard to my previous presented background. The ‘outsider’ perspective in the sense of exploring a ‘foreign’ context is in some sense relativised since my situation is characterised by a process of intense socialisation in the field – an advantage, which normally is reserved for long-term ethnology studies (Kruse, 2012, pp. 14–15). That also implies that the insider/outsider perspective and the thereof commonly resulting challenges in international comparative studies are to some extent and in some way relativised. What this concretely means for this study, is presented and discussed below:

As already mentioned above, the challenge for most qualitative comparative studies is to compare meaning-making patterns, which necessarily is based on the understanding of the meaning of ‘the other’. Especially with regard to the research of other ‘cultural’ contexts from a perspective of ‘the own’ (Cappai, 2008), there is a risk of understanding ‘the other’ through a lens that consists of the premises and the conditions of ‘the own’ (Fritzsche, 2013; Waldow, 2015)\textsuperscript{27}. This is what Matthes (1992) has called for the risk of ‘nostrification’. A comparison that would for example examine pupils’ justice conceptions as an already pre-defined concept in terms of a culturally pre-defined such, and in addition analyse the pupil interviews with such a pre-defined conceptual apparatus and coding scheme, would risk to force and to adjust the meaning-making patterns of ‘the other’ into and to the meaning making patterns of ‘the own’.

The fact that I have been situated in both contexts in everyday life and that I have gained experiences with and knowledge about pupils in both contexts, reduces this risk, since it supports the understanding of pupils’ meaning-making out of the actual context. However, this understanding of course implies the general limitation regarding the possibilities to understand ‘the other’ that were described above and that are inherent to all research, regardless approach or method. Moreover, the qualitative paradigm urges qualitative researchers for constant reflexivity and openness (Lamnek, 2010) and to critically scrutinise how far certain interpretations are more or less influenced by particular contextual views.

\textsuperscript{26} See also Merriam et al. (2001) for a critical and relativising perspective on the insider/outsider discourse, asking for example “What is it that an insider is insider of?” (p. 411).

\textsuperscript{27} However, here it also could be asked what ‘the own’ is characterised of or more concretely, how local and how individual ‘the own’ needs to be understood in relation to ‘the other’.
For this reason, it is important to discuss and validate analytical interpretations in e.g. cross-contextual research settings and groups (Osborn, 2004; Troman & Jeffrey, 2007). Even with regard to this, the present study could benefit from the collaborative project, which the study was a part of, since both, a German and a Swedish university were involved. For example, the analysis process in this study was continually supported by the organisation of an online interpretation-group on a regularly basis. The group consisted of participants with German as well as Swedish origin and mother tongue, who focused on sharing, discussing and jointly analysing excerpts of interview transcripts. In addition, I also took regularly part in weekly held research colloquia at the Centre for Comparative and International Education, Humboldt University in Berlin during a three-year period. Here, drafts of this research also were presented and discussed. The same applies, especially with regard to the main situatedness of this study, for the Linnaeus University in Sweden, where drafts of this study were presented and critically discussed with peer- and senior researchers having expertise in different fields with relevance for this study like e.g. curriculum research and assessment research. This form of collaboration with colleagues, who work in the same research field, is also pointed out by Corbin and Strauss (1990b) as a fruitful way to enhance a qualitative research study’s validity. Moreover, the presentation and discussion of findings at national and international research conferences also have been further measures to reduce the risk of ‘nostrification’ and to validate findings.

2.1.3.2 The ‘language issue’ in a multi-lingual comparative study

Like it has already been indicated before, the matter of language as such of course also plays a central role in studies that are conducted in different language areas (Cappai, 2008; Kruse, 2012). Due to the multiple problematiques that arise from the different languages, an interdisciplinary openness is suggested and to look for meaningful methodical tools as provided by e.g. translation sciences or linguistics (Esposito, 2001; Hennink, 2008; Kruse, 2012; Larkin & Schotsmans, 2007; Nikander, 2008; Squires, 2008, 2009; Temple, 2002, 2008; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Temple & Young, 2004; Wallin & Ahlstrom, 2006).

For example, it can be difficult to fully grasp and to understand the national research context and discourses if one is lacking language skills and therefore is referred and limited to publications written in a lingua franca. Furthermore, the language-issue is also an important aspect with regard to data-collection if adequate language skills are missing. Shall the interviews be conducted with the help of a bilingual translator or even be conducted by a translator? Shall
first language interpreters be used for interpretation? Or shall a lingua franca be used that is a second language for both, the researcher and the participants? And how good need the language skills to be in order to properly conduct an interview that is based on understanding and follow-up questions? Comparable issues also arise during analysis: if interviews were done in the participants’ language, in which language are the interviews transcribed? In which language are the preliminary codes, the categories and the central concepts formulated? How can one be sure that the participants’ meaning and sense-making is grasped? And finally, in which language should the results be presented?

Even if these aspects cannot be seen as a complete list of aspects that arise, nevertheless, they might give an impression about the range of possible problems and challenges of the language issue in international comparative studies. Most of the difficulties that were mentioned above could be avoided due to my fluent language skills in German and Swedish, which made it possible throughout the whole research process to take part of diverging sources of information in their original language and to collect data in German and Swedish respectively. Nevertheless, both, the contextual as well as the constant comparison, made it necessary to decide about a mediating language. This also led to questions with regard to the issue of translation and at which point of time of the research process this translations should be made.

As a mediating language, English was chosen as a lingua franca, which was seen as beneficial in terms of communicating and discussing the research in both contexts and internationally but also in terms of further minimising the risk of ‘nostriﬁcation’. The challenge that comes along with this mediating language is the fact that three languages need to be handled at the same time. It also implies the necessity to find adequate translations in terms of ‘lingual equivalences’, which basically imply “the transfer of meaning from a source language (SL) […] to a target language (TL)” (Esposito, 2001, p. 570) instead of literal translations (see also e.g. Panou (2013) for an overview of different conceptualisations of what ‘equivalence’ means in translation studies).

Data were collected in the source languages Swedish and German and by myself. Also the interviews were transcribed in the original source languages. During the first steps of analysis, aiming at capturing and understanding relevant meaning-making patterns, the source languages were maintained. First, during the later steps of analysis which aimed at theorising

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28 The transcription per se already means an act of interpretation and translation of meaning from the spoken language to the written language (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Likewise the analysis process and the presentation of results can also be seen as a translation process, where participants’ meaning-making is translated into a theoretical and scientific language (see also the guiding rules used for transcription in this study appendix E).
at a higher level of abstraction, the target language English was used for the theoretical conceptualisations (see chapt.2.3 for a more detailed description of the analysis process). By this, the contextuality of the meaning-making patterns in each context should be ensured to be maintained as long as possible, before transferring them into English – a procedure that also is recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a, p. 320). As another validation measure, the quotes represented in the findings chapter, are also presented as original interview excerpts in footnotes. The translations of the Swedish quotes are moreover double-checked and collaboratively improved together with an experienced Swedish-English speaker with well-founded experience of young peoples’ language style in both languages. Moreover, also a glossary with important German and Swedish concepts is provided (see appendix F).

Besides this, the writing of this thesis also included the challenge to present the study in the third language, the target language, English. This included not only the translations of quotes, but also the translation of certain concepts, research traditions and to some extent even research fields. The first challenge here is to identify the ‘functionally equivalent’ translations, which moreover also need to be ‘functionally equivalent’ with regard to the Swedish and the German context. One example of such challenge is the concept of ‘assessment’, which is the English concept chosen in this study for what is called ‘Leistungsbeurteilung’ in the German-speaking context, and ‘kunskapsbedömning’ in the Swedish speaking context. These concepts represent the collective term with regard to, on the one hand, the diagnosis of pupils competences and knowledge in summative and formative ways done by teachers in the classroom. On the other hand, this term also implies the ascription of grades made by teachers in relation to the diagnosis results. These concepts are connoted in different ways, depending on the context since they can include different aspects and can emphasise different foci of meaning. Furthermore, certain concepts, such as the Swedish ‘likvärdighet’ (which is often translated as ‘equivalence’) are not easily translatable to other languages, since “not all concepts are universal” (Choi, Kushner, Mill & Lai, 2012, p. 354) or might exist in other languages. Hence, the translations of particular contextual terms and their specific meaning in this study are especially explained in the text or in the footnotes where necessary. In addition such important concepts and their translations are also presented and further explained in a glossary (see appendix F). The finding of linguistically ‘functional equivalents’, means the finding of a concept that fits the intended meaning in the best way. This is on the one hand done by reading relevant research literature and to compare the choices made in there, which helps to identify such ‘best-fit concepts’. Another measure that was also used was forward-backward translations. Moreover, the final draft of this thesis was
also during a period of two month collaboratively discussed with an English-speaking editor, who holds a Ph.D. from UCLA and who is experienced in editing scientific texts in English. She read the draft line-by-line and made suggestions for improvement and change.

Of course, interventions like the ones presented above, have nevertheless their limitations and therefore, the loss of information cannot be completely prevented. However, like Nida (1959, cited in Corbin & Strauss, p. 352) already highlighted in 1959, the loss of information and other challenges of ‘translation’ is not just merely a problem of translating a language but it is also inherent to all kinds of communication as such:

“If one is to insist that translation must involve no loss of information whatsoever, then obviously not only translating but all communication is impossible” (Nida, 1959, p.13, cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 352)

Hence, certain challenges and risks cannot be wholly avoided. Even more, it is questioned, if this would be possible at all. Neglecting and disregarding these challenges as well as claiming complete control due to diverse methodical precautions would thereby obviously be inappropriate. However, there are certain measurements that can be applied in order to reduce the related risks – some of them are the ones that were used in this study and presented above.

Lastly, while there are a lot of challenges regarding language and communication that need to be handled in a multi-lingual comparative study, these challenges also imply a certain kind of strength: since the particular circumstances in studies like the present one literally oblige the researcher to explicate the use and the deeper meaning of concepts, the risk of an implicit ‘taken-by-granted’ or ‘self-evident’ use of concepts can be reduced. This also supports a deepened conceptual validation process regarding the interpretations and findings. This applies especially with regard to my Swedish-German bilingualism. In this regard, Shklarov (2007) for example means:

“Seeing two parallel cultural meanings or realities, and hearing two or more conceptual understandings might be challenging, but if not obscured, it might meaningfully enrich the in-depth perception of the context area and contribute tremendously to the ethical sensitivity and the quality of research.” (p.532)

After the challenges and benefits regarding the understanding of meaning in a multi-lingual comparative study have been discussed, different aspects related
to data collection in this study are described. This will also include certain reflections regarding research with and research about pupils, the methods for generating data, and the sampling and recruiting strategies applied as well as a presentation of the sample and the ethical considerations of the study.

2.2 The generation of the data corpus

This sub-chapter will provide in-depth insights regarding the aspects related to the collection, or more concretely, the co-constructional process of data generation in this study. The first sub-chapter will shed light on the issue of research undertaken with and about pupils. This will also include a closer description of what is meant by the concept of ‘pupil’. Hereafter, it is described why the focus group interview method was chosen for data collection and discussed how far the matter of group interaction played a role in this study. In the next sub-chapter, it will be taken a closer look on the particular sampling strategy in this study and a detailed overview over the sample is given, which, moreover, is complemented by a list of all participating pupils (see appendix D). This sub-chapter is then followed up by a description of the interview procedures and by the underlying reflections regarding important decisions that were made. Here, an overview of the interviews is given and thereby of the materialised data that were generated. After the presentation of these methodical and methodological cornerstones related to the generation of interview data, the underlying ethical reflections and guidelines that accompanied and guided the whole research process are presented. Finally, the role of additional data in this study is described, which provided the source for a deepened contextual knowledge that allowed for a context-sensitive understanding and a contextualised embedment of the interview data.

2.2.1 Research about and with pupils

The main actors in this study are pupils located in certain socio-educational contexts. That means on the one hand that the research is about pupils’ justice conceptions, and on the other hand, it means that the study is interested in examining this issue from a pupils’ perspective and therefore it is also about doing research with pupils.
It is further assumed, that the concept of ‘pupil’ implies that the pupil is at the same time also a young person, a child or an adolescent, who attends school and thereby it also implies a perspective of the individual that goes beyond the role of a pupil as such. Especially against the background of the here examined conceptions, and additionally also with regard to the normative dimension that is related to justice conceptions, it seems necessary to adopt a broader understanding of the concept of ‘pupil’. Consequently, a strict differentiation between the institutionally bound concept of ‘pupil’ (which would come along with a conceptual reduction to the institutionalised role in this study) and the concept of the ‘pupil’ as ‘young person’, ‘adolescent’ or ‘peer’ - located in school and in a certain socio-educational context - would neither be meaningful nor possible, especially with regards to the study’s thematic focus and methodological approach (concerning this perspective on pupil research, see e.g. Böhme & Helsper, 2008; de Boer & Deckert-Peaceman, 2009; Helsper & Böhme, 2002; Breidenstein, 2006; concerning the interrelation between these both concepts).

During the last decades, the societal discourse about children’s rights also influenced research focusing on child-related issues. That can be shortly summarised as a transition from research solely being about children towards research interested in letting children’s own perspectives become visible (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Honig, Lange, & Leu, 1999; James & James, 2004; Qvortrup, Corsaro, & Honig, 2009; Reinders, 2012; Tinson, 2009). With regard to this study, the necessity of more research about assessment from a pupils’ perspective has been repeatedly highlighted (Brown, 2008; Forsberg & Viveca Lindberg, 2010; Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015; Lundahl et al., 2015). In addition, Fan and Chan (1999) for example also underline the importance to avoid assuming what pupils might perceive as (un-) just in educational contexts and suggest, that we:

“instead [...] should begin with examining students’ own retrospective accounts of their justice experiences in order to understand their justice perception” (p.31)

In order to examine pupils’ justice conceptions, different methodological approaches would have been possible; all of them having their specific strengths and weaknesses. The one that was chosen for this study is presented below.

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29 Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that pupils’ conceptions in this study are a reconstruction, derived in a process of co-construction, theorisation and scientification (see e.g. Halldén (2003) for a deeper discussion regarding this issue).
2.2.2 Focus group interviews with pupils

Based on the different aspects and levels of contextuality, which characterises this study and which are related to pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, context and interrelatedness are also seen as being relevant to be mirrored regarding the choice of data collection method.

That means that contextuality is also a question of social contextuality on different levels. However, concerning the choice of data collection method and especially when doing research with pupils, the choice of method for data collection is of course linked to a particular responsibility with regard to ethical responsibility (see chapt.2.2.5 for a more close presentation of this issue). In addition to this, it is also important to reflect about where and how pupils’ conceptions can be captured in the best way. For this study, pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment were decided to be conducted in a setting that is close to the one where these issues usually are communicated: the peer group. Therefore, group interview techniques promise to generate relevant and rich data. This is for example also highlighted by Flick (2009), who sees the additional benefits of group interview techniques in the fact that they help to:

“further contextualise the data collected and to create an interactional situation that comes closer to everyday life than the (often one-off) encounter of interviewer and interviewee or narrator permits” (p.114).

As a well-established group interview technique, the Focus Group interview method was chosen for data collection in this study (Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988). Kitzinger (1995) describes the method in the following way:

“Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data. (...) focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view. The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way.” (p.299)
In contrast to group discussions (Bohnsack, 2008), which often also use extern stimuli like e.g. vignettes in order to examine the social generis of a certain issue, focus group interviews are first and foremost interviews, which focus on the content of data generated through interaction enriching the content (Morgan, 1988). That means that group interaction, such as explaining, joking, associating, agreeing or disagreeing, are seen as a valuable source for enriching data (Kitzinger, 1994) and helping to uncover dimensions in pupils’ justice conceptions that “would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (Morgan, 1988, p. 2). Hence, the research interest decides upon the meaning of interaction for analysis. For example, a conversation analysis study or a discourse psychology study would need to put more emphasis on interaction and on group phenomena, which would also imply a necessary concentration on a minor amount of data (regarding the role of interaction for analysis see also e.g. Vicsek, 2007, 2010; Carey & Smith, 1994; Rothwell, 2010; Kidd & Parshall, 2000). However, the focus in this study is more on a thematic analysis than on the interactional analysis. This means that the study is more interested in examining the content of pupils’ conceptions, rather than their interactional generis or the process of their social construction, which does not mean that the interactional dimensions were excluded. Consequently, interactional aspects that were of relevance for a deeper understanding and a situational contextualisation of the content have been included in the interview transcripts and were taken into account during the analysis. This contextualisation included e.g. also a description of the group compositions (see ch. 2.2.3 and appendix D) and the use of interview protocols (see ch. 2.2.4).

Research on focus groups with children and adolescents suggest that it is precisely those interactional aspects of the group setting, which particularly qualify the Focus Group interview method for research with young people (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Gibson, 2007; Hennessy & Heary, 2005; Norris, Aroian, Warren, & Wirth, 2012), since they allow the researcher to take a step back. By this, the communication during the interview is less characterised by a face-to-face communication between the researcher and the pupil, which otherwise also might have implications in terms of e.g. power-imbalance and ethical aspects that are related to this (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Honig et al., 1999; Tinson, 2009). Instead, the communication takes place among the participating pupils, with the researcher as being with the group but not being in its centre. In this respect, too, the Focus Group interview method that is applied in this study, promises to provide data that are rich with information about pupils’ justice conceptions about assessment.

In the following, it shall be taken a closer look on the sampling and recruiting strategy applied. Furthermore, a description of the sample is provided.
2.2.3 Sampling strategy and description of the sample

The sampling strategy chosen for this study can overall be described as theoretically guided and non-probabilistic in character (Kelle & Kluge, 2010; Patton, 2002; Reinders, 2012).

As already presented before (ch. 2.1.1), the choice of the units Sweden and Germany is not a choice of countries or nations as such, but rather needs to be understood as a choice of socio-educational contexts in which pupils’ conceptions are examined. The sampling is therefore based on preliminary theoretical assumptions regarding these contexts and is heuristically guided by previous empirical research that is relevant to this study’s focus. These heuristic assumptions also apply for the choice of the educational stage, which this study is focusing on. Because of grades’ relevance for further educational opportunities, the study has to concentrate on a specific transition point in the educational systems, which qualifies for comparison. For this reason, the study focuses on the end of lower secondary schooling, which means year 9 (or 10, depending on school types in Germany), when the achieved grades are decisive for further transition.

However, when it comes to the actor’s level, the overall sampling strategy of this study is characterised by what Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a) call for “theoretical sampling” (p. 145-157). Since the purpose of the study is to develop a theoretical conceptualisation enhancing the understanding of pupils’ justice conceptions about assessment, the focus of the study is not on pupils as individuals but on pupils’ conceptions (see also 2.1.1). Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a) put this sampling strategy as follows:

“the basis for sampling is concepts, not persons. Relevant concepts are elaborated upon and refined through purposeful gathering of data pertaining to these concepts. It is through theoretical sampling that concepts are elaborated and as such it forms the basis for rich description and theory production.” (p.157)

Sampling “concepts, not persons” means for this study that the sampling is not automatically based on individuals as representing pre-defined variables such as socioeconomic background, gender or for example cultural aspects per se, but on theoretical relevance. This explicitly does not imply that such variables cannot matter or were excluded (see appendix D). Rather that means that the meaning of such variables and their relevance in relation to the research questions is held open as an empirical question and can be included in the successive research process in case they become relevant for further
Theorisation or as an important background knowledge that may enhance understanding during analysis.

Theoretical sampling thereby means that the sampling process in this study is seen as a part of the research process and not an all-determining decision initially made. This approach benefits from the fact that the research process is organised in an iterative way. That allows to sample in relation to the successively emerging necessity of where to look next for relevant information in the next stage of the research process, and of which sampling criteria are the relevant ones (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a). Theoretical sampling in this study thereby refers to new data collection as well as it refers to the re-analysis of already collected sources of data with a new analytical focus.

For this reason, data were successively collected during the years 2013-2016. The findings of this study are based on 21 focus group interviews in total, representing 11 schools and including 95 pupils at the end of lower secondary education. More concretely, the final sample for the Swedish and the German context respectively looks as follows:

In the **Swedish sample**, five public schools are represented by six interviews with 24 pupils. Overall, the data were collected in five cycles during a ten-month period. The schools represented in the sample are located in the southern part of Sweden, in sites ranging from two small villages both with nearly 2,000 residents, one small town with nearly 20,000 residents, and two schools located in the city-centres of two large towns with nearly 70,000 residents. The amount of pupils attending these schools in year 1-9 reaches from nearly 300 to over 700. The proportion of pupils with migration background in the schools ranged from 14% to 46% (the national average in Sweden in the school year 2013/14 was 24%). Regarding pupils’ performance outcome at these schools, the average merit-value at the end of year 9 in these schools varied between 182,6 (which lies in the lower third of the national average) and 225,6 points (which is clearly above the national average that was 214,8 in the school-year 2013/14). The Swedish sample includes the following interviews:

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30 Background information for each pupil was also collected, see appendix E. One interview that was conducted in Sweden is not represented in this table and was excluded from analysis due to the fact that only two participants showed up.

31 The merit-value is a numerical value, which ascribes each final grade a certain amount of points, see ch. 4.1.2. The maximum possible amount for pupils achieving the highest grade in each of the 16 subjects is 320 points.

32 Source of data were the public national databases SIRIS and SALSA
Due to the highly federal organisation of the educational system in Germany, the German sample is exclusively focusing on the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, which is located in the Western part of Germany and the federal state with the largest population (nearly 18 million in 2015, www.statistik-portal.de). The sample represents six public schools, 15 interviews and 71 pupils in total and data were collected in six cycles during an 11-month period. That means that in most German schools, recruiting has led to more than one interview. In addition, due to its differentiated school system, the sample in Germany represents the following school-types: Hauptschule (HS), Realschule (RS), Gymnasium (GYM) and Gesamtschule (GES)\(^{33}\) (for a closer description, see ch.4.1). For plausible reasons, the German sample is therefore more comprehensive than the Swedish one. The schools represented are located in a region comparable to the Swedish one. Two schools represented in this study are located in smaller suburbs with 10,000 to 20,000 residents, three schools are located in small towns with 36,000 to 46,000 residents and one school is located in the city-centre of a big city with 270,000 residents. The amount of pupils attending these schools (year 1 to 10 or 13 respectively) reaches from nearly 250 to 1500. The proportion of pupils with migration-background in these schools ranges from 2% to 46% (the average for the federal state NRW in the school year 2015/16 for pupils attending the level SEK I was 8.6 %; Source: Statistisches Bundesamt). The German sample includes the following interviews:

Table 3. Overview of the German interview sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pseudonyms of the interviewed pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GER01</td>
<td>RS1</td>
<td>06/2015</td>
<td>Moustafa, Konstantin, Sandro, Kevin, Karl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER02</td>
<td>RS1</td>
<td>06/2015</td>
<td>Franziska, Sina, Marie, Johanna, Selina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER03</td>
<td>RS1</td>
<td>06/2015</td>
<td>Hendrik, Frederike, Mirjam, Simon, Manuel, Leon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{33}\) These school types were chosen as they are attended by the vast majority of all pupils in NRW.
the project in a class usually took around 20 minutes, where the purpose, the aim, the procedure as well as the ethical rules of the study were presented. Here, pupils were also given the opportunity to ask questions. At the end of each visit, a letter with information for pupils and their legal guardians was distributed (see appendix B), as well as a consent form, which all pupils had to sign in case they wanted to participate in the study (see appendix C). Usually, pupils had about one week to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study by informing their interest via telephone or e-mail, or if they wanted, they could do it in person right after the disclosure of the information. The interviews were usually conducted about two weeks after the classes were visited.

Regarding the information and registration of the German pupils, the study could benefit from the support of a German colleague, Christian Brüggemann, also working within the research project at Humboldt University in Berlin. He partly took over this part of the recruiting process in order to keep the effort of travelling manageable for me. The same colleague was also present during the interviews and assisted with regard to the interview protocol. The presence of this colleague during the interviews also showed to be very valuable regarding the exchange of ideas, the discussion of first impressions as well as the collaborative analysis of interviews in the online-interpretation group.

2.2.4 Conduction of the interviews

In each interview, the groups consisted of three to six participants in order to generate a group composition that enables rich interactions and also gives each participant the opportunity to actively participate and to be heard (see Morgan (1998) and Krueger (1994) regarding the composition of groups in terms of participants characteristics and heterogeneity vs. homogeneity as well as Halkier (2010) regarding the amount of participants).

Before the interviews started, the pupils were once again informed about the purpose, the rules, the aims and the procedures of the interview. This included also the information regarding their rights as voluntary participants and that they could leave the interview whenever they wanted without giving an explanation. Moreover, it was also explained how the collected data would be handled. Here, pupils also could ask questions again.

With regard to the recruitment, the choice of schools, and where possible, the classes visited, were based on theoretical sampling. All the decisions of theoretical sampling and the related underlying aspects cannot be presented here but can be exemplified:

In Germany for example, it was clear that the sample needed to include the most attended school-types due to the differentiation’s relevance for further educational opportunities and life chances. In addition to this, the theoretical sampling in Germany e.g. led to the decision not to sample only one Hauptschule, but even to recruit pupils attending another Hauptschule in order to contrast and to verify findings from the interview GER04 and from the interviews done in other school-types.

The decision to recruit pupils from school D in the Swedish sample, a little school in a small village, also was a decision with the purpose to contrast and to verify the findings of the interviews done before. It was assumed that the special conditions of a minor school in a small village might have certain implications for pupils’ justice conceptions. This assumption was based on the analytically derived hypothesis that the pupil-teacher relationship might be relevant for how pupils perceive assessment and that the conditions for this relationship might be different with regard to the school’s size.

The recruiting strategy in all schools in both contexts was carried out in the following way:

First, the school-leader, usually the headmaster, was contacted by phone or by e-mail in order to be informed about the project. If the school-leader was positive to contribute to the study, a certain date was chosen for visiting a particular school class and to inform pupils about the project. Informing about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GER04</td>
<td>HS1</td>
<td>06/15</td>
<td>Michelle, Sergej, Korbinian, Tobias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER05</td>
<td>GYM1</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Konrad, Malte, Laurenz, Ronny, Sophia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER06</td>
<td>GYM1</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Julian, Leandra, Leonie, Finn, Marcel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER07</td>
<td>GYM1</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Robin, August, Ella, Elias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER08</td>
<td>GYM2</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Elisabeth, Noah, Joris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER09</td>
<td>GYM2</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Chris, Ben, Torben, Maximilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER10</td>
<td>GES1</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Janis, Martin, Rafael, Suleyman, Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER11</td>
<td>GES1</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Gina, Marina, Nicky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER12</td>
<td>GES1</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Anne, Letizia, Magda, Nadine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER13</td>
<td>HS2</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Cedric, Hanoik, Lilly, Melanie, Sandrine, Soraya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER14</td>
<td>HS2</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Abdi, Ayleen, Eymen, Natalja, Serhan, Vanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER15</td>
<td>HS2</td>
<td>04/16</td>
<td>Aniram, Berat, Mareike, Niko, Sina, Tidjani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the project in a class usually took around 20 minutes, where the purpose, the aim, the procedure as well as the ethical rules of the study were presented. Here, pupils were also given the opportunity to ask questions. At the end of each visit, a letter with information for pupils and their legal guardians was distributed (see appendix B), as well as a consent form, which all pupils had to sign in case they wanted to participate in the study (see appendix C). Usually, pupils had about one week to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study by informing their interest via telephone or e-mail, or if they wanted, they could do it in person right after the disclosure of the information. The interviews were usually conducted about two weeks after the classes were visited.

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34 In cases, when pupils in the Swedish schools were under 15 years old, their legal guardians also needed to sign. In schools in NRW, the headmaster decided whether the legal guardians needed to sign the consent form as well.
After this, pupils filled in the consent form, also including additional background data regarding their parents’ educational and cultural background as well as their general grading level (see appendix C). In parallel to this, I also started to write an interview protocol, which included the date, time and interview-code, the participants’ first names (or self-chosen pseudonyms) as well as a sketch of the seating arrangement. Important notes during the interview were certainly written down in the protocol with the purpose of supporting later transcription and analysis. The interviews were then audio-taped with a special digital dictaphone that is particularly well-suited for group-interviews.

The interviews always started with a round of presentations, where pupils shortly introduced themselves by their names and explained why they decided to participate in the study. The purpose of this was twofold: on the one hand it helped to identify the pupils’ voice and to assign each voice to a pupil’s first name during the transcription. On the other hand, it served as an icebreaker at the beginning of the interview that activated the pupils to talk and set the atmosphere for the rest of the interview.

The interviews were semi structured and an interview guideline containing open-ended questions (Halkier, 2010; Hennessy & Heary, 2005) was used (see appendix A). The questions can be understood as following a suspense curve of conversation and can be categorised as: ‘introductory questions’ about how the current situation in school is experienced, ‘transition questions’ about assessment in general, ‘key questions’ about (un-) justice and assessment and finally ‘ending questions’, where pupils could summarise their narrations, and for example, could speak about their ideas regarding the improvement of assessment in terms of justice (Krueger, 2002, p. 6).

Besides these guideline questions, comprehensive questions were also asked, which supported deeper understanding and further stimulated pupils’ narrations (Reinders, 2012). Typical comprehensive questions for example were: ‘What do you mean?’, ‘Can you explain this more concretely?’, ‘Can you give an example for that?’ et cetera.

However, though this guideline structured the interviews to some extent, it was not used in an orthodox way. This maintained the scope of flexibility that was needed to support pupils’ conversations and their own meaning-making structuring of those (Reinders, 2012). Hence, the guideline was rather seen as a supportive tool, used to assure that all relevant aspects would be covered.

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35 In the German interviews, this part was taken over by Christian Brüggemann, who assisted me with the German interviews.
during the interview (Reinders, 2012), than a strict guideline that should be checked-off.

Overall, the interviews generated in total 19:50:00 h of audiotaped interview material, which is represented by 782 pages of interview transcripts. More concretely, the length of the interviews and the amount of transcript pages looks like the following for both samples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Length (h/min)</th>
<th>Transcript pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWE01</td>
<td>01:26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE02</td>
<td>01:03</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE03</td>
<td>00:45</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE04</td>
<td>01:15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE05</td>
<td>01:14</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE06</td>
<td>01:08</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In total, Swedish sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>06:11</strong></td>
<td><strong>229</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER01</td>
<td>01:04</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER02</td>
<td>00:56</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER03</td>
<td>01:16</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER04</td>
<td>01:12</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER05</td>
<td>01:12</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER06</td>
<td>01:08</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER07</td>
<td>00:47</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER08</td>
<td>01:12</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>GER09</td>
<td>01:01</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER10</td>
<td>00:53</td>
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<td>GER11</td>
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<td>GER12</td>
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<td>GER13</td>
<td>01:05</td>
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<td>GER14</td>
<td>00:53</td>
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<td>GER15</td>
<td>01:05</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In total, German sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>13:39</strong></td>
<td><strong>553</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In total, complete sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>19:50</strong></td>
<td><strong>782</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences between different interviews regarding the length of the interview and the amount of transcript pages have to do with the number of times speakers changed, the amount and length of pupils’ simultaneous talk, the amount and length of monologues of certain pupils, and the amount of written para-verbal and nonverbal utterances, et cetera.
2.2.5 Ethical considerations

Regarding its ethical dimensions, this study is based on the general ethical rules and regulations and in particular on those, which apply for research with children, as formulated by the Swedish Research Council (Swedish Research Council, 2011; as well as www.codex.se) and are in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Furthermore, this study was reviewed and approved in an ethical vetting process by the Ethical Review Board in Linköping, Sweden (Dnr 2013/362-31).

In this study, the following measures and procedures were applied in order to ensure individuals’ rights:

All data that could reveal individuals’ identity was anonymised during the transcription. Pupils, teachers, cities, areas et cetera, were for example allocated pseudonyms. Audio files, transcriptions, interview protocols, analysis material, et cetera, have been stored in a password-protected computer and in an external hard disk, which were only accessible to me. This material will be stored for 10 years, according to the Linnaeus University’s rules for data archiving.

Pupils were comprehensively informed about the research project. On the one hand, this was done orally in the classroom and on the other hand in written form through a handout (see appendix B). Pupils and their guardians were further given the possibility to contact me or the supervisors for further information or for asking questions. The same oral information was given once again before the interviews started. Here, the rules and procedures for the interview were explained, as well as the anonymisation of data; that pupils’ participation was voluntary and that they were allowed to leave the interview and stop their participation whenever they wanted without any explanation.

Since the participating pupils were usually 15 years old, no consent of their legal guardians was needed. However, pupils were explicitly invited to show the information handout to their legal guardians and to discuss their possible participation. Pupils signed up for participation directly to me\(^\text{36}\), either personally after the information visit or via telephone, SMS or e-mail. In the case that pupils were younger than 15 years old, each legal guardian had to sign the consent form as well. All pupils in Sweden and Germany had to sign this consent form before the interview started (see appendix C).

\(^{36}\) Regarding the German interviews, pupils signed up to Christian Brüggemann, who assisted me with the German interviews.
In order to provide a safe environment for the participating pupils during the interview (Reinders, 2012; Tinson, 2009), the interviews were either conducted outside the school building, in a neutral enclosed space, a rented conference-room that has been appropriate and easy to reach for the pupils or in an undisturbed conference room in the school, in case renting one outside the school was not possible. In one case, a German headmaster did not allow an interview outside the school due to liability reasons. Pupils were also informed about the rules for the interview: to treat each other in a respectful manner and to allow others to communicate their thoughts and perspectives. During the whole research process, my actions were focused on ensuring transparency, respectfulness and ethical responsibility.

Before the process and procedures of analysis are presented, the next chapter will shed light on the character of the additional sources of data that contributed to the contextual sensitivity.

2.2.6 All is data: additional sources of data enhancing context-sensitivity

Besides Focus Groups interviews with pupils, the study also is in the need of additional sources of data that allow for a deeper understanding of pupils’ justice conceptions in relation to their contextual embedment. These other sources of data enhance understanding and enable contextual and theoretical sensitivity as well as the successive analysis of data.

Such sources for additional data are e.g. regulations (such as laws, curricula, syllabuses etc.), official documents and statistics (such as reports, handouts or statistics from official bodies like ministries, authorities or national agencies etc.), relevant research literature as well as “non-technical literature” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 38–39) and other sources of data, such as newspaper articles, contributions in social media groups and online fora et cetera. (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 5). More concretely, for the Swedish context, this implies the following:

| Table 5. Overview of additional sources of data used in the Swedish context |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Category                  | Data                        |
| Regulations               | • School Act (*Skollagen*)  |
|                           | • Curriculum for comprehensive school (*Läroplan för*) |

This list cannot be seen as a complete list of all sources of data used during the time this study was conducted. However, the list shows the sources that were mainly used on a regular basis.
The additional sources of data used for the German context, are:

| Official documents and statistics | • Reports of the NAE (Skolverkets rapporter)  
| • Descriptive data of the NAE (Skolverkets beskrivande data)  
| • Commentaries of the NAE (Skolverkets kommentarmaterial)  
| • General advices of the NAE (Skolverkets allmänna råd)  
| • Support material of the NAE (Skolverkets stödmaterial)  
| • Research reviews of the NAE (Skolverkets kunskapsöversikter)  
| • Reports of the School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionens rapporter)  
| • Evaluations and decisions of the School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionens utvärderingar och beslut)  
| • National databases SIRIS and SALSA and other databases available via the National Agency for Education (see appendix H)  
| • Course plans (Kursplaner) for university courses in the teacher education programmes on assessment and grading, including the lists of the courses’ literature  
| • Etc. |  

| Research literature and evaluations | • Relevant international and national research literature, like e.g. research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, or books  
| • Research reviews, evaluations and reports published e.g. by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), research institutes like e.g. Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (Institutet för arbetsmarknads- och utbildningspolitisk utvärdering, IFAU)  
| • Etc. |  

| ‘Non-technical literature’ and other sources of data | • Newspaper articles from national and regional newspapers, including debate articles of politicians and researchers (e.g. Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Sydsvenskan, Göteborgsposten, and regional newspapers)  
| • Press releases of official bodies like the NAE, ministries etc. |
The additional sources of data used for the German context, are:

Table 6. Overview of the additional sources of data used in the German context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Regulations                   | • School Act of the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia (Schulgesetz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen)  
                                • Core curricula for different subjects and different school types (Kernlehrpläne)  
                                • Directives regarding e.g. education and final examinations on lower secondary level (Verordnung über die Ausbildung und die Abschlussprüfungen in der Sekundarstufe I, APO-SI) or the Official Collection of school-related regulations (Bereinigte Amtliche Sammlung der Schulpflichten NRW, BASS), also including the appendixes (Anhänge)  
                                • Circulars of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Runderlasse des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen)  
                                • Regulation regarding teachers work (Dienstvorschrift, ADO)  
                                • Agreements and decisions of the KMK (Abkommen und Beschlüsse der KMK)  
                                • Comments of the KMK regarding e.g. educational standards (Kommentare der KMK)  
                                • Etc. |
| Official documents and statistics | • Guidelines and handouts of the Ministry for School and further Education of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung, MSW NRW), like e.g. Reference frame of school quality NRW (Referenzrahmen Schulqualität NRW)  
                                • Reports and descriptive data of the MSW NRW like e.g. Statistical overviews and Zeitreihen (Statistische Übersicht and Zeitreihen)  
                                • Publications like e.g. reports of the The Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen, IQB) |
2.3 Process and procedures of analysis

This sub-chapter pays special attention to the procedures and canons of data analysis applied in this study as well as their underlying methodological and methodical considerations. Firstly, the foundations regarding the transformation of the audiotaped interviews into a written text are presented. This is complemented with a presentation of the rules for transcription that were applied (see appendix F). Hereafter, an overview over the research process and its iterative character are provided. After this, the concrete steps of data analysis are described in detail and exemplified with excerpts from the study. The analysis can be understood along a presentation of the different coding procedures applied, reaching from ‘open coding’ and ‘axial coding’ to ‘selective coding’. These procedures also imply an increase of the abstraction level and the generation of theoretical conceptualisations. In order to make the process of theory generation, which is based on empirical data, more transparent, particular attention is paid to these different levels of coding procedures.

2.3.1 Transcription of interviews

In a strict sense, the process of data analysis already began while conducting the interviews, and continued during the process of transcription (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Nikander, 2008). After the interviews were conducted in this study, they were immediately transcribed in their source languages: Swedish and German. For the transcription of the interviews, the transcription-software “F4”38 was used.

Since the transcripts are the main source of data used later on for analysis and since they already include a transformation and a ‘translation’ (in reference to this, see the discussed indexical nature of language in ch. 2.1.3) of pupils’ meaning-making from an oral conversation into a written text, it is important to reflect on how the transcripts are produced and which rules shall be applied when transcribing (Nikander, 2008). These rules are “regulation systems, precisely defining, how spoken language is transformed into a fixed form” (Kuckartz, 2010, p. 40, Transl. B.V.). Depending on the purpose of the study and the demands of transcription that result therefrom, the transcription can be made in different ways, and on different levels of accuracy and extent (Kuckartz, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Lamnek, 2010; Nikander, 2008; Wibeck, 2000).

38 https://www.audiotranskription.de/english/f4.htm

These additional sources were used throughout the iterative research process in order to contextualise pupils’ justice conceptions, to broaden and deepen understanding during analysis and to critically evaluate and validate findings (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 32-41 for a more detailed discussion regarding this issue). That means that these sources were not predetermined from the beginning of the study but successively included at points of time when they got relevant for analysis.

After this detailed presentation regarding the generation of the study’s data corpus, the following sub-chapters will present the reflections and applications of methods and procedures underlying the analysis of the generated data.
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38 https://www.audiotranskription.de/english/f4.htm
These different levels of transcription range from transcribing verbatim and very detailed (for example including intonation, dialect, breaks in seconds, pitch, sounds of hesitation and reflection, speech speed, accentuation etc.); and transcribing verbatim but more oriented towards the literary language (but including repetitions, expletive words, stuttering, breaks in seconds, accentuation etc.); to a quite reduced transcription, with smoothed out and only literary language without taking into account e.g. unfinished sentences, breaks or accentuations (Kuckartz, 2010; Nikander, 2008). Within this study, a medium level of transcription is applied, also including important nonverbal and para-verbal expressions, such as laughter, irony, restlessness, irritation or encouragement (Kuckartz, 2010, pp. 43, see the regulation system for transcription in appendix F). Here, important aspects of group interactions are also highlighted when relevant in order to enhance the understanding of the content (regarding this relation, see ch. 2.2.2). Furthermore, since excerpts and quotes will be used in order to exemplify an analytical pattern, transcripts also need to include some sort of reference markers that helps to identify where in the transcript the actual quote can be found. Traditionally, this is made by continuous line numbers in the transcript. However, due to the use of transcription software, these reference markers can also be set by automatically including time-markers for each paragraph. In the present study, the latter was chosen since the time-markers also automatically give an idea of from which part of the interview the quote is taken.

A typical excerpt from a transcript in this study, based on the above described reflections, thus can look like the one below:

This example shows some of the transcription rules in use, such as pauses, interruptions, pupils’ simultaneous talk or emphasised words. Furthermore, it also shows how additional information was included in square brackets such
as pupils’ laughter or other additional information that was important to take into consideration when analysing.

2.3.2 The iterative research process and the concept-indicator model

Overall and regardless the stage of the analysis process, the analysis in this study was characterised by iteration and constant comparison. The iteration implies that sampling, data collection, analysis and development of theoretical concepts were constantly repeated. Hence, instead of intensively sampling all participants and collecting all data at a certain point of time and analysing all the collected data at another certain point of time, the diverging steps of the research process were repeatedly carried out with minor sets of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, 1990b). This iterative process can be illustrated in the following figure:

![Figure 3. The iterative research process (see Mey & Mruck, 2012, p.24)](image)

Like the figure above clearly shows, the structure of the research process can be understood as following a sort of pendulum movement: a data collection period, when only one or only a few interviews were collected, was followed up by a phase of analysis, which resulted in the development of preliminary theoretical codes and categories. From these codes and categories, new
hypotheses arouse, which informed the next sampling based on theoretical assumptions leading to new collection of data (Strauss, 1987; Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a) et cetera.

In addition to this pendulum movement and the iterative structure, the research process also was characterised by a constant comparison. It is important to note that iterativity does not indicate that the development of codes and categories from one interview were finished after the first phase of analysis. Codes and categories are developed and refined throughout the whole research process and through a comparison across and within the interviews. This process can be best described by the means of the ‘concept-indicator-model’ (Strauss, 1987), “which directs the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators” (p.25). The empirical indicators are data - in this study a meaning-bearing piece of an interview transcript. The development of analytical concepts is based on the constant comparison of indicators with indicators, both, within and across different interviews. During the ongoing process of analysis (which is more closely described in the following sub-chapter), the theoretical abstraction and theoretical refinement increased and led to codes and categories. Regardless the level of abstraction, the development and constant refinement of codes and categories were always characterised by the iterative comparison with empirical indicators. Through this, the successive development of the theoretical conceptualisations were constantly verified and (re-) grounded in the interview data itself.

2.3.3 From empirical data to a theoretical conceptualisation of pupils’ conceptions of just assessment in school

In order to handle the huge amount of data and their complex contextual and relational embedment, a QDA software was used, Nvivo 10 for PC. Even if such programs cannot be used for the intellectual part of the analysis, they yet facilitate the analysis process in terms of time efficiency and analytical overview (see Kuckartz (2010) for a detailed discussion regarding the use of QDA software). In this study, this was certainly helpful for the constant comparison and the re-organisation of concepts, codes and categories in relation to the original transcripts, other sources of data, memos and research literature.

The iterative way of analysing data in GTM is called for ‘coding’, which refers to “extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 159). The process of coding also means a successive increase of theorisation under constant reconnection to empirical indicators. Therefore, coding can be said to
include different levels of abstraction, but is always grounded in and based on empirical data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 160). The three levels of theoretical abstraction that characterised the analysis process are presented in more detail below. Here, it is important to note that these levels of abstraction do not necessarily mirror isolated stages of analysis. The tripartite division in open coding, axial coding and selective coding, rather stands for different logics of analysis procedures than for a linear sequentiality of analytical stages (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 198).

### 2.3.3.1 Open coding

In the beginning of the analysis process, the interviews can be seen as providing a huge amount of not yet sense-making pieces of information. In order to identify the meaning-making patterns, the data need to be sorted, analytically ‘broken apart’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 195) and reduced. The analysis started directly after the transcription, by reading the whole transcript at least one time in order to get an overall overview. After that, the transcript was split into meaning-units, each read line-by-line and word-by-word, and assigned with an interpretative concept “that stand[s] for and represent[s] the ideas contained in data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 160, square brackets B.V.). It is important to note, that every interview transcript was coded in its wholeness. Each word and each line in each transcript was included in the coding procedure and thereby belongs to a code. Thereby, in contrast to a deductive approach, not only the parts of a transcript that fit a pre-determined category are included in the analysis. Rather, the complete data material is represented in the generated and successively developed concepts and later on, in the categories.

Here, so-called “in-vivo codes” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990/2008, p. 65) were used as often as possible. These ‘in-vivo codes’ are original concepts, paraphrases and terms, which pupils used during the interviews. The use of such ‘in-vivo codes’ prevent from a too hasty theoretical labelling of what pupils said. Such theoretical labelling in the initial phase would imply that the explanatory power inherent in such theoretical (in the meaning of scientific) concepts would risk forcing a certain perspective and focus onto data, before the analyst has become aware of what is going on in the data. In addition, this also implies that in-vivo codes enable an analytical nearness to pupils’ own conceptualisations as long as possible and as expressed by themselves. In

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39 Strauss and Corbin (2008/1990a) describe this process in the following way: “Open coding: Breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data.” (p.195)
order to clarify the practical application, such a basic coding procedure can be exemplified with an original excerpt from the dataset.

The following excerpt from the Swedish data set will illustrate a typical meaning-bearing piece of data and the related initial in-vivo code:

Figure 4. Excerpt from the Swedish data set with initial in-vivo code\textsuperscript{40}.

The meaning-bearing relation in the above presented excerpt was interpreted as being about the fact that pupils perceive teachers assessment to differ considerably. As a descriptive code, the pupil Nelly’s utterance “Ah, alla tolkar det ju väldigt olika” (“Uhu, everyone understands it like really different”) puts this aspect in a nutshell. Based on this, the in-vivo code “lärare tolkar olika” (“teachers understand it differently”) was assigned. Other meaning-bearing pieces from the same or from other interviews can also be subsumed under this code and contribute through constant comparison to a further development of the code. The result of this procedure is a list of concepts, each containing indicators from interviews.

By this, the initial list of concepts was characterised by the source languages German and Swedish in order to reduce the risk for ‘nostrification’ (Matthes, 1992; Waldow, 2015; Fritzsche, 2013). This implies that the minor units of analysis were developed out of and within their contextual embedment. The

\textsuperscript{40} English translation:
Hannah: They’ve got like the papers where it says: she needs GOOD knowledge for and E and she needs that. But it feels like everyone’s understood it differently. Everyone’s like got it different: what is GOOD knowledge, what is just a bit good knowledge, what is really good knowledge? And it feels as if some, I mean this really good knowledge is like really easy. But some could be that the good knowledge, that’s not possible to achieve because they recon it should be super duper great.
Nelly: Uhu, everyone understands it like really differently.
Hannah: Uhu, it’s like an understanding on it’s own. (SWE06)
loss of accuracy regarding the context specific indexicality of concepts, which is always inevitably linked to translation, could thereby be reduced. The same applies for the writing of so-called ‘memos’: associations, ideas and upcoming hypotheses et cetera that were already written down in this stage in their source-languages Swedish and German. These memos grew successively and were refined throughout the whole process of analysis, both with regard to their content and also with reference to their analytical dimensionality and interconnectedness with other memos. They also contained relations to sensitising concepts and mind-maps about the relations between the different concepts developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 117–142, 1990b).

Concepts were then bundled into categories. Categories in this study are concepts on a higher level of abstraction grouping lower-level concepts with related properties (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 159–194). Even these categories were still characterised by their source languages and contextuality. This is exemplified by excerpts of the German and the Swedish category-lists below:

Figure 5. Excerpt from the Swedish and German list of categories.

41 The category lists were successively refined and modified in the course of analysis. This also implied e.g. the renaming of categories or the integration of categories into other categories. Hence, an illustration of the complete category list or a list of concepts would automatically raise the question “which list?” and “at which point of time exactly during the three years of data analysis?”. Mostly, the list changed its character constantly as new insights were gained and categories were refined. The reorganisation and reconceptualisation of the list is a substantial part of the analysis process itself and is characterised by uncountable changes, which in turn come along with the constant comparison to other concepts, categories and empirical indicators. However, an excerpt from the category list that was developed in the middle of the analysis process may at least give an impression about this phase of analysis and the organisation of the procedure.

42 English translation of the German excerpt: “Subjectivity vs. objectivity; sympathy antipathy; insecure teachers; different abilities; teachers responsibility; pupils responsibility; what do I need this nonsense for, later in life?; generation of the grade”
Each category still refers to indicators in the interviews. The category “alla små saker på A” (“all the little things on A”) is an example for an in-vivo-code and refers to the following exemplary indicator:

Figure 6. Excerpt from the category ”Each little thing on A” with exemplary empirical indicator43.

These categories were then further elaborated during the so-called ‘axial coding’, which also implied the combination of the two data sets.

2.3.3.2 Axial coding

During axial coding, the categories from both datasets were compared in an abductive way and with regard to their content-related functional equivalence (Schriewer, 2006). The comparison resulted in new, shared categories that contained equivalent categories from both datasets, which worked as preliminary tertia comparationis of analysis, based on empirical data. Here, the concepts for the categories were formulated in the target language English, containing the categories and indicators in Swedish and German.

The shared categories were then further elaborated in terms of their dimensions, properties and relations to other categories. Through this, a shared category-system was developed by using the so-called ‘coding paradigm’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 89–93, 1990b) that supported the process of analysis.

This coding paradigm has its roots in the foundations of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism and provides a sort of

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43 English translation: “Carolin: //Uhu, EACH// lite thing has to be on A in order to get an A.” (SWE04)
“skeleton or "axis" for developing grounded theories. This "paradigm model" is used "to think systematically about data and to relate them in very complex ways" (STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990, p.99) and for determining the main purpose of theory construction: analysing and modelling action and interaction strategies of the actors. Thereby, special emphasis is laid on the intentions and goals of the actors and on the process character of human action and interaction.” (Kelle, 2005, paragraph 16)

The systematic analysis and development of complex relational structures was thereby facilitated by the application of the coding paradigm. The coding paradigm asks, for its part, about the contextual conditions of the categorical phenomenon, its (inter-)actions and relations as well as about the strategies and consequences of the aspect, which the category stands for (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 87–88). It is these cornerstones of the coding paradigm that helped me to develop the category’s dimensions and properties. Again, it is important to note that the concepts and categories developed were during the whole research process, and thereby also during axial coding, held open for re-interpretation and change. As new insights and hypotheses successively evolved, they repeatedly needed to be verified against the data or otherwise discarded. Through constant comparison with similar and contrasting concepts, categories and indicators, the category systematically and successively became dense. The following excerpt exemplifies such a shared category data-set, developed along the foundations of the coding paradigm:

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44 The dimensions imply that a certain aspect can be understood as a continuum. This is certainly important since it increases analytical breadth and depth and is crucial, finally, with regard to the category’s descriptive density and its theoretical and explanatory power (see e.g. Corbin & Strauss, 1990b).
2.3.3.3 Selective coding

Selective coding means the process of analysis with highest abstraction level. Based on the three main categories ‘Believing in meritocracy’, ‘Being responsible for the grade’ and ‘Understanding as imperative’, it was further theorised, compared, verified and related until one core-category could be developed that finally was able to integrate the three main categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 263–274, 1990b). Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a) describe the core-category as follows:

“The core-category represents the central phenomenon of the study. It is identified by asking questions such as: What is the main analytic idea presented in this research? If my findings are to be conceptualised in some few sentences, what do I say? What does all the action/interaction seem to be about? How can I explain the variation that I can see between and among the categories?” (p.14)

While the three main categories in this study are the theoretical cornerstones, the developed core-category is the theoretical conceptualisation that integrates and relates these theoretical cornerstones. The core-category thereby subsumes all the various aspects of pupils’ justice conceptions and is therefore in the need of dense categories. For this reason, the core-category was again compared to concepts and indicators on different levels of abstraction. When this phase of comparison only generated minor variations in the dimensions of already existing categories without changing the theoretical conceptualisation, the core-category and all the underlying categories were seen as theoretically saturated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 263–274, Corbin & Strauss, 1990b).

Thereby, the result of selective coding is the grounded and context-sensitive theoretical conceptualisation of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment as ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’. However, this theoretical conceptualisation is not set in stone, but preliminary in character (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 279). Nevertheless, it provides theoretical and explanatory conceptualisations that are developed out of empirical data and empirically verified regarding the aspects of pupils’ justice conceptions that were highlighted in the research questions.

Based on this, the finding chapters can be said to represent the quintessence of the above illustrated research process, both with regard to content as well as with regard to the increasing theoretical abstraction while maintaining the reconnection to empirical data.

The example above is an excerpt of the shared category of ‘effort’. The subcategory ‘showing effort’ is partly extended and shows, how the lower-level categories ‘actions of showing effort’ and ‘arena of showing effort’ consist of categories of the German and the Swedish data set. However, this excerpt does not stand for the final organisation of categories, but it still gives a glimpse of how the coding procedure was organised during the process of analysis and how a category’s dimensions and properties successively took shape.

During this process, the categories were further developed, refined and finally resulted in three main categories: ‘Believing in meritocracy’, ‘Being responsible for the grade’ and ‘Understanding as Imperative’. These were again continuously verified against indicators. That implies that these categories were built on shared and functional equivalents, based on and verified towards contextually embedded empirical data. Hence, each of these categories is an analytical tertium comparationis, which dimensions and properties contain vertical as well as horizontal comparisons. Contextual aspects and particularities are automatically included45 by the use of the coding paradigm.

Out of these three main categories, the core-category ‘Pupils’ meta-assessment’ was developed during the process of selective coding. The reflections and procedures that are related to this process are presented below.

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45 Corbin and Strauss (1990b) call these contextual aspects for “broader structural conditions in terms of a ‘conditional matrix’” (p.11), crucial to include into analysis “however microscopie the research” (ibid.).
2.3.3.3 Selective coding

Selective coding means the process of analysis with highest abstraction level. Based on the three main-categories ‘Believing in meritocracy’, ‘Being responsible for the grade’ and ‘Understanding as imperative’, it was further theorised, compared, verified and related until one core-category could be developed that finally was able to integrate the three main categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 263–274, 1990b). Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a) describe the core-category as follows:

“The core-category represents the central phenomenon of the study. It is identified by asking questions such as: What is the main analytic idea presented in this research? If my findings are to be conceptualised in some few sentences, what do I say? What does all the action/interaction seem to be about? How can I explain the variation that I can see between and among the categories?” (p.14)

While the three main categories in this study are the theoretical cornerstones, the developed core-category is the theoretical conceptualisation that integrates and relates these theoretical cornerstones. The core-category thereby subsumes all the various aspects of pupils’ justice conceptions and is therefore in the need of dense categories. For this reason, the core-category was again compared to concepts and indicators on different levels of abstraction. When this phase of comparison only generated minor variations in the dimensions of already existing categories without changing the theoretical conceptualisation, the core-category and all the underlying categories were seen as theoretically saturated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 263–274, Corbin & Strauss, 1990b).

Thereby, the result of selective coding is the grounded and context-sensitive theoretical conceptualisation of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment as ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’. However, this theoretical conceptualisation is not set in stone, but preliminary in character (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 279). Nevertheless, it provides theoretical and explanatory conceptualisations that are developed out of empirical data and empirically verified regarding the aspects of pupils’ justice conceptions that were highlighted in the research questions.

Based on this, the finding chapters can be said to represent the quintessence of the above illustrated research process, both with regard to content as well as with regard to the increasing theoretical abstraction while maintaining the reconnection to empirical data.
III. ‘ASSESSMENT’ AND ‘JUSTICE’ AS HEURISTIC CONCEPTS

This chapter provides an overview over the heuristic concepts ‘Assessment’ and ‘Justice’, which are central to the examination of this study’s research focus. Before these concepts are presented more detailed, the role of the sensitising prior knowledge for the abductive research process is discussed. Hereafter, a conceptual overview is given about ‘assessment’, including an explanation of the theoretical concepts ‘formative’ and ‘summative assessment’. Moreover, the chapter also provides a conceptual overview with regard to the purposes of assessment with a special emphasis on grades. The subchapter then concludes with a description of the different norms of reference, necessarily used when assessing pupils and allocating grades. Besides this, the chapter also sheds light on the concept of ‘justice’, its relation to normative and empirical justice research as well as the dimensions and principles of justice applied in the latter one of the both research fields named.

3.1. Heuristic concepts and the role of prior knowledge

It was already pointed out earlier (see ch. 2) that the present study is abductive in character (Reichertz, 2008). That implies first and foremost that the research process, following the qualitative research paradigm, is characterised by analytical openness (see e.g. Lamnek, 2010). This openness also applies with regard to the role and the use of prior knowledge, which may be personal
everyday knowledge or professional knowledge. The professional knowledge of course also includes certain theoretical concepts related to different fields of social science. Concepts, such as for example ‘socialisation’, ‘ability’, ‘extrinsic motivation’, ‘norm internalisation’ or ‘justice conceptions’ are used to describe certain phenomena.

The point here is that such concepts (and their related ideas) necessarily need to be used in order to be able to say something about the relative focus of the research at all (see e.g. Truschkat, 2012 or Kelle, 2007). Moreover, Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a) for example also highlight, that the iterative process of theorisation is basically dependent on the researcher’s ability to see meaning-making structures in data (p.19-21; 33-43). The heuristic thereby can be understood as the basic frame, in the first place allowing for an understanding of the phenomenon in theoretical and scientific terms. Hence, heuristic concepts enable the researcher’s “theoretical sensibility” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a; see also Glaser’s (1978) book with the same title), which means “the researcher’s ability, to reflect on empirically given material in terms of theoretical concepts” (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p.20, transl. B.V.).

However, the difference to concepts that are operationalised and therefore need to be defined in detailed in advance (like it is the case for a hypothetico-deductive approach), is that the heuristic concepts used, are inevitably empirically less substantial since the phenomenon per se does not exist outside a concrete context. The aim of qualitative research is, in contrast to the hypothetico-deductive research approach, to fill these empirically less substantial concepts with reconstructed empirical meaning. In turn, this will allow for a generation of hypotheses that can be tested. Kelle and Kluge (2010) explain and illustrate this issue in the following way:

“The qualitative researcher uses theoretical concepts (which often are necessarily vague and manifold in meaning) from sociological theories as sensitizing concepts, which are then, during the course of examining the empirical field, concretised and transformed into definite concepts. A researcher, who for example studies the social lifeworld of German-Turkish migrants in a German city, does not use the concept of assimilation in order to initially formulate a testable hypothesis regarding the extent of this group’s assimilation. Rather, [the researcher, B.V.] tries to find out through observations or open-ended interviews, if and how far the idea of assimilation plays a role in the social lifeworld of the German-Turkish people, which conceptualisations of assimilation they hold and in which way they relate to it” (p.30, Transl. B.V.).
Translated to the context of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, this means that the central concepts ‘justice’ as well as ‘assessment’ and the concepts that are related are used in a sensitizing but not in a guiding way. With regard to this, Corbin and Strauss (2008/1990a, 1990b) therefore also talk about ‘sensitizing concepts’. The ‘sensitizing concepts’ of the present study provide on the one hand a necessary conceptual lens and on the other hand, they enable an openness, characterised by sensitivity, by which I am able to identify and see pupils’ own relevance structures, making of meaning and sense as well as pupils’ own substantial focus. This prevents a ‘superimposition’ of those relevance structures through predefined concepts (regarding this issue, see also Kelle & Kluge, 2010, ch. 1 and 2). Hence, the detailed concretisation of this study’s relevant concepts of ‘justice’, ‘assessment’ and therewith-related concepts is the aim of the research process but not its starting point. That means, that it is not examined how far pupils’ justice conceptions are characterised by the principle of ‘equity’ or the principle of ‘equality’; or how far the dimensions of ‘distributive justice’ are more important for pupils’ justice conceptions than for example ‘interactional justice’ or ‘procedural justice’. Rather, the study poses questions of the kind such as what justice and assessment means for pupils in different socio-educational contexts, if and how far interaction plays a role or how pupils experience and conceptualise summative assessment. In that sense, the heuristic concepts as presented below and the therewith-related prior knowledge need to be more understood as preliminary supporting tools than analytical guidelines or lenses, which opened up and enriched the research process, instead of narrowing it down to pre-defined foci.

3.2 The heuristic concept of ‘assessment’ in this study

In the following, different aspects regarding the heuristic concept “assessment” are described, with a particular focus on grades. First, the formative and summative forms of assessment are outlined. Then, an overview is given about the purposes of assessment with a particular emphasis regarding the purposes of grades. Finally, the norms of reference are presented to which all assessment necessarily has to relate to.
3.2.1 Formative and summative assessment

Regarding assessment, usually it is differentiated between formative and summative assessment \(^{46}\). However, this differentiation often leads to the assumptions that the conceptual differentiation of ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ assessment would refer to different types of assessment, which is only partly true. Instead, it is more appropriate to understand ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ assessment as serving different purposes (Wiliam & Black, 1996). Harlen and Deakin Crick (2002) for example define formative and summative assessment in the following way:

“\[If the purpose is to help in decisions about how to advance learning and the judgement is about the next steps in learning and how to take them, then the assessment is formative in function. If the purpose is to summarise the learning that had taken place in order to grade, certificate or record progress, then the assessment is summative in function.\]” (p.1)

While formative assessment is mainly prospective in character, focusing on pupils further learning development, summative assessment is retrospective, focusing on summing up what has been learned. However, in theory as well as in practice a clear differentiation between these both purposes is not always possible (Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015) and mostly theoretical or analytical in nature. Rather, both purposes need to be understood as interrelated (Black, 2015). A summative test done at the end of a lesson can for example be used for assessment as well as it can be a basis for helping the individual student to move on in the learning process. The same test can also help to identify if a certain teaching content needs to be repeated next lesson or if teaching methods have to be changed (Hirsh (2017) for example, extends the concept of formative assessment towards ‘formative teaching’). From this point of view, formative assessment is always in the need of some kind of summative assessment, but it takes the assessment process one step further and the summative results are used for further learning and teaching, instead of stopping the process with the results. Hence, summative assessment provides feedback including information in a condensed form, while formative assessment in addition also provides feed-forward, which is rich in more detailed information.

However, the simultaneity and complex interrelations of both purposes can create certain fields of tension for pupils and teachers (Falkenberg, Vogt, &
Besides the selective and allocative purpose of grades, grades also serve the purpose of information. That means that grades inform pupils and their guardians about the achieved performance level. Depending on the norms of reference used for grading, this information either refers to a social group of comparison (like e.g. the class or the cohort in the whole country), to a criterial standard or to the individual's own progression (Rheinberg, 2002; Sacher, 2014, see also the following sub-chapter, 3.2.3). Since grades also are used increasingly for system monitoring and educational governance, they also inform on policy-level.

In addition, grades also serve pedagogical purposes. That means first and foremost that grades are of relevance in relation to the socialisation task of schools (Sacher, 2014). They are seen to prepare for the performance oriented society and tell pupils something about their achieved performance level in relation to societal highly valued goals. Thereby, grades shall serve the purpose as well, to motivate pupils making an effort (Klapp, 2015; Ziegenspeck, 1999). Depending on the broadness of the concept of assessment in relation to the concept of grading, the foci on pedagogical purposes may in this case also include learning and the support of individualised learning processes. This applies especially in relation to the idea of assessment for learning and formative assessment (for a conceptual discussion and lines of distinction, see Wiliam, 2011).

Besides the purposes of assessment and grading, the concept of ‘norms of reference’ is another sensitising concept, which is relevant in this study and outlined below.

3.2.3 Norms of reference

In order to identify any performance as a performance, it is basically necessary to relate the achievement to a certain standard (Rheinberg, 2002). More concretely, this means that the evaluation of a performance, which implies the ascription of a certain value, is in the inevitable need of a standard of comparison. This means that the informative value of the grade is determined by the fact that the grade tells us something about how good or how poor an individual performed in relation to a certain norm of reference (see e.g. Gustafsson et al., 2014; Sacher, 2014, p. 84), which thereby also implies the individual ascription of performance and its value. Regarding these norms of reference, it is usually differentiated between norms that are criteria related; (Waldow, 2017; Klenowski, 2009; Zaborowski, Breidenstein, & Meier, 2010). This field of tensions is characteristic for teachers’ often as contradictory perceived task to support pupils’ learning on the one hand and to be obliged to grade on the other (Gerrevall, 2008; Streckeisen, Hänzi, & Hungerbühler, 2007). This may especially apply for contexts, where the teacher also is responsible for the allocation of grades which are high-stakes in character, like it is the case for example in Sweden as well as in Germany.

3.2.2 Purposes of assessment and grades

Besides this general conceptual differentiation regarding assessment, grades as a ‘quick-language’ (Lundahl & Waldow, 2009) can be understood as being based on a summative assessment, which results are presented in a condensed form – the grade. This condensation comes along with an unavoidably loss of complexity but provides a “shared language” that enables “a smooth transmission of information within the educational field” (Lundahl & Waldow, 2009, p. 366). Assessment and grades as information carrier are usually ascribed to serve different general purposes (e.g. Lundahl, Hultén & Tveit, 2017; Gustafsson, Cliffordson, & Erickson, 2014; Klapp, 2015; Sacher, 2014; Ziegenspeck, 1999), which can slightly differ depending on whether the emphasis is put on assessment in general or on grades. However, regardless the different nuances of the purposes’ categorisation, the explicit and normative purposes of grades can be said to be represented in a scheme of categorisation. This categorisation scheme usually implies selection purposes, information purposes and pedagogical purposes (e.g. Sacher, 2014), which are described in more detailed below:

As already pointed out before, grades are on the one hand seen as an indicator of the individuals’ level of ability and performance. According to the meritocratic principle, grades need to be perceived as a legitimate basis for the selection and allocation of individuals at certain transition points in the educational system and at the transition point to working life. This also implies that the above named original condensation of information (which comes along with a loss of complexity; see Lundahl & Waldow, 2009) often turns again into an additional ascription of information. This is for example the case when grades are ascribed a prescriptive value regarding pupils’ future school success and their suitability for certain educational tracks or for certain tasks and professional training tracks in working life.

47 Lundahl, Hultén and Tveit for example suggest a re-conceptualisation of purposes that is horizontal to assessment and grades and puts emphasis on the nexus to pupils’ learning: “certification of learning”, “governing of learning” and “support of learning” (p.19, Transl.B.V.).
Besides the selective and allocative purpose of grades, grades also serve the purpose of information. That means that grades inform pupils and their guardians about the achieved performance level. Depending on the norms of reference used for grading, this information either refers to a social group of comparison (like e.g. the class or the cohort in the whole country), to a criterial standard or to the individual’s own progression (Rheinberg, 2002; Sacher, 2014, see also the following sub-chapter, 3.2.3). Since grades also are used increasingly for system monitoring and educational governance, they also inform on policy-level.

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norms that are social or group related and norms that are individual related (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015; Rheinberg, 2002; Sacher, 2014). The ‘criteria related norm of reference’ includes a comparison of a pupil’s achievement to predefined assessment criteria. The result of the performance measurement thereby informs about how good or how poor the pupil performed in relation to certain externally defined criteria.

The ‘social related norm of reference’ means that a pupil’s performance is related to the performance of other pupils. That means that the result informs about how good an individual pupil’s performance is in relation to the one of other pupils.

The ‘individual related norm of reference’ compares an individual pupil’s performance over time. That means that the result informs about the extent of individual progression. The pupil’s performance is thereby measured against an individual standard.

Consequently, assessment as an umbrella term necessarily means a mélange of the above named norms of reference. While grading, at least on the regulative level, can formally be based on a certain norm of reference (such as the former norm reference assessment system in Sweden (Andersson, 1991) or the aim and knowledge based assessment system with its strong criterial focus today (see chapt.4.2), assessment and in particular everyday class-room assessment almost automatically has to deal with and to balance all the diverging norms of reference. For instance, the formative purposes of assessment and a strong discourse about individualisation particularly focus on the individual norm of reference in relation to a criterial norm of reference. That means that the individual pupils’ progress is compared over time and in relation to specific standards. Furthermore, assessment and grades used for monitoring and national comparisons per se imply social norm related comparisons et cetera.

This implies that the diverging purposes of assessment and grades also are interrelated with questions regarding the norms of reference applied. This can lead to particular contradictions, which in turn also matter for how just assessment and grade allocation is perceived to be with regard to both, the classroom-level and questions of selection and allocation.

48 In the Swedish literature, it is often only referred to the criteria related norm of reference and the social related norm of reference, which in turn refer to the two different systems of assessment in Sweden: the social norm reference assessment system (normrelaterad betygssystem) in use between 1962-1994; and the aim- and criteria related assessment system (mål- och kriterierelaterad betygssystem) used since 1995.

49 This is for example a central idea in formative assessment.
In addition to the sensitising concepts of assessment and grading, justice is another sensitising concept of relevance and presented in the following.

### 3.3 The heuristic concept of ‘justice’ in this study

Justice as a moral principle is of importance in various societal areas and is in general related to normative questions about “the right thing to do” (Sandel, 2010). That these questions also are of high relevance for research can easily be seen with regard to the great amount of studies in diverse research disciplines and research areas focusing on particular aspects of justice. These range for example from welfare-studies (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1990) over gender-studies (e.g. Butler, 2009) to victimology (Moriarty & Jerin, 2017).

Also within the field of education research, justice is a central topic of interest. Here, various justice issues arise almost automatically (Giesinger, 2011; Noddings, 2012). This applies especially for education as a societal institution contributing to the reproduction of social inequalities (Boudon, 1974; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008). Evidence regarding educational inequalities, such as those highlighted by international large-scale comparative studies like PISA, IGLU or TIMMS, can engender intensive national discussions. This was for example the case in Germany during the 2000s (Geißler, 2004; Krüger, 2010). The same applies also for educational research concentrating on the Swedish and the German context, where diverging aspects of empirically proven inequalities in the educational system are repeatedly pointed out (e.g. Andersson, Malmberg, & Öst, 2012, Andersson et al., 2010; Hadjar, 2008; Hansson & Gustafsson, 2016; Imdorf, 2010; Solga, 2005b; Trumberg, 2011; Wellgraf, 2012; Beach, 2017).

However, in the following, the focus will be more on justice as a sensitising concept, and in particular on some primary conceptual differentiations made in the field of social justice research.

#### 3.3.1 Theoretical and empirical conceptions of justice

In general, the field of justice research can be divided into theoretical justice research on the one hand and empirical justice research on the other (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005; Liebig, Lengfeld, & Mau, 2004; Liebig & May, 2009).
Theoretical justice research can be said to provide normative theories of justice, such as the "Justice as fairness"-approach by Rawls (1971), the "Capability-approach" by Sen (2009) or the "Social recognition"-approach by Honneth (2009). Those approaches represent normative conceptions of "what we should do, what the claims of justice are and what just and unjust means from a moral point of view" (Liebig & May, 2009, pp. 3, Transl. B.V.). Thereby, theoretical justice research provides ethical conceptions about how certain societal goods should be distributed (Wegener, 1995).

Empirical justice research on the other hand examines, which conceptions of justice actually exist in society - in different societal groups as well as how and why individuals and groups perceive and reflect upon justice (Liebig & May, 2009). Within this field of research, it can be differentiated between research focusing on the analysis of public and political discourses, the analysis of institutions, and the analysis of people’s attitudes (Liebig et al., 2004).

While the research on justice discourses mainly concentrates on the "justice semantics developing in political and public discourses and which effects these interpretations have on the legitimisation of certain policies" (Liebig et al., 2004, p. 11, Transl. B.V.), the analysis of institutions is focusing on "the conceptions about social justice that are embedded in the blueprints of institutions and how they correspond to societal practices" (Liebig et al., 2004, p. 11, Transl. B.V.). The analysis of people’s attitudes on the other hand, is looking at "the conceptions of justice people hold, the societal conditions of these conceptions and which individual and collective behavioural consequences can be observed" (Liebig et al., 2004, p. 11, Transl. B.V.).

Even if all the three fields of empirical justice research are more or less indirectly represented in the present study through its embedment in the wider research project50, the focus in this study lies on the analysis of pupils’ conceptions and thereby on the latter field of empirical justice research mentioned above.

3.3.2 The multi-dimensional character of justice conceptions

In general, findings from social justice research suggest understanding justice to consist of different dimensions of justice. These dimensions point towards

50 See the work of Waldow (e.g. 2011, 2014, 2016), Falkenberg (2017) and Oehme (2015; forthcoming).
different aspects, which also influence how the allocation of certain goods is perceived (Colquitt et al., 2005; Liebig & May, 2009, p. 5). The three main dimensions have been successively developed and refined during the last decades (see e.g. Colquitt, Greenberg & Zapatha-Phelan (2005) for a historical overview) and are presented in their ‘chronological’ order:

- ‘distributive justice’, which is about justice principles regarding allocation (e.g. Adams, 1965);
- ‘procedural justice’, which focuses on the justice of procedures and rules underlying a distributive process (e.g. Leventhal, 1980);
- and ‘interactional justice’, which is about the communication aspects of justice underlying a distributive process (e.g. Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt, 2001).

These dimensions are presented more detailed below.

### 3.3.2.1 Distributive justice

Distributive justice focuses on the question how a certain good shall be distributed. Regarding this, it is usually differentiated between different distributive principles: ‘equity’, ‘equality’ and ‘need’ (Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1980).

Briefly summarised, the ‘equity principle’ is based on the conception that a distribution is seen as just when the output is proportionally equivalent to the input (Adams, 1965). That implies, that “persons with greater contributions should receive higher outcomes” (Leventhal, 1980, p. 3) and vice versa. Thus, distributions following the equity principle are seen as just when some kind of proportionality is applied, including also the possible differences that may result from the application of the proportional distribution. Since the distributive principle of ‘equity’ is based on contributions, different kinds of contributions come into question, such as ability or effort (Adams, 1965). For example, it can be asked if a distribution is just, if those, who contributed with the most effort receive the greatest reward, or if those, who showed the greatest ability receive most of the benefits - regardless the efforts they made.

The ‘equality principle’ implies that a just distribution is based on an equal distribution, regardless the contribution. Here, equality can either refer to outcome or to opportunity (see e.g. Coleman, 1975), which means that everybody shall receive the same amount of a certain benefit or that everybody shall receive the same opportunity to receive a certain benefit. Regarding the latter, ‘equality of opportunity’, Giesinger (2007, also for a
critical perspective) summarises this distributive rule in the following way: Equality of opportunity means that

"different individuals have the same chances to receive a good, if certain obstacles for the achievement of this good are equally absent. [...] Inequality arises, when certain obstacles lead to an unequal access to this particular good for certain individuals.”

(p. 368, Transl. B.V.)

When this principle is applied to education, inequality appears for example if certain groups of pupils are excluded from certain educational opportunities like it is in the case for Roma pupils (Hornberg & Brüggemann, 2013).

The third principle, ‘need’, implies that a distribution is seen as just if those, who need it most, receive the most amounts of the good – regardless their contribution (Deutsch, 1975; Leisering, 2004). That means that a certain amount of the good is distributed according to pre-defined criteria for “need”. The idea behind this principle is compensation. This is the case for example, when pupils are in the need of special pedagogical support in order to reach a pre-defined minimal standard of education.

With regard to the educational sphere, these justice principles have their respectively equivalents in the basic questions of a just allocation of educational goods. These can range from the structural and curricular organisation of education, until the very local practices in the classroom. Regarding the latter, this can for example imply that teachers need to decide how they allocate their questions during teaching (see e.g. Zaborowski, Meier & Breidenstein, 2010; Sahlström, 1999). From a perspective of justice, it then could be asked for instance, whether it is more just that the pupil, who tries most to get the question is asked; or if it is more just if all pupils are given equal chances to answer on at least one question each class; or whether it is most just, if the pupil who needs it most is given the chance to answer to the teacher’s question.

However, related to these three general principles of justice, there are further principles emphasised in different educational contexts. An illustrative example for this is the concept of ‘equivalence’ (likvärdighet) in the Swedish context: The concept of ‘equivalence’ (likvärdighet) plays an important role in Swedish policy texts and regulations (regarding the conceptual changes from ‘equality’ (jämlik) towards ‘equivalence’ (likvärdighet) during the last
decades, see e.g. Englund, 2005; Lindensjö, 2002; Moreno Herrera, 200751). That applies for education and the distribution of educational goods in general as well as for assessment in particular, which on a normative level shall be characterised by ‘equivalence’ (see Gustafsson et al., 2014). Although a more detailed and profound analysis regarding the meaning of the concept of ‘equivalence’ cannot be made within this study, it shall be shortly illustrated how the concept of ‘equivalence’ can be understood:

In the Education Act (skollag), it is formulated that education “shall be equivalent within each school-form and within the recreation-center, regardless where in the country it is provided” (SFS, 2010:800, ch.1, §9, Transl.B.V.). In the report ‘Equivalent education in comprehensive school’ (Skolverket 2012a, Transl.B.V.), the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), emphasises three aspects that characterise ‘equivalence’ in education: ”equal access to education, equal quality of education and that education shall be compensatory” (Skolverket, 2012a, p. 11, Transl.B.V.). The aim is that all pupils, regardless their attended school type and personal background, shall reach the national educational goals. In the curriculum for comprehensive school (Läroplan för grundskolan, LGR11), it is explained that:

"National goals specify the norms for equivalence. However, equivalent education does not mean that the education should be the same everywhere or that the resources of the school are to be allocated equally. Account should be taken of the varying circumstances and needs of pupils. There are also different ways of attaining these goals. The school has a special responsibility for those pupils, who, for different reasons, experience difficulties in attaining the goals that have been set up for the education. For this reason education can never be the same for all” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 11, Transl.B.V.).

Thereby, equivalence refers in different ways to the distributive principles of justice and implies an idea of comparability. It can furthermore be highlighted that equivalence points towards a compensatory and need-oriented distribution of certain goods, with regard to e.g. educational or economic resources (Skolverket, 2012a, pp. 11–12). The related principle, equality of outcome, can be understood here in terms of a ‘threshold justice’ (Schwellengerechtigkeit) (Giesinger, 2007), which means that all pupils shall

51 This change can according to Korp (2006) be understood “as a change of the social democratic discourse about the school’s role to drive equality forward, a change that resulted from the great pressure of the conservative parties regarding questions of education” (p. 11, Transl. B.V.)
be given comparable opportunities to reach at least those necessary educational goals that enable them to participate in society.

### 3.3.2.2 Procedural justice

Besides questions that address the issue of how a just distribution can be achieved, empirical justice research could show as well that the procedures, which forego the final allocation, are of relevance for how individuals perceive this process to be with regard to justice (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

For example, it could be shown that individuals perceive a distributive process as more just when they also knew that they could control the process (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). This control implies the possibility of ‘voice’, which means that individuals are given the opportunity to explain and to contribute with information before a final decision is made (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990; Tata, 2005).

In addition, Leventhal (1980) has identified seven categories of procedural components, which are important for individuals’ justice perception regarding the distributive process (Leventhal, 1980, pp. 22–23):

- ‘selection of agent’, which is about how the agents are selected, who are responsible for decisions of allocation
- ‘setting ground rules’, which means the procedures to define and to inform about the goals and the rules and how those can be achieved
- ‘gathering information’, which is about the rules for gathering information and a definition about the information that is relevant regarding the process
- ‘decision structure’, which focuses on how the final decision is made
- ‘appeals’, which means the possibilities to appeal against the process or the final decision of allocation
- ‘safeguards’, which can be both, formal or informal and which guarantee that the process is handled in a correct way
- and finally, ‘change mechanisms’, which refer to the possibility to change parts of the allocation process, if injustice appears that is embedded in the procedure.

According to these procedural components, Waldow (2014) has for example examined the conceptions of justice embedded in the regulations and rules for assessment in Sweden, Germany and England.
3.3.2.3 Interactional justice

In addition to justice research focusing on questions of the distribution per se as well as on the procedures underlying the distribution process, interactional justice is another dimension of justice, which is identified by empirical justice research. Interactional justice goes beyond mere procedures, looking especially at "the quality of interpersonal treatment [...] receive[d] during the enactment of organisational procedures" (Bies & Moag, 1986, p. 44). Such qualities that characterise a just communication of a distribution process are for example: respect, trustworthiness or how decisions are explained (Bies & Moag, 1986). In addition, Colquitt (2001) suggests differentiating between ‘interpersonal justice’, focusing on respectful treatment; and ‘informational justice’, focusing on explanation and information.

After the ‘sensitising concepts’ of this study were outlined, the particularities of assessment in both socio-educational contexts shall be presented.
IV. CONTEXTUAL EMBEDMENT

Since the study is based on the general assumption that:

“[…] fairness is fundamentally a sociocultural, rather than a technical, issue and that fair assessment cannot be considered in isolation from both the curriculum and the educational opportunities of the students” (Stobart, 2005, p. 275)

this chapter seeks to provide a contextual background foil that is intended to enhance a deeper understanding regarding the contextual embedment of pupils’ justice conceptions. Hence, the chapter will illustrate certain characteristics of both socio-educational contexts, which are of particular relevance for this study. In relation to pupils’ justice conceptions, this chapter more concretely provides insights in the following contextual aspects, for each one introductorily giving an overview about their socio-historical embedment:

Due to grades relevance for transition, both educational systems architecture are presented in order to make the “joints of educational trajectories” (Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, & Baumert, 2006, p. 300, Transl. B.V.) visible and thereby to identify the neuralgic points of pupils’ educational career. This is done in relation to grades’ and certificates’ particular contextual relevance.

After focusing on the structural level, the chapter will in a second step zoom in on the question how grades as the basis of allocation are ‘made’ in both contexts. This will be done along a conceptual differentiation regarding

52 For a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the procedural justice conceptions underlying the regulations and rules of pupil assessment in both context, the reader is referred to the work of Waldow (2010; 2011; 2014)
assessment (*Leistungsbeurteilung*), related to the one suggested by Jürgens and Lissmann (2015, p. 69):

- everyday assessment (*Leistungsfeststellung*)
- grade relevant testing and measurement (*Leistungsmessung*)
- evaluation and grade assignment (*Leistungsbewertung*)

This systematic procedure allows to examine functionally equivalent (see e.g. Schriewer, 2014) contextual conditions of grade allocation in both contexts as they are formulated in official documents, guidelines, laws et cetera.

### 4.1 Transition and access – educational differentiation and the allocation of life chances

Due to the meritocratic norm underlying allocation processes in both socio-educational contexts (Waldow, 2014), the matter of selection and allocation almost automatically also turns into a matter of differentiation. Thereby, horizontal and vertical transitions between and the access to different school forms and educational levels become central frames of reference. Here, grades and certificates play a vital role for pupils since they decide upon these transitions in different ways.

These transitions and their particular challenges, risks and opportunities for pupils as well as how pupils handle and perceive these transitions, are interesting for many fields of educational research and have been examined from different angles. Here, it can exemplarily be named children’s transition to pre-school class (*förskoleklass*) (Ackesjö, 2014), or young people’s transition to working life (Lidström, 2009; Lundahl et al., 2017; Solga, 2005b), as well as adults’ transitions within working life (Gunnarsson, 2014). Furthermore, research on transitions is often also informed by a research interest regarding educational and social justice due to “the still existing disparities of educational participation” (Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, & Baumert, 2006, p. 299, Transl. B.V.). From that point of view, transitions within the educational system can be understood as “joints of educational trajectories” (Maaz et al., 2006, p. 300, Transl. B.V.), where grades and certificates play a vital role for individuals.

Since the logics of educational differentiation and the structural architecture of transition and access can considerably differ in different contexts, it is necessary to trace the characteristics of the context-specific “joints of
educational trajectories” (Maaz et al., 2006, p. 300, Transl.B.V.), which pupils experience and are a part of. Based on this tertium comparationis, first this sub-chapter will give an overview of the socio-historical patterns regarding the development of both systems’ educational structure. Second, it will be taken a closer look on the present structure of the Swedish and the German educational system with a particular emphasis on lower secondary level and the for pupils neuralgic points of transition. In a third step, it is presented how far and in which ways grades and certificates are relevant for pupils with regards to transition and access. Finally, the sub-chapter then concludes with a look at what pupils are allowed or denied access to on the basis of the grades achieved at the end of lower secondary schooling. Here, the focus will especially lie on the opportunity of receiving certificates on upper secondary level, needed to enter working life or the higher education sector.

4.1.1 Outline of the socio-historical context/s

As already highlighted above, the question of justice is basically also a question of educational participation, permeability and access, which becomes certainly important in relation to a system’s “joints of educational trajectories” (Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, & Baumert, 2006). Embedded in a process of socio-historical development, Sweden as well as Germany have found different answers on this question during time with regard to the structural organisation of the functional differentiation.

Here, literature on the historical development of the Swedish and the German educational system, highlight the years after World War Second as a time of reorganisation and change (Lundgren, 2012; Wallin, 1991; Dwerek, 1994).

Like many other educational systems, also the Swedish53 system changed from a differentiated system to a comprehensive one during the post war period and was finally implemented in 1962. For this wide-reaching reform, the Swedish relations to the U.S. can be highlighted as especially important in terms of that “the orientation regarding questions of education towards Germany was replaced by a strong influence of the U.S.A.” (Lundgren, 2012, p.85, Transl. B.V.). However, the basic idea of a comprehensive system reaches back longer than this and is partly based on progressive ideals, which in turn are related to a strong influence of reform pedagogical flows54 as well as to a strong labour movement, criticising social inequalities that were seen as

53 In the following, the sections focusing on Sweden or Germany respectively are written in bold for reasons of clarity and overview.
54 Lundgren (2012) for example highlights here John Dewey’s role for Sweden.
being reproduced within the educational system (e.g. Lundgren, 2012). During post war period then, these discussions got intensified again in the light of post war ideals concerning the role of education in relation to values like democracy and equality. With regard to the structural organisation of education in Sweden, the work of the school commission, set up during the 1940s and mainly consisting of members of the social democrat and liberal parties, should become the basis for the following wide-reaching change of the Swedish system. The underlying main idea of the commission’s final report, published in 1946, is summarised by Wallin (1991) in the following way:

“[…] the main concern was with equal opportunity and equal access to education. This has implications in geographical terms as the comprehensive school means that all children wherever they live have access to schooling for nine years. The idea of equality also implies that the same school is open to all children, irrespective of social origin, and offers equal opportunities to everyone. Every child should be given the same chance to develop his or her talents and abilities, and receive the preparation needed for going on to upper secondary education” (Wallin, 1991, p. 143)

The comprehensive system, which was finally implemented in 1962, thereby aimed to postpone the structural differentiation of pupils – at least until the transition to upper secondary education55 and by this “to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, the influence of social and cultural background” (Wallin 1991, p.144)56.

Since then, the original and deeply rooted idea of “one school for all” (“en skola för alla”) has got seriously challenged. The wide changes that took place during the 1990s, including e.g. a broad decentralisation of education, the successive establishment of a free school-market and free school choice (“fri skolväl”, see also ch. 4.1.2), are widely seen to have contributed to increased segregation, inequality and a decreasing equivalence (likvärdighet) (see e.g. Holmlund et al. 2014).

In contrast to Sweden, Germany re-established the differentiated system after World War Second and after the period of a centralised system during the Nazi regime (Urabe, 2009). Today, the German system is seen as one of the

55 Regarding the comprehensive character of upper secondary education (sammanhållen gymnasieskola) implemented in 1971, see Kallos & Lundgren (1976).
56 For a more detailed presentation regarding the inner differentiation in the comprehensive system regarding e.g. different courses in mathematics or English, see Wallin (1991) as well as Kallos & Lundgren (1976).
most differentiated ones (Black, 2005). The idea of the structural differentiation and the early tracking of pupils is mirrored in the existence of different school types. These different school types, in turn give access to different certificates, which differ in terms of their value regarding the access to further educational opportunities. This idea could be asserted by the conservatives in West-Germany during the post war period - against the claims of the U.S. Allies (Hadjar, 2016) and was formally written down and decided upon by the KMK in the so-called “Düsseldorfer Abkommen” in 1955 (Dwerek, 1994). The logics of legitimising the early tracking of pupils were then mainly following the discourse on pupils’ different levels of talent as well as the needs of the economy for individuals with different kinds of educational background (Lundgreen, 2000). The arguments of the differentiation’s advocates have during the years slightly changed in character and are today more discussed and justified in terms of pupils’ differing educational needs (Lundgreen, 2000). Even if the basic idea of a necessary structural and functional differentiation of pupils still seems to be the guiding principle, it gets recurrently challenged and questioned.

For example are the debates and controversies regarding the differentiated system in relation to a comprehensive model since the 1960s constantly re-actualised (Herrlitz, Weiland & Winkel, 2003). During the 1970s, the discussions resulted in a tentative implementation of the comprehensive school type (Gesamtschule) in some federal states, but only in addition to the tracked system (Lundgreen, 2000; Wenzler, 2003). Gesamtschule has thereby extended the variety of school types, but not replaced the differentiated system. However, a broader implementation of this school type, which exists still today, has only been made in North Rhine-Westphalia – the federal state, on which this study is focusing on. Due to the results of PISA during the early 2000s, highlighting the differentiated system a main source for educational inequality, as well as the therewith related German “PISA-shock”, the debates regarding the differentiated system again get fuelled (Nath, 2003; Ringarp, 2016). Today, the educational systems of the federal states can be said to tend more and more towards a two-track system (Lundgreen, 2000; see also Lundahl, Hultén & Tveit (2017, p. 103) for an actual overview over the school types provided and Zymek (2013) for a historical embedment of this issue).

57 The logics as well as the grade of differentiation are more closely discussed in the following sub-chapters.
58 In contrast hereto, the educational system of East-Germany was also comprehensive in character (Polytechnische Oberschule). After the German reunion, the differentiated system was also implemented in the Eastern parts of Germany.
4.1.2 System structures and points of transition

Pupils in **Sweden** start their obligatory school career usually at the age of seven, when entering compulsory comprehensive school (*grundskola*). *Grundskola* includes education on primary and lower secondary level from year one to year nine and it is attended by all pupils of the age cohort in question. The thereof resulting heterogeneity in class is on the structural level not handled by separating pupils into more homogenous learning groups but by giving each individual pupil the support needed in order to reach the aims for *grundskola* (SFS 2010:800, Chapt.3). This support (*särskilt stöd*) can include, for example, teaching in pupil’s first language in case this is not Swedish. It can also aim at supporting pupils in certain subjects or with regard to certain competences such as Mathematics or reading, and it is often given by teachers specialised on special needs education. After successful completion of *grundskola*, all pupils can attend the voluntary, usually three-year upper secondary school (*gymnasieskola*) until the age of 20, which is attended by nearly all pupils. In autumn 2014 for example, 98% of all pupils in Sweden, who completed *grundskola* continued their education at *gymnasieskola* directly after the summer-break (Skolverket, 2016a, p. 47).

Broadly defined, the Swedish *gymnasieskola* provides two different educational pathways: preparing pupils for higher education (*studieförberedande*) or for working life (*yrkesförberedande*). More concretely, these two pathways are differentiated in a total of 18 national programs (*Nationella program*), whereof twelve prepare for vocational activities, such as childcare, healthcare, car mechanics or retail sales; and six prepare for higher education with specialisations in e.g. natural science, social science, humanities or art (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 16). In addition to these national programs, *gymnasieskola* also includes five introductory programs (*Introduktionsprogram*) for pupils who cannot attend a national program yet e.g. because of lack of sufficient language competences in Swedish. These programs are intended to lead either to change to a national program, or to practical work outside school. In autumn 2014, of all pupils attending an *gymnasieskola*, 58% attended a program in the pathway preparing for higher education, while 31% attended a program preparing for working life and 11% of all pupils attended one of the introductory programmes and here mainly the

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60 This presentation does not include other possible tracks for pupils with certain special needs or the Sami school.
Between pre-school and primary school, there is one year of a voluntary pre-primary school (*förskoleklass*), which aim is to prepare children for the first grade in primary school (see e.g. Skolverket (2011, rev. 2016) and the dissertation of Ackesjö (2014) for the transition from the pre-primary class to primary school.)
one which is focusing on learning the Swedish language (Skolverket, 2016a, pp. 83–84).

Regarding the structural organisation, the system, which pupils meet in Germany, can be said to be more varied. This has on the one hand and to some extent, to do with the federal organisation of the educational sector. In Germany, each federal state (Bundesland) has since the post-war period the sovereignty in questions regarding education (Kulturhoheit) (Grundgesetz, Art. 30). That implies that each of the 16 federal states in Germany has its own school system, legal regulations, curricula, etc., which the federal ministry of education is primarily responsible for. Therefore, the differentiated school system in Germany is not just differentiated with regard to different school types but also in terms of which different school types different federal states have chosen to offer (for an overview, see Lundahl et al., 2017, p. 103).

This study focuses on the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). Pupils attending school in this federal state start their obligatory school career usually at the age of six\(^{62}\), when entering primary school (Grundschule). In NRW, Grundschule includes, like in most other federal states of Germany, comprehensive schooling for all pupils between the years 1 to 4. Based on the mid-term certificate in year 4, legal guardians and their children are then recommended to attend a suitable school type within the differentiated lower secondary level (SchulG 2015, §11,5): Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule, Gymnasium or Sekundarschule (SchulG 2015, §14,15,16,17,17a,18)\(^{63}\):

*Hauptschule* shall promote basic knowledge, skills and abilities during year 5 until 9 (or 10), in order to mainly prepare pupils for further vocational in-firm training in e.g. blue-collar jobs\(^{64}\). In 2014, 12.8 % of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

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\(^{62}\) Depending on pupils’ abilities and developmental maturity, pupils can also start one year earlier or one year later. In NRW, the school’s headmaster decides about this question. In case of a later enrolment, in addition a medical report is needed (§35, SchulG NRW).

\(^{63}\) This list does not imply other school types such as model schools and diverse school types for children with special needs.

\(^{64}\) Formerly, Hauptschule was representing the most common school-form for the majority of all pupils (MSW NRW, 2014, p. 193), the educational expansion reform of the 1960s and the changing market demands led to a rising homogenisation of pupil composition at *Hauptschule*. The homogenisation is characterised by the over-proportionality of pupils from often low-income families and/or with migration background. During the school year 2014, 24.5 % of all pupils attending *Hauptschule* had a migration background compared to 4.5% of all pupils attending *Gymnasium*. Solga and Wagner (2000) describe this homogenisation process as a “creaming-out process”, characterised by a transition of pupils with more beneficial backgrounds to higher status schools such as *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*, while pupils with socially deprived backgrounds and/or migration background often continue to attend *Hauptschule*.
At school in this federal state start their obligatory school career usually. This study focuses on the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). Pupils have chosen to offer (for an overview, see Lundahl et al., 2017, p. 103).

The differentiated school system in Germany is not just differentiated with regard to different school education is primarily responsible for. Therefore, the differentiated school system, legal regulations, curricula, etc., which the federal ministry of Art. 30). That implies that each of the 16 federal states in Germany has its own sovereignty in questions regarding education (Kulturhoheit). Germany, each federal state (Bundesland), can be said to be more varied. This has on the one hand and to intensive societal and education policy discussions in the 1960s and 1970s regarding educational equality (regarding this see e.g. Lundgreen, 2000).

The homogenisation is made a transition to the upper secondary level. However, this school type includes year 5 – 10 and in order to attend upper secondary level, pupils need to change to a Gymnasium or a Gesamtschule. In 2014, 29,9% of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

When the Swedish and the German systems are compared on a structural level, the comparison first and foremost reveals that pupils in both systems make a transition but at different points of time in their educational career. While Swedish pupils meet the first point of transition nine years after they started school, German pupils are differentiated into different school types after four years of schooling. In both cases, this transition is also influenced in certain ways by pupils’ school achievement and it also matters for what certificates pupils can achieve, providing access to further educational opportunities. These relations, when and how grades and certificates are high-stakes in character for pupils in both systems, are presented in the following.

Realschule is focusing from year 5 to 10 on practical as well as extended theoretical competences, giving pupils the opportunity to either apply for a vocational in-school or in-firm traineeship for mainly more qualified practical employment like e.g. white collar or commercial jobs. Pupils can also proceed to upper secondary level if their achievement meets the requirements. In 2014, 26,4% of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

Gymnasium is aiming at a broad range of deeper theoretical knowledge and academically oriented competencies, which mainly shall prepare pupils for later academic studies on tertiary level. It contains the years 5 to 9 on lower secondary level and the years 10 to 12 on upper secondary level. In 2014, 29,9% of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

Gesamtschule, a comprehensive school type includes years 5 to 10 on lower secondary level and years 11 to 13 on upper secondary level. Gesamtschule is attended by pupils with diverging achievement levels and all school leaving certificates can be received, giving access to vocational traineeship as well as to the tertiary level after grade 13. In 2014, 22,5% of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

Sekundarschule was implemented in the year 2011 and is similar to Gesamtschule, in the way that it prepares for vocational training as well as for a transition to the upper secondary level. However, this school type includes year 5 – 10 and in order to attend upper secondary level, pupils need to change to a Gymnasium or a Gesamtschule. In 2014, 2,9 % of all pupils at lower secondary level attended that school type (MSW NRW, 2014).

The implementation of the school type Gesamtschule needs to be understood as a consequence of the intensive societal and education policy discussions in the 1960s and 1970s regarding educational equality (regarding this see e.g. Lundgreen, 2000).
4.1.3 The relevance of grades and certificates for transition and access

In Sweden, grades are given from year 6\(^{66}\). Due to the comprehensive character of grundskola, the grades that pupils receive until year 9 are not high stakes on a formal level with regard to transition during this period of time. The obligatory repetition of a schoolyear on the basis of insufficient grades, like it is the case in Germany, does not exist in Sweden\(^{67}\). Therefore, the grades given in year 6, 7 and 8 mainly serve for the purposes of information and diagnosis. When pupils finish their education at grundskola in year 9, grades become on the formal level relevant in the transition to gymnasieskola. Particular final examinations do not exist in Sweden – the grades allocated during the school year are the educational merits used for transition to gymnasieskola and thereby high-stakes in character.

As already pointed out earlier, gymnasieskola is divided into vocational tracks (yrkesförberedande program), tracks that prepare for higher education (studieförberedande program) and introductory tracks (introduktionsprogram) for pupils in the need of particular and extended support in order to reach grundskola’s goals. Generally, gymnasieskola is open for all pupils regardless their achievement level. However, grades that pupils achieve in year 9 are relevant in terms of which track pupils can attend. The basic access to the different tracks is based on the following minimal standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational track</th>
<th>Higher education preparatory track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum grade “passed” (E) in the subjects:</td>
<td>Minimum grade “passed” (E) in the subjects:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedish or Swedish as a second</td>
<td>- Swedish or Swedish as a second</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{66}\) Before the wide school reform in 2011, grades were given first in year 8. The conservative-liberal government explained the implementation of grades in school year 6 by highlighting that grades given sooner were expected to improve pupils school performance by sooner identifying pupils in the need of specific support and informing parents and pupils about the actual performance level at an earlier stage. Moreover, sooner grading was also expected to contribute to pupils getting used to being graded and thereby strengthening their stress resilience (Prop. 2009/10:219). In lower years 1-5, pupils learning development in relation to the knowledge requirements for year 3 and year 6 respectively is discussed in developmental dialogues (Utvecklingssamta) and written down in individual study plans (Individuella studieplaner). Since 2017, grades are allocated from year 4 on an experimental basis, but only for the schools that have signed up to participate. The experiment will be evaluated in year 2021.

\(^{67}\) Except in case that pupils e.g. due to sickness have missed crucial parts of teaching during the school year. Nevertheless, the repetition is voluntary. General knowledge gaps that increase the risk for not achieving the national requirements instead are corrected by giving individualised support during the school year.
Before the wide school reform in 2011, grades were given first in year 8. The conservative-liberal minimum grade “passed” (E) in the subjects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>+ 5 other subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish or Swedish as a second language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>+ 9 other subjects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The places that are available at the different national programs (*nationella program*) are then allocated according to the applicants’ grade level. This is done by ascribing each grade a certain numerical “merit value” (*meritvärde*), which are added up. Individuals are ranked according to the total of the merit value.

However, grades that are allocated at Year 9 are not just relevant with regard to the access to different national programs. In addition, they are also relevant in terms of the access to certain schools. Free school choice (*fri skolval*) and an almost unique market liberal privatisation of the educational sector have since the 1990s led to the establishment of an educational “quasi market” (Lund, 2006; Lundahl, Arremann-Erickson & Holm, 2013), where pupils are free to choose the school they want to apply to attend to. The logic of the tax-financed voucher system that characterises the Swedish “edu-business” (Lundahl, Arremann-Erickson & Holm, 2013, p. 504) is therefore not just leading to an increased competition between public and private schools (which in majority are owned by companies) but between all schools. This has certain consequences for the inner work of schools (Holm & Lundström, 2011; Lundström & Holm, 2011; Lundahl, Arremann Erixon, Holm & Lundström 2014; Lundahl, Arremann-Erickson, Holm 2013) and comes along with several side effects like segregation according to pupils background and results (Lidström, Lund & Holmström 2014; Trumberg, 2011; SOU 2017:35) or grade inflation (Wikström & Wikström, 2005). Even if this aspect cannot be discussed in detail here and read elsewhere (Lundahl et al., 2014 for an broader introduction; Vogt, Falkenberg & Waldow, in print, for an overview), it shall nevertheless be highlighted that the grades pupils receive at the end of Year 9, also are decisive for which school one is given the opportunity to get access to (see also Lund, 2006 in general and in particular regarding pupils’ experiences and rationals underlying their school choice).

68 Depending on the national program pupils choose, passed grades are obligatory in certain subjects: in order to be allowed to apply for the natural science program (*naturvetenskapsprogrammet*), pupils need to have a minimum grade E (passed) in the subjects of physics, chemistry and biology (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 20).

69 These merit values are ascribed according the following arithmetic basis: F = 0; E = 10; D = 12,5; C = 15; B = 17,5; A = 20.
In Germany, pupils at primary level, usually in year 470, are recommended to attend certain school types. These recommendations are based on how their teachers assume their performance level and learning abilities to be in relation to the characteristics and requirements of different school types on lower secondary level (SchulG, §11,5). With the beginning of lower secondary level, the grades pupils achieve at the end of each year are high stakes in character, both in terms of vertical transitions (the promotion to the next school year within the same school type) as well as horizontal transitions (transitions between different school types). For example, low grades can lead to the obligatory repetition of a school year and finally to an obligatory change to a lower school type. Likewise high grades can legitimise the transition to a higher school type.

Besides this continuous high-stakes character of grades, the grades and school-leaving certificates (Abschlusszeugnis) achieved in year 10 are decisive for pupils’ further educational opportunities. Based on them, pupils are allowed or denied access to upper secondary education (Oberstufe), leading to the higher education entrance certificate (Abitur); or pupils can leave school and apply for a vocational training position71. Though pupils in all school-types are, at least on the formal level, given the possibility to achieve the school-leaving certificate allowing for a transition to the Oberstufe, the vast majority of pupils actually attending the Oberstufe have attended the school type Gymnasium before (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014, p. 28). Hence, vertical changes of school type to a higher school type are seldom (MSW NRW, 2014; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014, p. 28).

The school-leaving certificates at the end of lower secondary level can be achieved in two different ways: either by the usual yearly certificate (Jahreszeugnis), which entitles pupils to move up to the next higher year, like e.g. if a pupil attending a Gymnasium successfully completed year 10, the received certificate is equal to a school-leaving certificate corresponding to the one from e.g. Realschule; or by successfully participating and completing the final examinations (Zentrale Abschlussprüfung) of the specific school type. These final examinations take place in year 10 and consist of centralised written tests, which are standardised on a federal state level as well as (optional) oral tests72, which the school decides upon. The assessment of examinations are done by two subject teachers. The subject-specific and numerical final grade is constructed through rating and calculating the results

70 Applies for most federal states in Germany.
71 Vocational training in Germany is organised in a dual system (Duales System), where the practical part of the training is done in a working place and the theoretical part of the training is done in vocational schools (Berufsschule).
72 In case that the grade of the written examination test and the grades achieved during school year differ more than 2 grade levels, pupils need to take the oral examination.
of the examinations and the grades achieved during the school year in a certain arithmetic procedure:

a) the mean of all grades received during school year result in the so-called ‘pre-grade’ (*VorNote*). This ‘pre-grade’ counts five times.

b) the grade received in the written examination tests counts three times.

c) the grade received in the oral examination counts double.

The addition of the results of a, b and c divided by the weighting factor then results in the examination grade visible on the school leaving certificate (*Abschlusszeugnis*)\(^{73}\) for lower secondary education (APO-S I, 2012).

When comparing grades’ and certificates’ relevance for pupils’ transition within the Swedish and the German context, the following two aspects shall be highlighted:

The first one has to do with the point of time when grades are high stakes in character. Due to the comparably late differentiation in Sweden and the fact that the mandatory repetition of the school year based on low achievement level does not apply, grades do not become high stakes before year 9. On the contrary, the differentiated lower secondary level in Germany and the yearly decisions regarding the promotion to the next school year based on the grades achieved, make grades on the structural level more often and earlier high-stakes in character.

The second aspect that shall be highlighted is how much the grades achieved during the school year are high stakes. Here, the grades achieved at the end of the lower secondary education are high stakes in character in Sweden as well as in Germany, since they determine pupils’ further educational opportunities – whether it is for vocational training or for preparing for higher education. However, regarding the way in which grades are high stakes differs between the two contexts. While the transition to upper secondary level in Sweden is completely dependent on the grades achieved at the end of year nine, access to upper secondary level in Germany is only based on one half of the grades achieved during the school year. The other half is based on final examinations. From that point of view, grades allocated in Sweden at the end of year 9 are, according to their relevance for transition, more high stakes in character than in Germany (see e.g. also Lundahl, 2017).

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\(^{73}\) In order to support this calculation, the Ministry for Education provides a certain tool, see appendix G.
Hence, grades are from a structural point of view earlier and more often high-stakes in Germany but more high-stakes in Sweden with regard to their relevance for transition to upper secondary level. But in which way are grades high stakes in character? Or more concretely: what future educational opportunities are opened up or restricted for pupils on the basis of the grades and certificates that are allocated to them? This question is addressed below.

4.1.4 What is at stakes?

The question addressed here is, what pupils are allowed or denied access to on the basis of their allocated grades at the end of lower secondary level.

As already outlined before, in Sweden, upper secondary education is open to all pupils who reach the minimal standards. Thus, the grades allocated at the end of lower secondary level basically decide upon the access to upper secondary level. Upper secondary level includes tracks for vocational training as well as tracks that prepare for higher education. Since 2011, only the tracks preparing for higher education automatically provide the opportunity to take the basic higher education qualification certificate (grundläggande högskolebehörighet). That implies that pupils successfully completing upper secondary school in a vocational track are no longer automatically given the possibility to access higher education studies (as it was the case before the wide school reform in 2011). Even if upper secondary schools are obliged to provide additional courses for vocational pupils that can lead to this certificate, in 2014 the majority of pupils attending a vocational track have finished upper secondary school without the basic higher education qualification certificate (see statistics on SIRIS\textsuperscript{74}). The original idea of a comprehensive upper secondary school (sammanhållna gymnasieskola) can therefore with this regard be said to have changed into a two track upper secondary system, where pupils are differentiated into those who by definition receive the basic higher education qualification certificate and those who do not (or at least not without taking additional courses). The upper secondary certificate (gymnasieexamen) that all pupils achieve when successfully finishing gymnasieskola, is thereby a certificate similarly named but with a different value regarding further educational transition and access.

In Germany, pupils in all school types are basically given the possibility to take a school leaving certificate that allows for the transition to upper secondary level – as long as their grades fulfil the requirements. This can be exemplified for pupils attending Hauptschule: these pupils are just given

\textsuperscript{74} http://siris.skolverket.se/siris/?p=Siris:1:0
access to the tenth school year leading to this certificate, if their grades in year 9 allow for it. Otherwise, they just can take one of the school-leaving certificates from Hauptschule (Hauptschulabschluss or Qualifizierter Hauptschulabschluss), giving them the formal opportunity to apply for a vocational training position in lower qualified jobs. In case their grades allow for attending the school year 10, the grades allocated in the school year 10 decide upon if they are given access to upper secondary education. Structurally seen, the underlying idea in the German system is to move more towards a two-track system – on the one hand Gymnasium straightly leading to the higher education certificate (Abitur) and on the other diverging other school types offering integrated possibilities to make the transition to upper secondary education that finally can lead to the higher education certificate (Zymek, 2013). However, this transition is only made by a small number of pupils: in the school year 2012/13, 89.7% of all pupils attending upper secondary level have also attended a Gymnasium before (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). Besides the stakes of yearly promotion, the grades allocated at the end of lower secondary level are thereby also decisive at several points of transition on the way to the higher education certificate (Abitur). In addition hereto, the different school-leaving certificates and grades are also decisive for the access to vocational training, since pupils compete with their grades and certificates when applying for a place at an in-firm training workplace. For pupils with a school-leaving certificate from Hauptschule, the overall chances to get a place for in-firm training are quite limited (see e.g. Protsch, 2014).

If the two systems are compared, this means that in Sweden as well as in Germany, grades at the end of lower secondary level are of great relevance for pupils as they determine and shape pupils’ opportunities to pass the higher education exam necessary to enter the tertiary sector. Even if both systems are on the formal level to some extent characterised by permeability in terms of formal opportunities to receive the higher education exam, is the way towards this exam to some extent and in different ways a more difficult one for pupils who not directly gained access to the tracks preparing for higher education studies. The possibilities to achieve a higher education exam (or to find a place in the vocational training sector like in Germany) and thereby more opportunities and life chances, is on the structural level different for pupils with different grades at the end of lower secondary level.

Based on the structural relevance of grades in both systems, the question that immediately arises is how the grades that determine and shape pupils’ access and transitions in the above outlined way, are ‘made’. This question is addressed below.
4.2 Regulatory frames of assessment

After the neuralgic points of transition in both contexts were presented in the previous chapter, it shall now be taken a closer look on how grades as a part of the "micro-politics of the selection in schools" (Terhart, 2008), are ‘made’. For this purpose, the chapter initially provides a historical background against which the present assessment systems need to be understood as embedded in a particular socio-historical context. Hereafter, a comparative view of certainly relevant components of assessment is presented, which represent the *tertia comparationis* along which a systematically comparison is enabled. In order to ensure functional equivalence (Schriewer, 2006) and thereby to ensure that assessment is captured in its contextual interrelatedness, assessment in both contexts is presented in relation to the components of assessment as suggested by Jürgens and Lissmann (2015, p. 69). These components are:

- everyday classroom-assessment
- grade relevant testing
- evaluation and grade assignment.

Thereby, the chapter will provide a background foil that seeks to enhance the understanding of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding the conditions of assessment in Sweden and Germany. Due to empirical findings regarding pupils’ conceptions, this will also include everyday assessment as foregoing grade assignment and accompanying the assessment process.

4.2.1 Outline of the socio-historical context/s

As already explained in the chapters before, are grades and assessment in this study seen as embedded in a contextual web of interrelations and interdependencies (Broadfoot & Black, 2004). Grades can be seen as ‘cultural artefacts’ (Lundahl, 2017), which also implies that grades and the assessment process are influenced of traditions and socio-historically grown.

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75 In terms of contextualisation and contextual sensitivity, it would have been interesting as well to comprehensively analyse and to compare the contextual meanings of curricular concepts such as knowledge (‘Wissen’ and ‘kunskap’), competences (‘Kompetenzen’ and ‘kompetenser’), abilities (‘Fähigkeiten’ and ‘förmågor’), skills (‘Fertigkeiten’ and ‘färdigheter’), performance (‘Leistung’ and ‘prestation’) or requirements (‘Anforderungen’ and ‘krav’), which could not been realised within the present study (regarding the meaning of the concept of ‘knowledge’ in the Swedish curricula LGR11 in comparison to the European discourse on ‘competences’, see e.g. Wahlström (2016)).

76 Luhman (2002) also talks about grades as "organisational artefacts" (p. 65), highlighting grades’ historical development as a necessity for organising educational selection processes in the 18th century.
Etymologically, the Swedish term for certificate (and for grades), “betyg”, refers to “to bear witness” (Hellquist 1922) — the same applies for the German term for certificate, “Zeugnis” (Grimm & Grimm, 1854). The here indicated shared historical roots also reveal when one is looking at two comprehensive historical studies done in this field — Lundahl (2006) for the Swedish context and Urabe (2009) for the German context. Here, both point out the Jesuit schools in the 17th century as an important historical context where grades were allocated with the intention of stimulating a competition amongst pupils in order to select and educate the best appropriate candidates and by this to maintain and secure the ecclesiastical elite group of the future (Lundahl, 2006, pp. 29–30; Urabe, 2009, pp. 28–34).

The development of modern systems for assessment as well as their societal relevance needs to be understood against the background of the societal transition that took place during the 18th and 19th century. Here, society successively changed from the estate-based society, where the allocation of beneficial societal positions was based on inherited social status and power, towards a society where selection on the basis of educational merits increased in relevance (e.g. Titze, 2000). In the course of this development, grades and certificates relevance for the access to further educational opportunities gained in importance. Thereby grades and certificates also increasingly served administrative purposes linked to selection and allocation (Korp, 2003, p. 27; Lundahl, 2012 ;, p. 263). In year 1788 for example, the first Abitur certificates were allocated in Preussen, which allowed entering university (Titze, 2000; Urabe, 2009, pp. 35–36). In the course of educational expansion and the introduction of mandatory schooling, also lower school forms got successively included in this development during the turn to the 20th century and started to allocate school-leaving certificates and grades (Lundahl, 2012 ;, p. 265; Titze, 2000).

In line with the development of the psychological discipline during this time and in particular the field of psychometrics and intelligence testing during the middle of the 20th century (see e.g. Schneider & Hutt, 2013); assessment based on teachers’ professional diagnosis got increasingly challenged (Tierney, 2013). Psychometrics with its scientific character was seen to provide an answer based on objectivity and measurability on the question of societal selection (Waldow, 2011; Korp, 2003; Lundahl & Tveit, 2014; Lundahl, 2006, for a comprehensive presentation). However, while the impact of psychometrics in relation to teacher’s professional assessment was comparably low in Germany, the situation in Sweden differed (Waldow, 2011).

The fact that psychometrics could gain that much relevance in Sweden needs to be understood in the light of a more comprehensive “scientification” of the
Swedish society - “a widespread belief of research’s potential to increase efficiency in society in general and in particular in school” (Lundahl, 2006, p. 265). In relation to this, Waldow (2009, 2011, 2014) for example also talks about “social engineering”. Of course, these progressive ideas also included assessment and promoted the idea of a standardisation of teachers’ assessment in form of standardised tests, the so-called ‘Standardprov’. These tests can be seen as a necessary legitimisation basis for the later on implemented comprehensive school system and paved the way for external psychometrics experts into the arena of teachers professional assessment monopole (see further Lundahl & Tveit, 2014 regarding this issue). These changes came along with what Lundahl and Tveit (2014) conceptualised as “struggle of professions about grades, tests and assessment” (p.297) and had consequences for teachers’ autonomy and professional self-image. Still today, these tests, nowadays called “nationella prov” (national tests), sustain their legitimacy as a tool for calibrating teachers’ assessment and grade allocation and to control for assessment validity in terms of equivalence and objectivity (e.g. Skolverket, 2016f.; see also ch. 4.2.4).

As already named before, was the influence of psychometrics on German teacher’s assessment comparably little. Waldow (2011) assumes that this has to do with the great relevance of the traditional German concept of Bildung as the central and hardly measurable task of German teachers’ professional practice. In contrast to Sweden, the German view on standardised tests was (and still is, according to Waldow, 2011, p.491) a critical one with regard to their use as safeguards of a just selection. Here, “teachers’ professional assessment is still preferred to the ‘mechanical sorting of persons (students)’ [referring to Terhart, 2006, p.123 as cited in Waldow, 2011, p.489; B.V.] through test systems” (p. 491, Transl. B.V.). Even if standardised tests on national level (Ländervergleichsstudien) as well as on federal state level (Vergleichsarbeiten, VERA) have been introduced in the course of the implementation of educational standards since the early 2000s, the tests ‘only’ serve the purposes of system monitoring and school development77. Teachers’ classroom assessment is still characterised by a high level of professional autonomy (see also Wermke, 2013) and safeguards are provided in the form of the possibility of legal appeals (Waldow, 2011).

Overall, there are also differences obvious with regard to the degree of which reforms of the assessment system are planned and realised. Consistent to the progressive lines of development in Sweden illustrated above and the comparably stable traditions in Germany, the Swedish system is characterised by several comprehensive changes since the 1950s while the German system overall can be said to be the same since year 1964.

The Swedish assessment system has since World War II undergone several wide-reaching transformations. With the implementation of the Comprehensive School system in the 1960s and the basic curriculum reforms related to this change, the till then used ranking system (absolut betygssystem) changed to a norm related system (relativ betygssystem) in 1969. The idea behind the norm related system was to enable the just selection of pupils by norming grade allocation according to a social reference group on a national level. Andersson (1991) describes this idea in the following way:

“Norm referenced grades as an idea, were at the beginning strongly related to how it was thought about fair selection these times. The expression ‘right man at right place’ was used in different contexts in order to describe the dominating view at the end of the 1930s and in the beginning of the 1940s. The conception that it was possible to form an objective tool for selection, used for democratic purposes and following the model of the intelligence measurements in the U.S and England, seems to have been quite popular.” (p. 37, Transl. B.V.)

The norm referenced allocation of grades means that individual grades (reaching from 1 to 5), should be allocated in relation to a normal distribution curve based on the results of all pupils in Sweden in the same class level. In order to calibrate this normal distribution curve, central tests were needed – the so-called Centralproven (Korp, 2006; Lundahl & Tveit, 2014). However, due to multiple problematiques with this system, like for example that teachers used their class as a social norm of reference instead of the national cohort group, together with the argument that the norm referenced system did not allow for assessing pupils knowledge in terms of educational aims but only of comparison (Andersson, 1991), finally led to yet another change in 1994.

The new system, the aim- and knowledge related assessment system (mål- och kunskapsrelaterad betygssystem) can be shortly said to be about the assessment of the individual pupil’s knowledge in relation to nationally formulated assessment criteria (bedömningskriterier). This change also implied a reduction of the amount of grade levels from formerly five to three and a later point of time when grades should start to be allocated, namely in year eight. Furthermore, the reform also implied the decentralisation of education and the transfer of many responsibilities from the state level to the municipality level (Wahlström, 2002). This included for example also the concretisation of assessment criteria and learning content. However, during the 2000s, characterised by decreasing PISA results (Ringarp, 2016) and grade inflation (Wikström, 2005) again fueled the discussion about the assessment systems’ fairness and conditions for equivalence (Mickwitz, 2015). This resulted in a wide school reform, implemented in 2011, included yet another
change of the Swedish curriculum as well as the assessment system, characterised by accountability and output-orientation (Wahlström, 2014). Taken together that means that almost each generation of Swedish pupils since World War Second has experienced another assessment systems, including widely differing ideas about assessment and ways of its realisation and organisation.

In comparison to the continuity of change that the Swedish system has undergone, the German system seems almost static. After World War Second and its centralised system (see Urabe, 2009 for a more detailed presentation), the federalised organisation of the West-German system was re-established and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, KMK) was founded as a national arena for discussions regarding education. In 1964, the KMK decided upon the national standardisation of a six-level grading scale for certificates with the following descriptors (KMK, “Hamburger Abkommen”, 1964-04-18): sehr gut (very good); gut (good), befriedigend (satisfactory), ausreichend (sufficient), mangelhaft (insufficient) and ungenügend (unsatisfactory). These descriptors, which are slightly concretised in federal school laws (see ch. 4.2.4), are the basis for teacher’s assessment, which is characterised by a comparatively high level of professional autonomy (Wermke, 2013). Hence, it is not the standardisation that is seen to provide the basis for a just selection but still teachers’ professionality. The implementation of norm-referenced standards (Regelstandards), national tests and centralised examinations during the 2000s has not changed this and is mainly justified with arguments regarding system monitoring and school development (KMK, 2005, p.6).

Against this short outline about the socio-historical patterns in which the present assessment systems are embedded within, the following illustrations hopefully gain in contextual contour.

### 4.2.2 Everyday assessment

Everyday assessment here refers to all the continuous implicit and explicit assessment situations that teachers use in order to gather information about pupils learning. These can be summative in character, which means an assessment of pupils’ performance level at a certain point of time, or formative

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78 For a presentation regarding the Eastern Part of Germany until Germany’s reunion in 1989, see Urabe (2009).
in character, which means that the assessment results are used to support pupils' further learning as well as to improve and to adjust teachers' further teaching (see chapt. 3.1 for a more detailed presentation). Everyday assessment as understood here, means an assessment that is not used for grade assignment as such, but rather it serves the purpose of describing pupils' performance level in everyday assessment situations (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015, p. 69). Even if the focus of this study is on grade relevant assessment, it is important to understand assessment in its wider context of everyday assessment. This applies especially as the analysis in this study has shown that assessment from a pupils' perspective need to be more understood as an interrelated and coalescing mélange of different assessment practices and purposes.

While the conditions for grade relevant assessment are presented later on, this subchapter seeks to provide a short outline regarding the regulative conditions for everyday assessment.

When looking at the documents and guidelines regarding assessment in Sweden, first and foremost the amount of material provided to support and to guide teachers' assessment (kunskapsbedömning) is striking. Diverse publications of the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) addressed to teachers, comprehensively describe in detail how assessment is understood and shall be put into practice (e.g. Skolverket, 2011b, Skolverket, 2012c, Skolverket, 2014).

Overall, the interrelatedness of grading and assessment is particularly highlighted in these documents. Assessment is understood as a continuous process strongly interwoven with everyday teaching and learning. Teaching, learning and assessment are quasi thought to form a unity "and need to be interconnected" (Skolverket, 2014, p. 4). In the comprehensive handout about assessment in school (Skolverket, 2011b), assessment is for example described in the following way:

"All types of information gathering, even those with a summative purpose, can be used in a formative way until they are summarized in a grade [at the end of the term or year, BV.]. Important questions one can ask are: what does the information tell me about pupils' knowledge development? How can teaching be planned and feedback be given so that the pupil can move on in his or her learning process?" (Skolverket, 2011b, pp. 18, Transl. B.V.)

Besides the fact that assessment is seen to provide the necessary information for later grading, everyday assessment has also an explicit relevance for teaching and learning as a whole. The continuous everyday classroom
assessment thereby necessarily permeates the planning of lessons as well as the way in which they are carried out (see the detailed handout of Skolverket (2012c) regarding the planning and conduction of lessons).

The aim is to support pupils’ learning as good as possible before the final grades are assigned (Skolverket, 2012c, p. 25). That implies for example that pupils shall also get frequent feedback about what they are supposed to learn, what they already know, how they can improve, how they can support each other’s learning and how they can assess and steer their own further learning process in relation to the national assessment criteria, called ‘knowledge requirements’ (kunskapskrav) (Skolverket, 2011b, pp. 16–17).

Besides this continuous everyday classroom assessment, pupils and their legal guardians are also provided a developmental dialogue (utvecklingssamtal) each term. Even here, the focus is on the continuous further learning development in relation to the national assessment criteria and to develop pupils’ self-responsibility for their own learning process (Skolverket, 2013, pp. 10–16). The continuous everyday classroom assessment and feedback is seen as the vital basis for a meaningful developmental dialogue, helping the teacher to gather relevant information and to support pupils understanding of the own performance level and possibilities for further development (Skolverket, 2013, p. 13).

In contrast to the Swedish guidelines and handouts, the amount of material provided regarding assessment in Germany is generally quite limited. With regard to everyday classroom assessment, the regulations only provide an orientation in terms of the note that the results of summative assessment practices shall also be used for formative purposes in terms of supporting pupils further learning (SchulG, §48, 1).

Only in the subject and school type specific core curricula (Kernlehrpläne), the above named formative purpose is slightly more concretised. This is exemplified by an excerpt of the core curriculum for the subject German at the Realschule:

“Based on the assessment results, teachers shall evaluate the aims and methods of their teaching and if necessary, to modify those. Regarding pupils, [the assessment results, B.V.] shall be seen as a tool for supporting further learning. Therefore, assessment has to be organised in a way that also allows learners to understand their individual learning development. According to this, shall the

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79 Regarding these key questions it is explicitly referred to Dylan Wiliam’s OECD report “The role of formative assessment in effective learning environments” (see Wiliam, 2010)
Regarding these key questions it is explicitly referred to Dylan Wiliam’s OECD report “The role of assessment thereby necessarily permeates the planning of lessons as well as formative assessment in effective learning environments” (see Wiliam, 2010).

Here, it is highlighted that the results of assessment shall be used for formative purposes with regard to the improvement of teaching as well as a support for pupils’ further learning and their ability to reflect about learning.

Compared to the sparse regulations about everyday assessment in Germany, the comprehensiveness and detailedness of regulations, guidelines and handouts in Sweden are even more obvious. Even if these could not be presented here in their wholeness, the extent, the complexity and the detailed description in the Swedish documents is striking. In comparison to this, the limited and reduced rules and regulations in Germany indicate that the way in which everyday assessment is put into practice, is to a great extent left upon the teaching profession itself.

Another interesting point is the fact that the Swedish guidelines and handouts refer to related research and often also involve researchers in the writing process (see e.g. also Waldow (2011) regarding the relevance of research for regulations of assessment in Sweden). Here, the references point towards the national and international field of research about "assessment for learning" (AFL) (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Lundahl, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). Interestingly it seems that this international field of research does not to have any greater impact on the German discourse regarding "the new forms of assessment" (neue Formen der Leistungsbeurteilung) (see also Maier, 2010). The literature on this issue mainly concentrates on alternative pedagogical instruments and tools, like e.g. peer-assessment, self-assessment, portfolio-work, or certificates with descriptive feedback instead of grades, which is used at the primary school level on an experimental basis (Bohl, 2003; Grunder & Sacher, 2011; Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015; Maier, 2010; Sacher, 2014). Such tools are mainly seen as reform-pedagogical alternatives to traditional forms of assessment, used as an alternative basis for assessment, which individual teachers can chose to use (Maier, 2010).

Even if it would be very interesting to examine the everyday classroom assessment outlined above more closely, nevertheless it becomes obvious that everyday assessment seems to differ in both contexts. This applies for both, the detailedness and the amount of guidelines and handouts which shall inform teachers everyday assessment as well as, what everyday assessment actually means on a regulative level.
After this short excursus regarding everyday assessment, it shall now be taken a closer look on the context-specific conditions of grade allocation.

### 4.2.3 Grade relevant testing

Besides everyday assessment, Jürgens and Lissmann (2015, p. 69) identify grade relevant testing as another component of the assessment process. Grade relevant testing here means the formal and explicit diagnosis of pupils’ performance level, excluding the evaluation of this performance and the assignment of grades, which is presented in the next sub-chapter. In the following, the focus is more on what the grade in the end is based upon and what is included in the grade relevant assessment decisions made in both contexts.

In the Education Act in **Sweden**, it is not specified what grades should be based upon. However, only the curriculum for comprehensive school (**Läroplan för grundskolan**, LGR11) slightly concretise that teachers, when grading, should

> “make use of all available information about the pupil’s knowledge and learning in relation to the national knowledge requirements, and make an all-round assessment of this knowledge.”
> 
> (Skolverket, 2011 rev. 2015, p. 18)

When looking closer at the diverse handouts that **Skolverket** provides regarding assessment and grading, it becomes clear that the “all available information” includes a broad variety of possible components on which the later grade is based upon. In a handout for grading, one can for example read that grade assignment shall be based on the information a teacher gets from

> “[…] oral or written presentations, films, practical work situations, laboratory reports or tests, […] or, B.V.] documentations that summarize the knowledge a pupil has. Teachers can also use memos or use any other relevant information memorized that perhaps was not documented.” (Skolverket, 2016b)

That means that it is regulated that teachers’ assessment shall be based on ”all available information”, which can be understood as an obligatory variety aiming at increasing assessment validity. Against this background, teachers can for example also include the individual information provided by the results of the national tests (**nationella prov**) in their assessment (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 55). However, which concrete forms of testing or proof teachers use
for their formal assessment is left upon teachers’ professional scope of decision.

In contrast to the obligatory variety in Sweden regarding the proofs included in assessment and the relative broad scope of decision left upon teachers, the German regulations are on first sight considerably more directive. The Education Act in NRW (Schulgesetz) for example defines that the grade shall be based on

“all the results that pupils achieved in the assessment area ‘written tests’ and the assessment area ‘other performance during lessons’. Both assessment areas as well as the results of the central tests are taken into account in an appropriate way when grading” (SchulG §48,2, Transl. B.V.)

The education act thereby initially defines that teachers assessment shall be based on the results of the centralised tests (zentrale Lernstandserhebungen) and the assessment in two different areas or categories: “written tests” (Klassenarbeiten) and “other performance during lessons” (Sonstige Leistungen während des Unterrichts).

With regard to the “written tests” (Klassenarbeiten), it is regulated that these have to be written in all school types in lower secondary schooling in the subjects of Mathematics, English and German. In addition, these written tests have also to be done in the foreign languages and the elective subjects in the school types Realschule, Gymnasium and Gesamtschule (APO-SI, 2012).

Furthermore, the amount of “written tests” as well as the amount of time available for the test is also regulated in detail and differs between different school-types. For Gymnasium, for example, this regulation looks like the following:
When the regulative conditions for what grades are based upon are compared across both contexts, some major differences become obvious. While, both contexts, it is explicit what grades shall be based upon and the results of centralised or national tests are explicitly included, the Swedish guidelines highlight that everything that can provide information about pupils’ performance level shall be used for grading. Furthermore, the variety of grade relevant proofs is obligatory in Sweden and concrete choices regarding the ways in which pupils may show their knowledge, are up to the professional teacher to decide. In contrast hereto, are the proofs of how pupils show their knowledge related to two different, pre-defined assessment areas: “written tests” and “other performance during lesson”. While the area of “written tests” is characterised by a high level of regulation, the area of “other performance during lesson” opens up for the inclusion of a wide variety of aspects that are relevant for grading, that also includes for e.g. pupils’ work ethos or orderliness. The German teachers’ scope of decision regarding the choice of how pupils may show their knowledge can therefore be said to be more regulated in detail on the one hand but at the same time also opened up by the area “other performance during lesson” on the other hand.

How the grade-relevant information and proofs finally turn into a grade, is presented in the following.

4.2.4 Evaluation and grade assignment

In this part of the chapter, the context-specific conditions for evaluating the basis of grade relevant assessment and how grades are assigned, shall be examined more closely. This means that the focus is on how the value of the gathered information is determined and how this value is linked to a certain grade (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015, p. 69).

As already highlighted before, teachers in Sweden shall “make use of all available information about the pupil’s knowledge and learning in relation to the national knowledge requirements, and make an all-round assessment of this knowledge.” (Skolverket, 2011, p.18)

The evaluation of pupils’ performance is thereby made in relation to a criterial standard. These criteria are represented by the knowledge requirements (kunskapskrav), which are part of the subject-specific syllabuses. The knowledge requirements formulate in a highly detailed way what pupils need to show in order to receive a certain grade. More concretely, they define the

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Figure 8. Original table regarding the regulations of "written tests".

What “other performance during lesson” means, is clarified in the subject and school type specific curriculum in the chapter on assessment and can differ. In the curriculum for the subject of Mathematics for Realschule, the “other performances during lesson” for example includes

- “Contributions to discussions during lesson […]
- Cooperative performance related to group work (willingness to make an effort, ability to work in team, reliability)
- Proof of performance in lessons, e.g. presented homework or protocols of individual or group-work, adequate handling of the work book or the portfolio
- Short, written tests” (Kernlehrplan, Mathematik für die Realschule, p. 50, Transl. B.V.)

The assessment category ”other performance during lesson” is thereby on the one hand aiming at performance-related written assignments or oral proofs and on the other hand, the area also includes aspects that can be related to pupils’ cooperation ability, their working ethos (like e.g. “willingness to make an effort”) or how far they handle their school material with care.

80Amount (Anzahl) of written tests in each school year (Klasse) that have to be written in the subjects German, first foreign language, second foreign language and Mathematics as well as the amount (Anzahl) of time available expressed in teaching hours (Dauer in Unterrichtsstunden) for Gymnasium. See https://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/Recht/Schulrecht/APOen/HS-RS-GE-GY-SekI/Anzahl-Klassenarbeiten/ [2017-02-27]
When the regulative conditions for what grades are based upon are compared across both contexts, some major differences become obvious. While, both contexts, it is explicit what grades shall be based upon and the results of centralised or national tests are explicitly included, the Swedish guidelines highlight that everything that can provide information about pupils performance level shall be used for grading. Furthermore, the variety of grade relevant proofs is obligatory in Sweden and concrete choices regarding the ways in which pupils may show their knowledge, are up to the professional teacher to decide. In contrast hereto, are the proofs of how pupils show their knowledge related to two different, pre-defined assessment areas: ”written tests” and ”other performance during lesson”. While the area of ”written tests” is characterised by a high level of regulation, the area of ”other performance during lessons” opens up for the inclusion of a wide variety of aspects that are relevant for grading, that also includes for e.g. pupils work ethos or orderliness. The German teachers’ scope of decision regarding the choice of how pupils may show their knowledge can therefore be said to be more regulated in detail on the one hand but at the same time also opened up by the area ”other performance during lesson” on the other hand.

How the grade-relevant information and proofs finally turn into a grade, is presented in the following.

4.2.4 Evaluation and grade assignment

In this part of the chapter, the context-specific conditions for evaluating the basis of grade relevant assessment and how grades are assigned, shall be examined more closely. This means that the focus is on how the value of the gathered information is determined and how this value is linked to a certain grade (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015, p. 69).

As already highlighted before, teachers in Sweden shall

"make use of all available information about the pupil’s knowledge and learning in relation to the national knowledge requirements, and make an all-round assessment of this knowledge.” (Skolverket, 2011, p.18)

The evaluation of pupils’ performance is thereby made in relation to a criterial standard. These criteria are represented by the knowledge requirements (kunskapskrav), which are part of the subject-specific syllabuses. The knowledge requirements formulate in a highly detailed way what pupils need to show in order to receive a certain grade. More concretely, they define the
specific qualities that pupils have to show in order to receive a certain grade. Furthermore, the knowledge requirements are formulated in relation to the specific curricular content (centralt innehåll) for each subject, each grade level and for the end of the years 6 and 9\(^{81}\). Since 2011, the Swedish grading scale consists of six grades, which is A-F and where A is the highest and E the lowest passing grade. F stands for "not passed" (SFS 2010:800, 10, § 17). The qualitative progression of the assessed knowledge and abilities are expressed by so-called “value words” (värdeord), which can be seen as quality indicators.

This shall be exemplified through a short excerpt from the syllabus in the subject of Swedish for year 9 (Skolverket, 2011, rev. 2015):

For the grade E:
“Pupils can write different kinds of texts with some variation in language, simple text linking and also basically functional adaptation to type of text, language norms and structures”

For the grade D:
“Grade D means that the knowledge requirements for grade E and most of C are satisfied”

For the grade C:
“Pupils can write different kinds of texts with relatively good variation in language, developed text linking and also relatively well functioning adaptation to text type, language norms and structures”

For the grade B:
“Grade B means that the knowledge requirements for grade C and most of A are satisfied.”

For the grade A:
“Pupils can write different kinds of texts with good variation in language, well developed text linking and also well-functioning adaption to type of text, language norms and structures.” (p. 231-233; underlined emphasis B.V.)

What becomes visible here is that the content is the same for all grading levels. The way in which the grading levels differ in their description is by the underlined value words. The achieved grade level is thereby defined by the

\(^{81}\) For year 3, knowledge requirements are also formulated but as minimal standards without levels of grading.
quality level of pupils shown performance. Consequently, the value words signalise the progression on the grading scale. These grade levels are formulated for all the diverse curricular content and the grades allocated require that all the knowledge requirements of the related grading level are achieved. In case pupils do not meet all requirements for a grade, the lower grade is allocated.

The other fact that becomes obvious here is that there are no specific knowledge requirements formulated for the intermediate grading levels B and D. Instead, the grades B and D shall be allocated if pupils achieved all requirements for the lower grade and if the requirements for the next higher grade are achieved to the most extent. What “most extent” means is described in detail in another handout (Skolverket, 2016b).

In addition to these regulations regarding classroom assessment, the national tests (nationella prov) are also of relevance for grade allocation and shall help teachers to grade in an equivalent way:

“The purpose with the national tests is on the one hand to support an equivalent and fair assessment and grading, and on the other hand to provide a basis for the analysis how far the knowledge requirements are met on a school level, a level of the official body and on a national level” (Skolverket, 2016f, Transl.B.V.)

Even if the socio-historical development, present meaning, purposes and organisation of the national tests cannot be covered in detailed here and read elsewhere (e.g. Lundahl, 2009; Korp, 2006), nevertheless it shall be highlighted here that the results of the national tests are public and since the 1990s and particularly since the 2000s, they have also been increasingly used for quality control and for monitoring of teachers assessment. Excessive discrepancy between the results in the national tests and the grades allocated are seen as a possible indicator for inequivalent grading and a reason for the schools in question “to look over their work with regard to grading” (Skolverket, 2016f, p. 3). That means that even if the national tests are not central for grade allocation per se, they are, however, relevant for teachers’ assessment.

As already highlighted before, since 1964, German pupils across all federal states are graded according to a six-level grading scale (KMK, Hamburger Abkommen, 1964). To each grade level, a grade descriptor is assigned, which describes the quality of pupils’ performance: sehr gut (very good); gut (good); befriedigend (satisfactory), ausreichend (sufficient), mangelhaft (insufficient) and ungenügend (unsatisfactory). Usually, these descriptors are also related to different numbers, reaching from 1 for ‘very good’ until 6 for ‘unsatisfactory’.
These grade descriptors apply for all school-types, primary and lower secondary level and for all subjects (KMK, 1964). As a result of the international large-scale studies in the beginning of the 2000s and the therefrom resulting so-called “PISA shock” in Germany, the KMK has since 2003 successively (until now in three cycles: 2003, 2004 and 2012) decided upon the implementation of national educational standards (Bildungsstandards) for a few subjects and in relation to different school-leaving certificates (KMK, 2005). These standards are norm-reference standards (Regelstandards) and describe what the average pupil is expected to know in relation to certain points of time. However, these standards are not linked to grading levels, like it is the case with the Swedish knowledge requirements.

More details regarding assessment are not formulated on a national level in Germany but are to some extent concretised on federal state level in school laws, regulations and guidelines due to the strong federalisation of education.

In the Education Act of the federal state of NRW (SchulG, 2015), there is some concretisation and a short description of the diverging grade descriptors:

“The assessment of performance is based on following grade-levels:

Very good (1). The grade “very good” shall be given, if the performance particularly meets the requirements.

Good (2). The grade “good” shall be given, if the performance fully meets the requirements.

Satisfactory (3). The grade “Satisfactory” shall be given, if the performance in general meets the requirements.

Sufficient (4). The grade “Sufficient” shall be given, if the performance, although showing deficiencies, altogether meets the requirements.

Insufficient (5). The grade “Insufficient” shall be given, if the performance does not meet the requirements, though indicating that there is necessary basic knowledge and that the deficiencies can be corrected in a foreseeable period.

82 At upper secondary level, the grading scale 1-6 is replaced by a grading scale consisting of grading points from 1-15 (Leistungspunkte).
Unsatisfactory (6). The grade “Unsatisfactory” shall be given, if the performance does not meet the requirements and if the basic knowledge is fragmented in such a way that the deficiencies cannot be corrected within a foreseeable period“ (SchulG, 2015, Transl.B.V.)

These grade levels are not related to the federal curricula. The subject and school type specific core curricula (Kernlehrpläne) formulate competence-based curricular content and norm standards (Regelstandards) that the average pupil is assumed to reach at the end of Year 6, 8 and 10. Pupils’ achievement progression is thereby described as a progression of the average pupil who attends a certain school-year in a certain school-type. The progression of the individual pupil is not related to certain grade levels but to average norm standards (Regelstandards).

For the subject German at Realschule, an excerpt of the average ‘competence expectations’ (Kompetenzerwartungen) for example looks like the following:

Table 8. Competence expectations (Kompetenzerwartungen), core curriculum for Realschule, subject German, p. 3483

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key task</th>
<th>Year 5/6</th>
<th>Year 7/8</th>
<th>Year 9/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handling of literary texts</td>
<td>They [the pupils, B.V.] differentiate between simple literary forms, understand their content and effects while considering linguistic and structural characteristics.</td>
<td>They [the pupils, B.V.] differentiate between specific characteristics of epical, lyrical and dramatical texts; they have basic knowledge of their effects and consider historical relations if necessary. They [the pupils] can use basic linguistic terms.</td>
<td>They [the pupils, B.V.] know and understand epical, lyrical and dramatical texts that are appropriate to their [the pupils’, B.V.] age and evaluate their effects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When allocating grades, teachers shall relate the general grading descriptors as formulated in the Education Act to the norm standards as formulated in the core curricula. Hence, the identification of quality indicators and their

83 Transl. B.V., additional exemplary clarifications are not translated.
`valuation` in relation to a certain grade level is left upon teachers’ professional decision.

Overall, when it is compared how pupils’ performance is evaluated and how grades are assigned in the **Swedish** and the **German** contexts, the comparison first and foremost reveals that the level of detailedness and the amount of what is regulated differs considerably. While in Sweden since 2011, the criteria for assessment explicitly describe in a highly detailed manner the quality indicators for each grade level; Germany is since 1964, assessment is characterised by a relatively wide scope for decision-making and professional interpretation. Norm standards implemented in the 2000s and competence expectations formulated for particular years and stages have not changed this at large (Waldow, 2011). It is still up to the professional teacher to decide, what the quality indicators are and what they mean for grade allocation.

Finally, if the different components of assessment and grade allocation (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015) presented in this chapter are compared, it can be noted that there are highly regulated components as well as components with lower level of regulation in both contexts.

In Sweden, everyday assessment, that focuses on supporting pupils learning and teachers teaching and the evaluation of pupils’ performance and grade assignment is comparatively highly regulated and described in detail. That means that the process that foregoes testing and grade allocation, as well as the process of allocating grades, is clearly defined. The scope of decision to individualise and to adjust the assessment process to situational and individual conditions is mainly related to the component of how relevant information about pupils performance is gathered, that is how pupils may show their knowledge.

The component that is characterised by a wide scope of decision in Sweden is in certain ways highly regulated in Germany. While it is regulated in detail that pupils have to show their performance in "written tests", as well as the amount of written tests and length of time for test taking, the assessment category "other performance during lesson" provides a wider scope for what teachers additionally can include in their assessment. Since everyday assessment, evaluation and grade assignment are also characterised by a comparably low regulation, it can be said that in Germany, assessment and grade allocation is mostly based on teachers’ professional decisions.
V. INTRODUCTION TO PUPILS’ JUSTICE CONCEPTIONS AS ‘META-ASSESSMENT’

The following chapters represent the quintessence of the context-sensitive and constant comparative research process. The categories are on different levels of theorisation and abstraction and therefore, they represent the research process in a reversed way – while the levels of categories as presented here descend in theoretical abstraction, the process of categories’ development was characterised by a successive increase of the same. Each analytical category here, subsumes underlying categories and includes the empirical patterns of data. Hence, these categories can be seen as analytically derived and empirically grounded tertia comparationis of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, which are functionally equivalent (Schriewer, 2006). In addition, they also include the context-sensitive comparisons of pupils’ conceptions, both, in and across the socio-educational contexts.

One can see the three main categories as the analytical cornerstones of the theoretical conceptualisation of pupils’ justice conceptions. These suggests to understand the pupils’ conceptions regarding assessment as ‘meta-assessment’, which means that pupils assess the experienced assessment in terms of justice. The primary analytical and empirically grounded cornerstones, which frame ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ are

- ”Believing in meritocracy”
- ”Being responsible for the grade”
- ”Understanding as imperative”
These three main categories suggest, to understand pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment as including normative parts, as well as parts that are related to pupils’ situationally and contextually bound experiences. It becomes also visible, that the borders between the institutionalised assessment and pupils' socio-educational context become blurred to some extent. This means that pupils’ justice conceptions need to be understood in the light of their broader embedment in a socio-educational context. In a simplified way, it could also be said that pupils’ making of sense and meaning regarding what just assessment means to them, does not automatically stop by the walls of the classroom, but can also go beyond it. Thus, assessment from a pupils’ perspective, and in particular assessment with regard to justice, is a kind of sense-making mosaic, whose parts and whose relations between these parts were systematically reconstructed and compared in this study.

These parts of the mosaic are presented in the following, including the above named main categories as well as their related sub-categories. These include the context-sensitive comparisons and excerpts from the original interview transcripts exemplifying and illustrating the typical empirical patterns for the category, as well as references to relevant research literature. First, each chapter will start with a general introduction to the category. Second, it is presented how the empirical patterns from both contexts relate to the category. Finally, each chapter concludes with a comparison as well as with a theoretical integration. In addition, interim résumés are provided.
VI. BELIEVING IN MERITOCRACY

The data analysis revealed a major pattern regarding pupils’ justice conceptions about assessment, which can be said to be about the more general normative aspects of grade allocation. These normative aspects imply that pupils in both socio-educational contexts conceptualise a just grade allocation in certain ways as related to meritocratic principles. This becomes obvious with regard to two analytical dimensions:

- On the one hand, the societal allocation and selection on the basis of grades is the only conceivable possibility to avoid other selection criteria that would be based on ascriptive criteria. However, the internalisation of this normative idea is not an uncritical one.

- On the other hand, the overlying normative principle for a just and an unjust grade is its deservedness. The basic principle of a grade’s deservedness and in addition hereto, the deservedness of chances and limitations that result as a consequence from a grade, have to do with the general belief that rewards and burdens should be allocated justly in life.

In the following, both of these components of pupils’ conceptions regarding the meritocratic principle are presented more in detail as well as how these aspects are conceptualised by pupils in the Swedish and in the German interviews. The chapter concludes with an interim résumé.
6.1. Accepting the allocation and selection on the basis of grades

This chapter presents pattern that emerged in the data, which generally could be said to be about pupils’ conceptions regarding grades as a basis for selection and allocation. Pupils in both contexts perceive that grades’ major purpose is their role in allocating further educational chances by selecting the most suitable person. This implies that grades are seen as especially relevant at certain transition points within the educational pathway, depending on the structure of differentiation in the educational systems. As such, one can say that the meritocratic principle is a part of pupils’ normative orientation. However, this normative orientation is by no means an uncritical one; but instead, it needs to be understood more as an acceptance due to the lack of feasible alternatives that could help to avoid social inequalities in a better way.

Though the conceptualisations that are mentioned above are important patterns in both datasets, there are also some differences in how Swedish and German pupils perceive and experience this issue. In the following, it is presented how pupils’ conceptions in both contexts relate to this shared analytical category.

For the pupils in the Swedish84 interviews, the main purpose of grades is the school-system’s internal selection, which matters on different levels for transition. For the interviewed pupils, the transition they themselves stand in front of is the transition to the upper secondary school (gymnasieskola), where grades are seen to impact on their chances to attend a certain track:

Louise: Uhu, and it feels/. Oh well. And I know that the (.) grade that I get on this test, I will be //we’ll have to apply// with it.

Josefin: //apply with it// //.

Louise: Uhu, we’ll apply with this grade for upper secondary school. So this test is REALLY, REALLY important. Ehmm and it feels. Well, like you get REALLY stressed by it. Really. (SWE05)85

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84 In the following, the sections concentrating on the Swedish and the German context respectively, are written in bold due to reasons of clarity and overview.

85 Original sequence:
Louise: Ah, och det känns/. Aja. Och jag vet ju att det här (.) betyget som jag får i det här provet, det kommer ju bli //vi kommer ju söka// in med det här. #00:23:50-7#
Josefin: //söka in med// //. #00:23:50-5#
Louise: Ah, vi kommer ju söka in med det här betyget in till gymnasiet. Så det här provet är ju JÄTTE, JÄTTE viktigt. Eh och det känns. Ja, alltså man blir ju JÄTTE stressat av det här. Verkligen. #00:24:03-3# (SWE05)
This sequence shows how the relevance of grades for single tasks, like e.g. written tests, is conceptualised with regard to the imminent transition. Each grade is perceived to be “REALLY, REALLY important” since it matters for the transition to “upper secondary school”\(^86\). While this sequence focuses on grades’ relevancy for transition on a concrete everyday level, the Swedish pupils also discuss this issue on a more general level. The following quote is a typical example for this:

_\textit{Amanda: Uhm. I mean. Grades and reports, I’d say, they don’t matter that much because they’re basically the same. But in the report they don’t say like: you’ve got like a C or an A. Then it’s more of a written text. And then in some way it’s better, because that shows what I’ve got. But anyway, the grades are, it’s quite important. Because if you’re going to get a job, or to the university or get into upper secondary school, then... (...) uhm, then (...) it’s quite good if they, who decide who gets in, can see that: “She’s like, really clever. And she puts a lot in to it. Whereas she’s not (...) doing anything and doesn’t give a damn”. But if there weren’t any grades, then she, who don’t give a damn, she’d get in. And then not make the most of (...) the opportunity. While someone who really wants to, doesn’t get in, because there’s no grade. (SWE01)}\(^87\)

Through this quote it can be shown that all sorts of summative evaluations, unconsidered if expressed in grades or in more detailed reports, “are quite important” and seen as being high-stakes in character with regards to the transition within the educational system. This applies for the transition within the school-system, from \textit{grundskola} to \textit{gymnasieskola} as well as it applies from \textit{gymnasieskola} to working life or to the tertiary sector\(^88\). The purpose of

\(^{86}\) Swedish pupils’ grades matter for the transition to \textit{gymnasieskola} in three aspects: for the first, there are qualification requirements (behörighetskra) based on grades, which need to be fulfilled in order to get access to the national programs of \textit{gymnasieskola}. Second, these qualification requirements imply that pupils need the minimum grade E for a certain amount of subjects, depending on if they want to attend a theoretical (studieförberedande) or a practical (yrkesförberedande) program. Third, grades are transformed into a merit value (meritvärde), based on which the applying pupils are ranked for selection (see e.g. also ch. 4.1.3).

\(^{87}\) Original quote:


\(^{88}\) University places in Sweden are basically allocated in three different ways: one third by grades received during upper secondary education, one third by the national university aptitude test
these grades and why they are “quite important”, is selection - so that “those, who decide […], can see that: “She’s like really clever […] [and] she puts a lot in to it” in comparison to another individual who “doesn’t give a damn”. This conceptualisation of gatekeeping and the related selective function of grades is one of the most prominent patterns in the Swedish interviews when it comes to grades’ purposes. That means on the one hand, that the selection purpose of grades is clearly emphasised. On the other hand, it also means that this societal purpose is perceived as a selection, since grades are seen to be a self-evident basis for the gatekeepers’ selection of exactly those individuals that are seen to be most appropriate for certain educational pathways or jobs. The legitimacy of grades as basis for selection is derived from the belief that grades provide selection-relevant information about individuals’ merit – in terms of capability as well as in terms of a strong working ethos and willingness to put “a lot in to it”89. This selection of individuals is then perceived to result in an allocation of educational “opportunities”, which are seen in turn as a scarce good that the individual, if once allocated, needs to take90.

However, besides pupils’ conceptions of grades as a basis for the selection of individuals and the allocation of chances, this principle is seen as the only possible one in order to avoid a selection and an allocation that otherwise would be based on ascriptive criteria. The following sequence exemplarily represents this conception:

*Emelia: [...] There are schools abroad. For example in New York, there’s one called Columbia. And there you need really high grades to get in. But it helps if you’re really well-off too. So that (.) WITHOUT grades it would’ve just been (..)/

*Carolin: About money.

*Emelia: Money, uhu. And even if you come from a poor family for example, you’ve got to have a chance to work your way up and to get a good job and to be able to have a good life later. Because if*

(högskoleprovet), and one third decided by the universities themselves through e.g. interviews. Besides these general entry requirements for first level studies, there are also specific entry requirements depending on the chosen program such as specific courses passed on upper secondary level in advanced mathematics (Universitets- och Högskolerådet, https://www.uhr.se/studier-och-antagning/tilltrade-till-hogskolan/).

89 Based on Michael Young’s (1958) dystopia, merit is originally defined as basically consisting of talent (intelligence or ability) and effort (see also Waldow, 2016; Allen, 2011; Mijs, 2016; Goldthorpe, 1996.

90 Forsberg for example describes the selective purpose of grades as relevant for “selection processes as well as for pupils own choices” (Forsberg, 2014, pp. 59, Transl. B.V.), which also points towards the selective character of pupils own choices regarding e.g. which national program they choose to attend.
it’s/, if it was/ if it’s not going to be about the grades then you know
it’s going to be about something else to get the best education. And
then it’ll be money. So even if you’d have/, I checked their website,
so even if you’d have REALLY good grades, you need fifty thousand
to be there like (.) for two weeks.

I: Oh wow.

Emelia: Uhum. So then I guess that without grades, I don’t know
how you’d be able to (…)/.

Carolin: Nah, but and upper secondary schools and so on, like
harder and easier programmes, need to have something to go on.

Finja: Uhu, it would’ve been rather ni/ a freedom to become what I
want to. But it, no this. What if it/, if someone who would’ve been
really bad at math would become a doctor. That wouldn’t have been
that great perhaps?

Emelia: Nah, it [laughs].

Carolin: Nah that would’ve been REALLY difficult.

Finja: Uhu, so it/. Perhaps one could figure out another solution?

Emelie: Uh, I don’t know. (SWE04)\(^91\)

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\(^91\) Original sequence:


Carolin: Pengar som gäller. #00:45:57-8#

Emelia: Pengar, ah. Och även om man kommer till exempel från en fattig familj, då måste man ju kunna ha chansen att jobba sig upp och få ett bra jobb och kunna ha ett bra liv sen. För om det/, om det var/ om det inte kommer hänga på betygen då förstår man ju att det kommer hänga på något annat för att få den bästa undervisningen. Och då blir det ju pengar. Så även om man hade haft/, jag kollade på deras hemsida, så även om man hade haft VÄLDIGT bra betyg, då krävs det femtio tusen för att vara där typ (.) två veckor. #00:46:30-6#

I: Oh wow. #00:46:29-4#

Emelia: Mhm. Så där antar jag utan betyg då vet jag inte hur man skulle kunna (…)/. #00:46:37-7#

Carolin: Nå men och gymnasieskolor och så så svårare och lättsare linjer måste ju ha någonting att gå efter. #00:46:44-2#

Finja: Ah det hade ju varit ganska sk/ frihet att kunna bli det jag ville. Men det, nej det. Tänk om det/, om någon som skulle vara jätte dåligt i matte skulle bli läkare. Det hade ju inte blivit så där jätte bra kanske? #00:46:53-8#

Emelia: Nå, det [skrattar]. #00:46:53-8#

Carolin: Nå, det hade ju varit JÄTTE svårt. #00:46:54-9#
Likewise the examples before, this sequence also highlights grades relevancy for a legitimate selection procedure within the educational system. Furthermore, it also points out that the selection procedure that is based on grades is intertwined with the allocation of “a chance to work your way up and to get a good job and to be able to have a good life later”\textsuperscript{92}. Pupils perceive that the selection and allocation procedure on the basis of grades prevents them from an allocation that would otherwise solely be based on “money”, since “if it’s not going to be about the grades then you know it’s going to be about something else to get the best education. And then it’ll be money”. From a pupils’ perspective thus, grades as selection criteria can be understood as a safeguard\textsuperscript{93} against as illegitimate perceived ascriptive criteria like for instance, financial wealth and the opportunities and chances that are related with it.

Overall, it gets obvious that Swedish pupils perceive the selection of individuals and the allocation of educational chances on the basis of grades as the only imaginable and legitimate normative principle of how scarce educational chances and societal positions in working life could be allocated. However, this meritocratic principle is merely accepted in order to avoid social benefits that otherwise would be determined by wealth or societal influence, which is seen as the most obvious example for social injustice. Hence, in the absence of a better theoretical concept for societal allocation, pupils prefer the meritocratic one.

Similar to the pupils in the Swedish interviews, also the pupils in the German interviews have internalised the legitimacy of grades as a criterion for allocation and selection in the absence of a better theoretical concept:

\begin{center}
\textit{I1: I have one more question. Could you imagine what a world would look like completely without grades?}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textit{Ronny: Nope.}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{92}Regarding the chances to “work your way up”, Husén (1974) for example notes in his book “Talent, Equality and Meritocracy” the following: “According to the classical liberal conception […] there should be no artificial barriers in the institutional system of education to bar him from taking advantage of the opportunities his abilities entitle him to. Equal opportunity in a formal sense should be given to everybody by removing economic, social and geographic barriers which prevent the able from climbing the educational ladder (“Freie Bahn den Tüchtigen”). A key idea in this philosophy is that talent is mainly inborn, something that squares with the view of divine destiny. The active participation of the individual in molding his own fate squares with the Protestant work ethic. Those who succeed and those who fail get the praise and the blame for effort or lack of effort respectively” (p.125).

\textsuperscript{93}See e.g. Leventhal (1980) according to which safeguards are one criterion characterising a just procedure.
Leventhal (1980) according to which safeguards are one criterion characterising a just procedure. Likewise the examples before, this sequence also highlights grades relevancy and allocation and selection in the absence of a better theoretical concept: 

This sequence exemplarily shows that pupils a feasible alternative to grades is hardly imaginable for pupils, when it comes to selection and allocation, since nothing else would “work in reality”. The conclusion is that “grades are simply needed” in order to “compare students” and on the basis of this, selecting individuals and allocating opportunities. In addition, grades are also perceived as important for transition – they are seen as necessary door openers and admission tickets throughout the educational pathway, which are in diverse ways of particular relevance in the differentiated school system in Germany. In the following quote, the pupil Konrad summarises and illustrates this view as follows:

Konrad: Basically, it’s actually like this: well, you actually just need at Grundschule [primary school, year 1-4, B.V.]. Well, if you want to study at the university later on. So, in Grundschule, year four. Three years you don’t work anything. Fourth year you just write Twos. Admitted to Gymnasium. [...] year five, six you just work a little bit. And then, continuously, you practically have to/ until the EF [orientation year at Gymnasium before Oberstufe level starts, B.V.] and in the Q1, Q2 [two qualification years before Abitur examination, B.V.]. You can have done continuously poor before. If you in Q1, Q2, don’t know, have an average of uhm (...) One point three and you’re allowed to go ahead. (GER05, Gymnasium) 

94 Original sequence:
I 1: Ich hab’ nochmal ‘ne Frage. Könntet ihr euch denn vorstellen, ganz ohne Noten? #01:00:12-2#
Ronny: Nö. #01:00:13-4#
Laurenz: Nö. Das ist ja dann wieder Kommunismus. Das hört sich dann erst mal wieder toll an, funktioniert aber in der Realität nicht. #01:00:20-8#
I 1 lacht. #01:00:20-8#
Ronny: Man braucht einfach die Noten. Entweder um die Schüler vergleichen zu können, oder um sich selbst so ein=’ein Feedback zu haben. [...] #01:00:28-8# (GER05, Gymnasium)

95 Original quote:
Konrad: Im Prinzip ist es ja eigentlich so: Also, man muss ja eigentlich nur in der Grundschule/. Also, wenn man dann später studieren möchte. So, in der Grundschule, vierte Klasse/. Drei Schuljahre lang
Based on Konrad's quote it becomes clear that it is especially the points of transition which determine the importance of the grades allocated, pointing out the high-stakes character of grades. In order to emphasise this, he illustrates this issue on the basis of a thought experiment, according to which it theoretically would be possible to selectively invest work and effort at especially important points of time and at certain educational stages. The aim would be to receive grades that are high enough to successfully pass through the whole educational pathway from the first day at Grundschule until the enrolment at the university. What becomes particularly obvious in this quote is the perception that performance and effort over time do not seem to be of certain relevance for transition: “continuously, the years before, almost haven’t worked at all” – as long as the performance and the invested effort is on a sufficiently high level at certain temporal key moments, which matter for the final grades that are used as selection criteria. However, this quote represents the conception that grades are seen as a sort of meritocratic admission ticket throughout the educational pathway.

Besides the educational pathway at Gymnasium leading to higher education studies, this principle is also applied in relation to vocational education and working life. The quote below, taken from an interview at a Realschule, picks up this analytical pattern as an example and, in addition, it shows the double dimension of grades that are used for selection purposes:

Simon: Well, the question is: how this would continue without grades. Well, if you then start your professional career. Well the, the companies want to see grades, don’t they? If you apply somewhere for a job or for a secondary school, they want to see grades as well.

macht du nichts. Vierte Klasse schreibst du so irgendwie nur Zweien. Kommst auf’s Gymnasium. #00:55:19-4# […] Fünfte, Sechste, machste dann erst mal wieder nur so ein bisschen. Und dann musst du praktisch so durchgehend bis zur EF und in der Q1, Q2/. Du kannst vorher so durchgehend total schlecht gewesen sein. Wenn du in der Q1, Q2, was weiss ich, so einen Schnitt von äh (...) einskommdrei hast, hast du am Ende, im Endeffekt, quasi durch die (.) durchgehend vorher quasi die Jahre fast nichts gemacht. Und dann hast du auf einmal einsdreii und dann kommst du weiter. #00:55:53-5# (GER05, Gymnasium)

98 The relevance of grades for transition within the differentiated school system is widely discussed (e.g. Schauenberg & Ditton, 2006; Stojanov, 2011, Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, and Baumert, 2006). Furthermore, this relevance also plays a role in the way that pupils in German schools are promoted to next school-year based on the achieved grades. Due to this fact, the grades pupils get on their yearly certificates mean that there are more transition points imprinted in the German system than e.g. in the Swedish one in addition, thereby they are also more often high-stakes in character (see also ch.4.1.2). Maaz et al. (2006) for example describe these transition points as „the joints of educational trajectories” (p. 300, Transl. B.V.), having wide-reaching implications for individuals’ further educational possibilities.

Deutsch (1979) uses for example also the analogy of grades as the ”basic currency of our educational system” (p.391).
Hendrik: //Grades are an evaluati[the pupil emphasises “value”, B.V.].//

Frederike: Then you need other criteria. For example, then it also could be like this that people, coming from poorer backgrounds, don’t stand a chance at all. To prove themselves in some way. Because, because of the grades, when they work really hard in each way, they have a good chance to earn more money later on of course. And ehm, if there are no grades, they couldn’t work their way up.

[...]

Manuel: Yes. They can continue working there and later on get fully employed and like. But otherwise. Well. That’s such a blessing and such a curse. Because you need the grades. (GER03, Realschule)

The sequence shows that grades per se are not seen as a necessary feature of education itself but that they derive their necessity from future decisions that will be based on grades, since “the question is: how this would continue without grades”. What the pupil Manuel then summarises as “blessing” and “curse” is the double dimensionality of grades used as criteria for selection and allocation: that they, on the one hand, mean that “people, coming from poorer backgrounds” are given the “chance” to “work their way up” but that this, on the other hand, also means that “you need the grades” since “companies want to see grades”. Hence, the allocation based on grades can mean both to pupils, an enabling chance as well as an obligatory necessity.

However, besides pupils’ general view regarding grades’ relevance for selection and allocation, grades’ selective and allocative purpose is also

98 Original sequence:
Simon: Die Frage ist ja: Wie würde das dann weitergehen, ohne Noten. Also wenn man jetzt in den Beruf geht dann. Also die, die Firmen die wollen ja Noten sehen, oder nicht? Wenn man sich jetzt irgendwo bewirbt oder halt an einer weiterführenden Schule, die wollen ja auch Noten sehen. //01:05:03-6#
Hendrik: //Noten sind ja ‘ne BewERTUNG//. #01:05:05-7#
Frederike: Dann braucht man ja andere Kriterien. Und zum Beispiel, dann kann es ja auch so sein, dass jetzt die Leute, die aus ärmeren Verhältnissen kommen, gar keine Chance mehr haben. Sich irgendwie zu beweisen. Weil jetzt halt durch die Noten, wenn die jetzt überall richtig Gas geben, haben die natürlich auch ‘ne gute Chance mehr Geld später halt zu verdienen. Und ähm, dadurch dass es dann halt keine Noten mehr gibt, könnten die sich halt auch nicht mehr höher hoch arbeiten. #01:05:29-2#
[...]
assumed to be a matter of socio-educational stabilisation. A typical conception of pupils in the German interviews is for example that not everyone can receive good grades since the system is basically dependent on stable differences. Additionally, this also applies to the different levels of certificates that pupils can take according to the different educational tracks they attend to. This seems especially to apply to pupils, who attend school types that lead to the *Abitur*, which is the certificate that qualifies for higher education studies:

Raphael: Yes well, actually, that’s how it is, uhm. So for example, here you need, well like/. It also depends on grades, uhm (.) which certificate you get. Or if you can attend the Oberstufe [Upper secondary stage leading to Abitur, B.V.]. And then everyone (.) in some way, who/ (..) uhm (..) doesn’t matter how well or bad you do. You can attend the Oberstufe. If there aren’t any grades. And if this isn’t specified. And then some day, I’d say for example (.) has (..)/ someday has the/. Well, the Abitur has no longer a certain value, if there aren’t any grades. And simply (.) traditionally. Well, I believe, during the last years this has declined a bit, a bit, the value of the Abitur. Since SO many got it.

II: Oh, it’s like this?

Martin: Yes. Many take the Abitur. Actually.

Raphael: Yes. GREAT, GREAT many.

Martin: And mostly not even with a good average. Well, some take their certificate with a Three point five average //and so//.

Raphael: //Most important to have the Abi// then.

Martin: Yes. Somehow. And then that’s the result.

II: And you don’t think that’s good?

Martin: Yes, it is good.

Raphael: Well, let me put it like this: well, otherwise everyone who would have taken a Hauptschule certification, by which you still can attend a vocational training, which isn’t bad either, uhm (..)/ the result would just be, that suddenly everyone would want to take the Abitur. Everyone would want to study at the university. Just because
there are no grades and yes. Well, I believe, this would not work out
(,) well. (GER10, Gesamtschule)\textsuperscript{99}

First, this sequence shows again grades’ relevance for transition and in this
case regarding the access to “the Oberstufe”, which is the last two years of
upper secondary schooling and which leads to the Abitur, the certificate that
allows for higher education studies. Second, grades’ selective and allocative
purposes need here to be understood in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The
exclusion is necessary in order to guarantee the stability of the “certain
value”\textsuperscript{100} that is inherent to the Abitur. That means that the chances that are
linked to the Abitur are just chances if they also are exclusive\textsuperscript{101} to some

\textsuperscript{99} Original sequence:
Raphael: Ja also, das ist ja eigentlich schon so, ähm. So zum Beispiel muss man hier jetzt ja so/. Das
hängt ja auch von den Noten ab, ehm (,.) welche oder welchen Abschluss man macht. Oder ob man in
die Oberstufe gehen kann. Und dann ist ja jeder (,.) irgendwie, der (,.) ehm (,.) egal, wie gut oder
schlecht der ist. Der kann dann in die Oberstufe. Wenn’s keine Noten gibt. Und wenn das nicht
festgelegt ist. Und dann irgendwann würde ich zum Beispiel sagen (,.) hat (,.) / irgendwann hat das/.
Also hat das Abitur dann zum Beispiel auch keinen Wert mehr, wenn das keine Noten gibt. Und halt (,)
traditionell so. Also, ich glaube, das ist ja schon in den letzten Jahren so ein bisschen, so ein bisschen,
so der Wert des Abiturs ein bisschen zurückgegangen. Dadurch, dass das SO viele haben. #00:40:07-0#
I1: Ach ja, ist das so? #00:40:07-9#
Martin: Ja. Viele machen Abitur. Auf jeden Fall. #00:40:09-4#
Raphael: Ja. SEHR, SEHR viele. #00:40:10-3#
Martin: Und jetzt auch meistens nicht wirklich mit ‘nem guten Schnitt so. Also manche machen Abi
mit ‘nem Drei-Fünfer-Schnitt //und so/. #00:40:16-1#
Raphael: //Hauptsache Abi// dann, ne? #00:40:16-1#
Martin: Ja. Irgendwie. Und dann kommt sowas bei raus. #00:40:19-9#
I1: Ja und das findet ihr dann nicht gut? #00:40:29-7#
Martin: Ja. gut schon. #00:40:29-7#
Raphael: Aber ich sag jetzt mal so, also ansonsten könnte ja jeder, der jetzt ansonsten so
Hauptschulabschluss hätte, wo man ja auch mit ‘ne Ausbildung machen kann, was ja auch nicht
schlecht ist, äh (,.) dann würde es halt eben darauf hinauslaufen, dass dann plötzlich jeder Abi machen
will. Jeder studieren will. Einfach weil’s keine Noten gibt und ja. Also ich glaube, das würde nicht gut
(,) gehen. #00:40:50-9# (GER10, Gesamtschule)

\textsuperscript{100} This issue is also mirrored in the broader public discussions, mostly in terms of concerns about the
value of the Abitur as well as the therewith assumed decrease of Bildungsquality. For example
headlined the conservative-liberal oriented Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) in the feuilleton in
2013: “The state of Gymnasium. The German Gymnasium degenerates more and more to a
comprehensive school for the upper half of the population. The result is the ‘Realschul-ification’ of
Gymnasium.” (http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/forschung-und-lehre/lage-des-gymnasiums-erst-
Furthermore the increasing Abitur-grades are interpreted as grade inflation at the same time as well as a
proof for the decrease of quality. The liberal national newspaper “Die ZEIT” published in 2016 an
article with the headline “One point Nothing. The number of pupils taking the Abitur increases. Are
pupils getting smarter or examinations getting easier?”. An interviewed University’s Chancellor, gets
cited in the following way: “the grades of the Abitur barely correlate with the competences we
assessed”, which also is seen as an indicator for the decreasing educational quality at Gymnasium
(http://www.zeit.de/2016/19/abitur-bestnoten-pruefungen-schnitt-leistung, 2016-08-23, emphasis
B.V.).

\textsuperscript{101} The same principle applies also for holding good grades scarce: “In order to be usable for selection
extent. Hence, this implies the selective inclusion of certain individuals as well; while excluding others. This exclusion is then justified with the notion that attending “a vocational training, […] isn’t bad either”\textsuperscript{102}. In this regard, the selection and allocation on the basis of grades and certificates, can be understood as a conception of a ‘sustainability of exclusive chances’, which is legitimised and justified with system stability and a particular (re-) interpretation of the exclusion\textsuperscript{103}.

On the contrary, the as necessary interpreted sustainability of exclusive chances is perceived in a different way by those, who are excluded from these chances. This becomes obvious in the following excerpt from an interview with pupils attending \textit{Hauptschule}:

\begin{quote}
Tobias: Because usually, I always find it unfair that people absolutely need an Abitur or a Realsch/ or Fachabitur {\textit{all of those certificates named are the ones allocated at higher school types than Hauptschule, B.V.]} and it’s not only about grades, but also about the people themselves.

\textbf{I1: How do you mean?}

Tobias: Yes, I find that this is weird. Because, let’s say, okay, it’s clear, that is/ you need to be well educated.

\textbf{Sergej: But not for everything.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{102} The conception that a vocational training “isn’t bad either” can be seen to refer to a societal process that is called the “cooling out” process. In short, it means that meritocratic societies initially need to motivate all pupils in order to generate the best basis for selection. After the basic selection, which in the German case is the tracking of pupils on lower secondary level, individuals’ aspirations regarding future life chances need to be adjusted again in relation to the scarcity of factual opportunities. That implies that the individuals’ initially established motivation needs to be ‘cooled out’. According to Sacher (2014, pp.24-27), there are different societal strategies for ‘cooling out’, which all can be said to be about a societal legitimate reinterpretation of the exclusion from educational opportunities. This reinterpretation includes the need for a belief, that the less beneficial opportunities are alternatives that are equivalent in societal value.

\textsuperscript{103} This points towards what Liebig & Wegener (1999) define as the “Reinterpretation of injustice experiences”, according to which the original injustice experiences “are, with different subjective reasons justified, re-evaluated or ‘seen from another perspective’, so that the original injustice is no longer perceived as such” (p.271, Transl. B.V.). Then, the ‘re-interpretation’ of the different allocation of the educational chance to take the Abitur, is subjectively legitimised in terms of a ‘sustainability of exclusive chances’.
Tobias: But you don’t need to be well educated for everything. If you attend Hauptschule, it’s automatically it’s said: crafts, crafts. So. Well I’ve directly been (.), by Mrs. N.mentor [Vocational training mentor, B.V.], been sent to an annual practical training in crafts. Well, as an electrician. And I told her from the beginning that I don’t want to do that.

Korbinian: The first practical training we had also was in the chamber of crafts education. And from the very start I wanted to work in a hotel and not/.

Sergej: Isn’t it centre and not chamber?

Korbinian: Centre, chamber, whatever. Crafts either way. And then there have just been crafts.

Michelle: HAIRSTYLIST!

II: Well, for all?

Korbinian: //Yes//.

Sergej: //Right//.

Tobias: //Yes//.

Sergej: Yes, for all. And then, in the beginning, during two days (.) we needed to go to the (..) what’s it called?

Korbinian: //Idiot-test//.

Michelle: //Idiot-test//.

Tobias: //Idiot-test//.

Sergej: Health test. Ability test. Uhm we simply needed //to do such a test//, for skills or not.

Tobias: //Then, they already knew if you’re going to work as a bricklayer or not//. (GER04, Hauptschule)
Initially, this sequence refers to pupils’ perception that “it’s clear, that […] you need to be well educated”, which applies in their perception not for themselves, who are attending Hauptschule. Moreover, this sequence exemplarily shows how pupils, who perceive themselves not being given the above mentioned chances, experience the selective and allocative characteristics that are related to the structural differentiation: as a ‘prospective ascription of limitation’. This implies the experience of being, in advance, “automatically” ascribed to work in the “crafts” sector, for example as an “electrician” or “hair-stylist”. The major point for the pupils is that they perceive that they do not have the chance to choose, but rather that it is decided in advance, on the basis of their school type, if they “are going to work as a bricklayer or not”105.

Overall, the analysis showed that pupils in Sweden as well as pupils in Germany perceive grades as inevitable criteria for the allocation of

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105 This finding is also discussed more detailed in chapter 5.2.2.4. Solga (2005b) for example notes that the education pupils experience at Hauptschule is more a process of “status allocation” than a process of “status acquisition” (p.205), which also implies the role of the pupils attending Hauptschule as being dependent of these prospective ascriptions of limitation. Waldow (2016) for example refers in this context to the historical roots of the principle “right man at the right place” as part of the concept of “social engineering” regarding the idea of meritocracy (p.313).
educational chances, which requires the selection of the most appropriate individuals. This principle is perceived to become certainly relevant in relation to certain transition points within the educational system, where grades are seen as a kind of socio-educational ‘admission ticket’ that allows for access. That implies by no means that grades as selection and allocation criteria are seen as unproblematic. Rather, this is seen as the best conceivable way to handle the as necessary perceived selection and allocation and to avoid a selection that otherwise would be based on ascriptive criteria like individuals’ socio-economic background. This acceptance thus needs to be understood as a theoretical counter concept to the lack of alternatives.

Furthermore, these findings show first and foremost that the interviewed pupils in both countries have internalised the meritocratic idea as a normative principle. Regarding the meritocratic principle as a guiding norm in modern societies, Waldow (2016) for example means that

“Despite the changes that the concept of ‘meritocracy’ has undergone, it is still a constitutive part of the ‘normative self-definition’ of Western democratic societies (Solga, 2005, 23) in the sense that it is the prime legitimation for the allocation of life chances to individuals and the main justification of social inequality. […] The ‘meritocratic minimum’ shared by these societies is that individual merit should be decisive for the allocation of life chances, not ascriptive criteria such as ethnicity, social background or wealth” (p.313)

From a pupils’ perspective, this “meritocratic minimum shared” across both contexts implies the belief: a) of the scarceness of educational chances in the form of limited access to further education as well as professional chances in the form of limited access to vocational training positions or jobs – depending on pupils’ grades and path-depending qualifications, b) that individuals are selected for the allocation of these chances, c) that grades are, as the best imaginable and most feasible basis for this selective allocation process, accepted in absence of better solutions regarding the problem of social inequality as well as an assurance against obvious social injustice as represented through the ‘natural’ privileges by birth.

106 Like for example the change within “social and economic policy making” (p.313) from the concept of social engineering to the concept of “competition between individuals, educational institutions and employers […] in which individuals look for a place according to their abilities and aspirations” (p.313)

107 Regarding pupils’ view on grades role for societal allocation, see e.g. also Sivenbring (2016).
While the empirical patterns in the Swedish interviews refer to a more general normative level, the empirical patterns in the German interviews go one step further, towards the aspect of legitimacy. Regarding this legitimacy, two empirical dimensions emerge: on the one hand selection and allocation on the basis of grades conceptualised as a matter of ‘societal sustainability’ and on the other hand selection and allocation on the basis of grades perceived as ‘prospective ascription of limitations’. This dualism can be understood as two sides of the same coin: a dichotomy of conceptions, by which the inevitable societal contradiction of the normative idea is expressed. Wegener (1992) for example suggests that individuals’ justifications regarding the allocation of societal rewards can be categorised in terms of what they refer to. That means that individuals judge societal allocations with regard to how far these allocations are justified as just for the individual itself (“selbstbezogen”) or as just for the system in general (“ordnungsbezogen”). While the first one is about “micro justice”, the latter is about “macro justice” (p.271).

With regard to the empirical findings, this means that pupils’ shared normative conceptions, following the principles of meritocracy, are justified in terms of macro justice, since pupils mainly argue with the societal necessity of the meritocratic principle as the best imaginable counter concept to a societal allocation that otherwise would be based on e.g. wealth. On the other hand, the perception expressed by the pupils attending Hauptschule, can be seen as a justice judgment that is based on micro justice, since these pupils perceive the selective practices that they experience as a limitation of their factual chances. Additionally to Wegener’s conceptual distinction into micro and macro justice, the empirically derived theoretical concept of the ‘sustainability of exclusive chances’ thus can be understood as a hybrid of macro and micro justice, operating on two different levels: on the macro level, it is justified in terms of societal stability. On the other, it aims at the micro level in terms of exclusivity, which necessarily needs to be re-interpreted by individuals as a matter of macro justice. These findings suggest that the practically experienced selection and allocation of the pupils in the German differentiated school system generates experiences of meritocratic contradictions: contradictions between the ‘normative level of justifications’ and the ‘experienced level of justifications’. Comparative questions of legitimacy that results from these contradictions do not exist in the Swedish interviews. A possible explanation for this may be that the pupils’ first experiences with educational differentiation still lay ahead with the future transition to gymnasieskola.
6.2 The ‘Deserving’ of the grade as a basic principle of a just allocation

Across all the interviews, the main pattern that characterises a just grade for pupils is the basic principle of “deservedness”. In general, the deserved grade consists of certain components that are seen to qualify for a certain grade. The main components, which the deserved grade consists of, can be summarised as ability and effort\textsuperscript{108}. Pupils compare their invested amount of ability and effort with the outcome, the grade, and in addition to this, with their classmates’ input/output-relation, which means that even social comparisons play a vital role here. Hence, a deserved grade is the grade that is in line with pupils’ expectations on the basis of their input. Furthermore, the deservedness of the grade needs to be understood as a basic normative principle that covers different dimensions. Analysis shows for example that the normative conception of ‘deservedness’ applies as a normative principle for good as well as for poor grades, for ‘oneself’ as well as for ‘others’.

In the following, the basic principle of ‘deservedness’ in relation to just assessment will be illustrated more in detail along representative sequences from the Swedish as well as from the German interviews. It will also be presented, in which ways the ‘deservedness’ can be understood as an indicator for pupils’ internalisation of the meritocratic norm. This will be done by following the dimensional patterns analysed in regard to the ‘deservedness’ of the good vs. the poor grade as well as in relation to the categories of ‘oneself deserving the grade’ vs. ‘others deserving the grade’.

In the interviews with the Swedish pupils, ‘deservedness’ emerged as the main principle for what characterises just assessment on a normative level. Mostly, this principle was referred to as “deserving” (“Att förtjäna”) a certain grade. In some examples, pupils also talked about being worth (“Att vara värd”) a certain grade. A typical quote that can exemplify this principle is the one from Matiba, who describes her Swedish teacher’s assessment practice as differing in a positive way from other teachers’ assessment practices:

Matiba: *She takes it all and puts a grade in and she’s not unfair [...] I mean. And you like understand. When you’ve finally had a grade then you know: I deserve this.* (SWE01)\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} For a more detailed presentation, see ch. 7.1.2 and 7.3.
\textsuperscript{109} Original quote: Matiba: Hon tar alltihopa och sätter till ett betyg och hon är inte orättvist. […] Alltså. Och man förstår, alltså. När man väl har fått ett betyg så vet man: Jag förtjänar detta. #00:47:54-8# (SWE01)
For Matiba, the just grade is characterised by a holistic assessment procedure, since the teacher “takes it all” when grading. Besides that, the other aspects that needs to be highlighted here is that the just grade allocation has to do with the fact that she as a pupil “understand[s]” and “know[s]” that “I deserve this”. Thereby, the just grade is linked to the certainty that one got the grade, which one deserves – regardless the grade level. The deservedness of the grade can therefore be understood as the individual insight and consent that the grade received is in line with what the pupil believes that one should get. This comparison between the received grade and the pupils’ expectations of what one should get already per se implies a normative orientation, which will be presented in more detail in the following.

As already outlined above, deservedness as a basic principle of the just grade applies for good and poor grades as well as for oneself and for others. Regarding the deservedness of the good grade, pupils typically explain this in the following way:

*Majken: [...]If (...) if the student\textsuperscript{110} really does the assignments, then I think, that you somehow (.) should deserve a better grade. And uhm (..). (SW\textE01)\textsuperscript{111}*

The quote illustrates that the deservedness of the “better grade” is on the one hand characterised by the expectation\textsuperscript{112} that the higher grade should be allocated. On the other hand, there are certain criteria determining when the higher grade is deserved – in this case “if the student really does the assignments”.

While the above presented quote is still on a general level, the deservedness of the good grade also matters in relation to the concrete experiences of the individual pupil:

*Sara: Well, I mean it was in Social Science class. Then we had the two times [...] But then we were supposed to write an (.) an assignment quite simply. And the others who then had written/ and*
they had then sort of written like me too, so we we were like this similar. And then I got an E for that. And then I like felt/. And I was quite pleased with this work. Then then I had even written some pages, right, and I didn’t quite get it: what’s=what’s wrong what’ve I done. I didn’t UNDERSTAND. Because it was worth so much more than an E. Because E is for when like, only writing like a sentence. When you don’t, like, know that much. So that was really unfair. (SWE02)113

Even here, the deserved grade that the pupil would have been “worth” is related to how just assessment is perceived. As the pupil got a lower grade than deserved, the allocated grade is seen as unjust. The deservedness is here derived from the social comparison with the classmates: the input consisting of what and how many pages one has “written” in the assignment in relation to the output, the grade, is compared to the classmates’ input/output relation. An aspect that clearly contributes to the perception of being unjustly graded is moreover the fact that the pupil “didn’t UNDERSTAND”114 the different outcomes. If taken together, this leads to the belief that oneself would have deserved a better grade.

The basic principle of the deservedness does not only apply in relation to good grades, but also when it comes to poor grades. On a general level, this principle can be exemplified by the following sequence:

I: When, do you think, you should get an F?

Linus: Uhum. When you don’t give a damn.

Carl: Uhu.

Linus: Well (4) like not handing in homework uhm, getting F on a rehearsal. Uhm. Then you’re like not worth an E.

Mohammad: Yes. (SWE03)115

113 Original quote:

114 Regarding the relevance of ”understanding” assessment, see ch. VIII.

115 Original sequence:
I: När ska man få ett F tycker ni? #00:22:46-2#
Similar to the deservedness of good grades, pupils also perceive that poor grades can be deserved. Even here, there are some criteria which determine this deservedness: if one is “not handing in homework” or “getting F on a rehearsal”. In case these criteria are not met, the pupils find that “then you are like not worth an E” and that one would deserve an F as a poor grade.

Besides the deservedness on a general level, this applies also to the concrete experiences on an individual level. Pupils experience a strong feeling of injustice when fellow classmates are allocated an undeserved good grade. In the interview sequence, the next quote is embedded in pupils discuss this issue in terms of ‘enragement’, which can arise in such situations. When they get asked whom they are enraged at, the pupil Finja answers:

*Finja: Nah. I get enraged at the student. Like HELL. Because I don’t think they like deserve it. I really didn’t think I deserved my E. I really didn’t. But I was glad to get it. [...] (SWE04)*

It becomes obvious how the perceived injustice is linked to a strong feeling of getting “enraged” at the classmate “like HELL”, who was allocated a grade that is perceived as being undeserved. At the same time, this quote also exemplarily shows that the deservedness of the poor grade is not just only applied to ‘the other’ but that pupils in the interviews also reflect about how they themselves can deserve a poor grade. The quote indicates that Finja thinks that the better grade she received was unjustified on the one hand, but that she was also “glad to get it”. In the following quote, this becomes even clearer as well as it shows, to whom the perceived injustice applies:

*Maja: Uhu. That one uhu. That teacher has given me fair grades as well. Or in one subject I think he’s almost graded me better than I deserve. Almost.

I: Is that unfair then?

Maja: We:ell. Maybe.

Marina: Perhaps to other people. (SWE02)*

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Linus: Mhm. När man skiter i det. #00:22:50-6#
Carl: Ah. #00:22:50-6#
Linus: Alltså (4) typ inte lämna in läxor ehm, få F på förhör. Mmm. Då är man inte värd ett E liksom. #00:23:00-8#
Mohammad: Ja. #00:23:00-5# (SWE03)

*Original quote:
Finja: Nä, jag blir arg på eleven. Som FAN. För jag tycker att den inte förtjänar det typ. Jag tyckte faktiskt inte att jag förtjänade mitt E. Det gjorde jag faktiskt inte. Men jag var glad att jag fick det. [...] #00:58:48-1# (SWE04)
Maja explains here that the teacher graded her justly and admits that she once got a better grade than she “would have deserved”. That means that the generally just assessment of this teacher gets limited by the undeserved allocation of the better grade. The injustice that arises from this is an injustice that addresses the “other people”, who in some way would be disadvantaged. Hence, the deserved poor grade does not only apply to others in terms of sanctioning but pupils refer also to themselves in this matter.

Overall, the deserved grade needs to be understood as the basic normative principle characterising a just grade for pupils in the Swedish interviews and as covering dimensions like the good and the poor grade, which can be applied for ‘oneself’ and for ‘others’.

Similar to the Swedish interviews, the ‘deservedness’ of the grade is also in the German interviews and in all school-types the basic principle and most prominent pattern when it comes to the just grade. Generally, this principle can be illustrated by the following quote:

Robin: And I think, to some extent, the grades don’t match the (...) the (...) regarding the ratio, I’d say. Because then, some just have, then some just have a Two, though they participate really well. Some have a Three on the certificate then, though they don’t work anything AT ALL. And then this doesn’t match. Those participating well, those ones would really have deserved something much better than someone who’s not participating AT ALL. (GER07, Gymnasium)

This quote indicates that the ‘deserved’ grade (in this case for oral participation) is perceived to mirror pupils invested amount of effort [10] during the lesson. The differences between the grades allocated are perceived to be slighter than the perceived differences of invested effort from the pupils. The

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[118] Original quote:
Robin: Und ich find’ teilweise passt das halt von den Noten her auch nicht mit der (...) mit der (...) mit der Relation, sag ich mal. Weil einige haben dann halt, einige haben dann halt ‘ne Zwei, obwohl die richtig gut mitmachen. Einige haben dann auf’m Zeugnis ‘ne Drei, obwohl die echt GAR NICHTS machen. Und dann passt das halt nicht. Wer gut mitmacht, der hätte ja eigentlich etwas viel besseres verdient als jemand, der GAR nicht mitmacht. #00:05:48-1# (GER07, Gymnasium)

[119] Regarding the relevance of effort in terms of just assessment, see ch. 7.3.
‘deservedness’ of the grade thereby is based on the invested input and linked to the expectation to receive a certain grade. The mismatch of this “ratio” leads to a perception of being unjustly graded.

This principle, formulated on a more general level in the quote above, applies also for pupils’ concrete experiences when it comes to the ‘deservedness’ of the good grade. The following quote representing this issue is taken from a sequence where the pupils at a Gymnasium discussed a teacher’s assessment, which is hard to understand for them. The pupil Laurenz says:

Laurenz: I find this weird as well/. Well, I was sure that I’d get a One in this subject. Because I haven’t deserved anything else [all laughing]. Yes, that’s how it is. I know exactly that I am by far the best in this course. (GER07, Gymnasium)

Here, the pupil explains that he is convinced to be “by far the best in this course”. This makes him “sure” of having “deserved” anything else than the best grade that is possible, “a One”. The frame of reference for his belief of deserving the best possible grade is the class - which means that a social point of reference is used. The fact that the other participants acknowledge his statement of having deserved a One with laughter furthermore indicates that this is perceived as something unusual to state about oneself. Overall, the quote shows how the idea regarding oneself deserving a good grade is one aspect of the basic principle of ‘deservedness’.

In another quote, the relevance of ‘deservedness’ for pupils’ justice conceptions becomes even more obvious. Here, pupils attending Hauptschule also discuss about a teacher’s assessment that is not easy to understand:

Ayleen: At least a Three (.) and so, he gave me a Four anyway and I found this totally unfair, because, if I already were on the Four and then I write a One two times, then I would have deserved a Three at least. Because then you see that I made an effort and anyway he hasn’t done so (.) and then I felt unfairly treated like. (GER14, Hauptschule)

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In this quote, it is expressed that the ‘deservedness’ is related to the expectation of a certain grade. The expectation, in turn, is based on an arithmetic reflection\textsuperscript{123}, which means that the ‘deservedness’ of a good grade (in this case, a final grade), would be justified according to the average of all the grades received. But since the pupil got a poorer grade than expected, the allocation of the grade leads to a feeling of being “unfairly treated”.

However, the ‘deservedness’ of the good grade does not only apply for pupils themselves. Additionally, pupils also find that others, for example their classmates, can deserve a good grade. The following quote is taken from an interview sequence where pupils talk about a classmate who always receives the highest grades. Regarding this issue, the pupil Mareike says:

\textit{Mareike: Yes, well, he deserves it. He pays () attention during class, gets good grades, he learns, he always does his homework and so on. If he’s late, then he does/. Then he even goes to the teacher and apologises. And then he even explains why he’s late and so on. Well, I find, he deserves it. If he wouldn’t work, then I’d understand. But he works. He does anything that is possible and therefore he also deserves to get good grades. (GER15, Hauptschule)\textsuperscript{124}}

‘Others’ deservedness’ of the grade obviously has a connotation of not to begrudging the classmate’s good grade since the classmate meets certain criteria that determine his ‘deservedness’ of the good grade. These criteria are almost presented like a checklist of criteria, including effort, orderliness and good behaviour.

Similar to good grades, also poor grades are from a pupils’ point of view something that one can ‘deserve’. In this regard, the deservedness can either be a benefit in case a better grade than deserved was received or it can be a logical consequence of an insufficient performance. The following quote will illustrate the aspect of the undeserved benefit. It is part of a sequence, when pupils talk about a teacher who generally grades all pupils with a Two at the

\begin{flushright}
\textit{gegeben habe und hat der trotzdem nicht gemacht (.) und da habe ich mich ungerecht gefühlt so. #00:27:46-6# (GER14, Hauptschule)}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{123} Regarding this ‘arithmetic logic’, see also ch. 8.2.

\textsuperscript{124} Original quote:

\textit{Mareike: Ja also, er hat’s verdient. Er passt (.) im Unterricht auf, er schreibt gute Noten, er lernt, er macht immer Hausaufgaben uns so. Wenn er zu spät kommt, dann macht er/. Dann stellt er sich sogar immer noch vor den Lehrer und entschuldigt sich hier. Und dann erklärt der auch noch, warum der zu spät kommt und so. Also. Ich finde, der hat das verdient. Würde er nix machen, dann würde ich das verstehen können. Aber er macht was. Er tut was dafür und deswegen hat der das auch verdient, so gute Noten zu bekommen. #00:21:01-4# (GER15, Hauptschule)}
end of the school year. When pupils are asked how they perceive this situation, Sergej answers:

Sergej: //If you//. Well, for those who really would have received a One, this is really unfair. But those, who haven’t //participated that well//, those who really would have //deserved a Three, Four//, they are happy, of course. (GER04, Hauptschule)

The classmates who would have deserved a poor grade on the basis of their poor participation during the lessons received a higher grade than they deserved. The allocated grade that was better than the one that would have been deserved therefore is seen as an undeserved benefit, while the ones who would have deserved a better grade than the one allocated, are seen as disadvantaged in this grade allocation, which is perceived as “really unfair”.

The conception of the deserved poor grade as a sort of logical consequence in terms of a sanction can be illustrated with the following sequence. Here, two pupils discuss why a classmate has deserved a poor grade from their point of view:

Karl: Well, sometimes I also think/ well sometimes I also think, when we get our test back, then I think/.

Moustafa: Hope, he’ll get a low grade.

Karl: Then I hope, that he’ll get a low grade, because then it’s like=like DESERVED. Because he has/. Because=because=I make my task list and HE DOESN’T. And then he always drops remarks, don’t know, and then he always discusses with the teachers. But I don’t and STILL I either get the same or even a lower grade than him. (GER01, Realschule)

125 Original quote: Sergej: //Wenn man’s//. Also, für die, die eigentlich ‘ne Eins bekommen sollten, ist das eigentlich ungerecht. Aber die, die eigentlich nicht //so gut mitgearbeitet haben//, die haben eigentlich //‘ne Drei, Vier verdient haben, freuen sich ja//. #00:35:29-8# (GER04, Hauptschule)

126 Original quote: Karl: Also manchmal denk’ ich mir auch so/ also manchmal denk’ ich mir auch, wenn wir die Arbeit wiederbekommen, dank denk ich mir so/. #00:57:17-0#
Moustafa: Hoffe, dass er ‘ne schlechte Note bekommt. #00:57:19-7#
Karl: Dann hoffe ich, dass er ‘ne schlechte Note bekommt, weil dann ist das so=so wie so VERDIENT. Weil er hat/. Weil=weil I=ICH mach’ ja meinen Arbeitsplan für die Arbeit und ER NICHT. Und dann gibt der halt auch immer so Sprüche ab, keine Ahnung, und legt sich dann halt auch immer mit Lehrern an. Aber ICH mach’ das nicht und TROTZDEM hab’ ich entweder die gleiche oder sogar noch ‘ne schlechtere Note als er. #00:57:33-2# (GER01, Realschule)
The perception that the classmate hopefully will “get a low grade” is justified with regards to the principle of ‘deservedness’. The deserved low grade is justified by referring to the classmate’s inappropriate behaviour towards the teacher as well as the fact that the classmate has not finished his “task list”. Both of these aspects are part of a social comparison. The perceived injustice is based on the fact that the classmate got a better grade than the pupil himself got, though the classmate doesn’t meet the criteria for a ‘deserved’ grade. Because of this imbalance, a poorer grade would be deserved as a form of logical consequence in terms of sanctioning. This can be understood as the expectation of a compensatory justice in the classroom in order to restore the balance between one’s own expectations and the grade that was finally allocated.

Overall, the analytical pattern of ‘deserving the grade’ can be said to be the general normative principle regarding a just grade allocation. The analytical broadness of this concept, including for example both, good and poor grades as well as that it applies for oneself and for others, additionally supports the finding of the concept’s fundamental character. This suggests that the ‘deservedness’ of the grade can be understood as a collectively shared concept of just assessment.

Besides these findings regarding the structural character of the ‘deservedness’ of the grade, the concept’s content-related character is suggested to equate what is called for “poetic justice” in literary science (see e.g. also Nussbaum, 1997). The term “poetic justice” describes a stylistic device in literature according to which virtue and high morality are rewarded while sinning behaviour and wickedness are punished. This principle is for example also known from fairy tales or films with the ‘happy end’ as a stylistic device. In regard to pupils’ justice conceptions, this means that pupils’ expectation to receive the deserved grade also is a question of rewards and punishments on the normative level.

The principle of ‘deservedness’ that is highlighted here also shows certain parallels to the justice motive theory (Hafer, Bégue, Choma, & Dempsey, 2005; Lerner, 1966; Lerner & Clayton, 2013; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Oppenheimer, 2006). According to this theory, individuals have the need to believe that they live in a just world in order to encourage themselves and maintain motivation to strive for life goals. The just world is characterised by the belief that “everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get” (Dalbert, 2009, p. 289). Hence, the principle of ‘deservedness’ can be understood as a general normative belief aiming at compensation. This also plays a vital role with regards to the basic idea of meritocracy, which for example Mijs (2016) puts in the following way:
“Meritocracy provides a principle of justice for the allocation of reward: Whoever performs best justly deserves the highest reward.”

(p.17)

Thus, pupils’ conception of the deserved grade is, in addition to the acceptance of the allocation and selection on the basis of grades, another dimension of pupils’ general normative conception following meritocratic beliefs.

### 6.3 Interim résumé – character and dimensions of pupils’ normative justice conceptions

The findings suggest that pupils in both educational contexts have internalised the normative conception that an allocation process, which is based on meritocratic principles, is the only possibility to avoid an allocation that otherwise would be based on other criteria, such as for example socio-economic background. In addition, this is also emphasised and somewhat intensified by the finding, that the ‘deservedness’ of grades is the central conception characterising a just grade allocation on a general normative level. This conception can be understood as a form of ‘poetic justice of the educational sphere’, which is deeply rooted in the basic justice belief that, in the end, everyone receives what is deserved. Based on this, it can be concluded that pupils in both contexts have internalised meritocracy as a normative principle, of how further educational opportunities and life chances shall be allocated in society.

The comparison reveals that this normative conception of justice is more theoretical in character and on a more general level. It is so to speak pupils’ ethico-moral guideline, which mirrors pupils’ theoretical reasoning about how they expect a just allocation process to be. The fact that this theoretical conception can be challenged is already initially indicated by the fact that the experienced differentiation and the consequences following from this differentiation based on grades, lead to group-specific justifications of pupils in the German context or to pupils’ questioning of the meritocratic principle in regard to their concrete experiences. The theoretical conception that a just allocation is based on educational merits, as well as that grades and certificates are the adequate operationalisation of merit, is therefore not self-evident when it comes to pupils’ experienced conditions and consequences of assessment. This will be presented with more detail below.
VII. ASCRIBING RESPONSIBILITY

Pupils’ justice conceptions presented above are related to the meritocratic principle in terms of general normative conceptions. Besides those, there are certain analytical patterns that refer to the relevance of pupils’ concrete experiences with assessment. The two main patterns here are about ‘responsibility’ on the one hand and about ‘understanding’ on the other. This chapter presents the analytical pattern of ‘responsibility’ and its manifold dimensions.

The main category ‘responsibility’ is focusing on the result that pupils conceptualise just assessment in relation to who can be hold responsible for the grade127 and how this responsibility is constructed, handled, ascribed and negotiated. Here, the analytical main pattern is about the allocation of and the access to opportunities and chances, which forego grade allocation. These can be understood as the relevant (pre-) conditions that underlie just assessment and a just grade from a pupils’ perspective and highlight the multi-dimensional and manifold character of pupils’ justice conceptions, which goes beyond their general normative conceptions. The opportunities and chances, which forego grade allocation and which are important for pupils can be said to consist of three dimensions:

127 The concept of responsibility used for this analytical category is based i.a. on Noddings (2012) differentiation of the concepts accountability and responsibility: "Responsibility and accountability point in different directions. We are accountable to a supervisor, someone above us in the hierarchy, but we are responsible for those below us. [...] A sense of responsibility in teaching pushes us constantly to think about and promote the best interests of our students. In contrast, the demand for accountability often induces mere compliance” (p.206, original emphasis). ‘Responsibility’ as a theoretical conceptualisation in this chapter thereby implies also that pupils’ conceptions regarding this issue go beyond a conception of mere ‘accountability’.
opportunities and chances, which pupils perceive that they ‘have’,
opportunities and chances, which pupils perceive that they are ‘given’
and opportunities and chances, which pupils perceive that they have
to ‘take’

While pupils find that they themselves are responsible for taking certain
opportunities and chances, the responsibility for the allocation and the
handling of opportunities and chances, which they simply ‘have’ and perceive
‘to be given’, can be seen as ‘externalised responsibility’. These analytical
categories are presented with more detail below.

7.1 Externalised responsibility - Chances and opportunities one just has

This chapter will present one of the two analytical patterns that are about the
‘externalised responsibility’ for the allocated grade. It is about the
opportunities and chances, which pupils perceive that they simply ‘have’ and
how these are handled in relation to assessment. These opportunities and
chances can be seen as the basic conditions of being a pupil in an educational
system, of learning in general and in addition, also as the basic conditions of
assessment and grade allocation. The allocation of these opportunities is an
allocation of opportunities by birth, and for pupils they matter in certain ways
regarding justice. The opportunities that one simply ‘has’ and which matter for
how pupils perceive assessment in school, imply the following thematic
dimensions, which include variations within and across the two contexts:

- the socio-cultural and socio-economic resources that are related to
  family background and parental support
- abilities that are seen as a quite static component of what is assessed
  and graded.

These analytical categories are presented more detailed in the two sub-
chapters below.
7.1.1 Chances on the basis of family background and support

The analytical category of ‘family background and support’ refers to pupils’ conceptions in regard to how far certain conditions of their socioeconomic and sociocultural background at home play a role for their learning process in school and, in extension to this, for the grades they can achieve. First, it can be noticed that pupils conceptualise a supportive family background as something that one either has or not. This implies also that pupils’ differing family backgrounds are not per se seen as unjust. These differences become only a question of justice, when the different backgrounds seem to matter in certain ways for grade allocation. The different opportunities and chances that are related to pupils’ different extent of and their different access to supportive and beneficial structures outside school are then perceived to be in contradiction with the normative meritocratic ideal. This contradiction leads then to pupils’ basic question of who can be hold responsible and a critical evaluation of what this responsibility implies from their point of view.

In the Swedish interviews, pupils generally talked less about family background and support outside school than the German pupils did. Furthermore, the relevance of family background and support outside school seems to be more perceived as indirect and it is discussed in close relation to pupils’ normative belief. A typical example for this indirect influence of family background and how this is related to perceived injustice in assessment is the following:

Amanda: I think it’s unfair because, now, my advantage is playing an instrument. And it feels wrong to have an advantage. And then, when making like songs, then I get it because I know like where the note needs to go. But it still feels wrong that I should be graded much higher just because I’ve done this with an instrument in my spare time. She should asses a little bit more from (.) how much you’ve put into class and such. And not //just what you’ve done before//.

Matiba: // Because it’s still MUSIC //.

Amanda: So, if you take a guitar for example. Even though I haven’t played it, there’s still a bit of an advantage because one learns more fingering on a violin. And then it looks like I’m much better at the guitar even though I’m not really. Because I’ve just got other, like, experiences. And that’s so wrong towards OTHERS, I think. Such an unfair assessment. (SWE01)

128 Original sequence:
In this interview sequence, Amanda explains how the opportunities that her family background provides her, are beneficial for her grade in the subject of Music. The injustice is conceptualised as a benefit by birth, which gives her indirect advantages regarding the allocation of good grades in comparison to other pupils, who lack these benefits by birth. Here, injustice needs to be understood along the dichotomy of advantage-disadvantage. That means that the family background’s influence has relevance on her grade via the content and the requirements of the lessons, which she perceives herself to be better prepared to respond to and to fulfil. According to this, it is not the diverging opportunities per se - that she has learnt playing the violin at home while some classmates have not - which are perceived as unjust. The injustice only arises in relation to the assessment, and later on the grading, of these competences since it is to her “advantage” and based on opportunities that are differently allocated by birth. Here, the teacher is the one who is seen responsible for the as unjust perceived assessment since the teacher assesses something that is basically influenced by her family background and the related opportunities. This is aggravated since the teacher in addition is not making use of the possibility to assess pupils invested effort as a sort of neutral aspect of merit, which is seen to have the potential for compensating for unequal conditions.

Another relevant aspect in the Swedish interviews is about the informal structures of support outside school that pupils can use as a resource for learning:

Finja: Because my parents can hardly, like, help me. Because it’s gotten harder. Sure, my dad can but my mum isn’t that smart, really.

Emelia: But you’re lucky you’ve got someone to help you in your free time like your granddad or dad. Because otherwise it would’ve been really hard. I talked to this other girl who (.) has parents that really don’t know Math. She’s gotten completely/. She doesn’t know WHAT to do. So she/ so I’ve got to help her then. But like if you haven’t got anybody OUTSIDE of school then a lot of grades would’ve like (.) be lowered.

Amanda: Jag tycker det är orättvist för att, nu har jag fördel för jag spelar ett instrument. Och det känns fel att jag har fördel. Sen det här, när vi ska göra så här låtar, då förstår jag för jag vet liksom hur tonen behöver ligga. Men det känns ändå fel att jag ska få mycket högre betyg bara för att jag har gjort det med instrument i fritiden. Och då borde hon bedöma lite mer från (.) hur mycket man har gett på lektionerna och sådant. Och inte //bara vad man har gjort inman//. #01:02:07-0#
Matiba: //För det är ju ändå MUSIK//. #01:02:08-2#
Amanda: Så om man tar till exempel gitarr. Trots att jag inte spelat det så har man ändå lite fördel för att man lär sig mer fadersättning på fiol. Och det bli ju sen så att det ser ut så att jag har mycket bättre från början på gitarren, fast jag egentligen inte är det. För jag bara har andra, typ, erfarenheter. Och det blir så fel mot ANDRA, tycker jag. Så orättvis bedömning. #01:02:35-0# (SWE01)
First and foremost, this sequence shows that pupils perceive that the support outside school, which one either have access to or have not access to, plays a vital role for the grades that can be achieved. Even more, the lack of adequate support outside school in combination with the perceived lack of adequate help in school is seen to reduce the chances for good grades. When pupils perceive that they do not get the help in school that they would need in order to achieve a certain grade, the informal support outside school is seen to be the determining factor of compensation. As a consequence, the school’s compensatory task\textsuperscript{130} is reversed.

While the aspect of family background and support outside school in the Swedish interviews is mainly related to injustice in terms of having or not having certain chances, pupils in the German interviews highlight their parents’ role for influencing teachers’ assessment. The chances and opportunities that are related to this influence are, similar to the Swedish interviews, seen as opportunities that one either has or lacks. However, there are clear differences how pupils, who attend different school-types, explain their parent’s role when it comes to assessment. In order to make these school type related contrasts visible, typical sequences are presented from German interviews conducted in a Hauptschule, a Gesamtschule and a Gymnasium.

In the following interview sequence, taken from an interview at a Hauptschule, pupils discuss about the allocation of poor grades, which they - in some cases - don’t agree with. When pupils were asked if they can talk with their parents about these grade allocations, they reacted upon the question in the following way:

\textsuperscript{129} Original sequence:
Finja: För mina föräldrar kan knappt hjälpa mig liksom. För det har ju blivit svårare. Min pappa kan ju men min mamma är inte såhär jätte smart. #00:10:46-2#
Emelia: Men det är ju tur i alla fall att du har någon som kan hjälpa dig på fritiden som din morfar eller din pappa. För annars hade det blivit jätte svårt. Jag pratade med en annan tjej som (.) har föräldrar som verkligen inte kan Matte. Hon har ju blivit helt/. Hon vet ju inte VAD hon ska göra. Så hon/ så jag får ju hjälpa henne då. Men så om man inte har någon UTANFÖR skolan då skulle nog många betyg så (.) sänkas. #00:11:09-4#
Carolin: Ja. #00:11:07-6#
Emelia: För att man få inte ofta den hjälpen man behöver. Men det är ju/ det är ju inte alla lärare det är så såklart. Men det är MÅNGA. #00:11:18-3# (SWE04)

\textsuperscript{130} See e.g. Johansson and Geijer (2007) regarding the Swedish grundskolan’s compensatory task to “even out differences” (p.23).
I 1: If you then get a grade like that, can you then talk with your parents about it?

[all roar with laughter]

Aniram: My mother would kill me!

Berat: I, I uhm, I don’t know what this is like in the other families, but amongst immigrants it’s not such a good idea to come home with a Five [he and Aniram are laughing out loud].

[all pupils speaking at the same time]

Mareike: And I don’t live at home.

Tidjani: Well, my siblings.

Berat: Well, as usual. Clothes, furniture, dishes.

Mareike: Shoe at the head and the like. But I don’t live at home. So because of that I can’t say anything.

I 1: Where do you live?

Mareike: I live in a group for assisted living.

I 1: So there are pedagogues living with you?

Mareike: Yes. And social workers.

I 1: And do they help you then?

Mareike: Yeah well, definitely. Well (.) if I would’ve received the letter, the one I got NOW, if this would’ve been sent home, I believe my mother would have kicked me off the stairs again, uhm. And now, yes. Now in the group, well, they have laid my certificate to the side and said that, well, that this isn’t acceptable. And that we will however, now (.) they will call and that we’re going to talk about it. With such a discussion and things like that. And uhm, that they also understand and also say that if we need help with learning and so on, they look for extra private tutoring, which they also pay for. And
First, it is important to note that the emotional engagement caused by the initial question was exceptionally strong since all pupils laughed out loud and all pupils started talking at the same time. The main theme represented in this sequence is that these pupils not only have to deal with the lack of family support but that a mere signalling of being in the need of support would lead to emotional and physical violence. Therefore, just the thought on what would happen if they would talk to their parents about certain grade-related issues seems to be absurd for the pupils. If these pupils perceive to be in need of support, they think that they have no opportunity to get it or even to ask for it. Thereby, they face a double lack of family support, a lack of understanding and a lack of help, putting them at double disadvantages regarding their opportunities to learn and to get support when they feel unjustly graded. Furthermore, the quote of Mareike, who lives in a group for assisted living, shows that discussing school-related issues (like for example received grades) or discussing learning issues (like for example the need of private tutoring), is perceived as unusual and a situation that cannot “be compared to people living at home”. This indicates that she sees the support she receives now as unusual in comparison to how she experiences the usual conditions for “people living at home”.

Original excerpt:
I 1: Wenn ihr da dann so ‘ne Note kriegt, könnt ihr da dann so drüber mit euren Eltern //reden oder so/? #00:33:13-2#
[alle brüllen vor Lachen] #00:33:14-2#
Aniram: Meine Mutter schlägt mich tot! #00:33:15-7#
Berat: Ich ich ähm, ich weiss ja nicht, wie’s bei den anderen Familien so ist, aber bei den Ausländern ist das nicht so ‘ne gute Idee, mit ‘ner Fünf nach Hause zu kommen [er und Aniram lachen laut].
#00:33:22-8#
[alle reden durcheinander]
Mareike: Und ich wohn ja nicht zu Hause. #00:33:23-6#
Tidjani: Ach, meine Geschwister. #00:33:25-7#
Berat: Ach, das Übliche. Kleidungsstücke, Möbel, Geschirr. #00:33:31-8#
Mareike: Schuh gegen den Kopf oder so. Aber ich wohn’ nicht zu Hause. Also von daher kann ich nicht mitreden. #00:33:34-9#
I 1: Wo wohnst du denn? #00:33:39-1#
Mareike: Ich wohn in ‘ner Wohngruppe. #00:33:39-0#
I 1: Und sind das dann Pädagogen, die da mit euch wohnen? #00:33:43-6#
Mareike: Ja. Und Erzieher. #00:33:43-6#
I 1: Und helfen die dir denn dann? #00:33:46-9#
Mareike: Ja also auf jeden Fall. Also (.) hätte ich den Brief jetzt, den ich JETZT bekommen habe, hätte ich den nach Hause bekommen, ich glaub’ meine Mutter hätte mich rückwärts die Treppe wieder runtergetreten, äh. Und jetzt ja. Also in der Gruppe jetzt da haben die dann mein Zeugnis daneben gelegt und haben selber gesagt, dass das überhaupt nicht sein kann. Und dass wir da auf jeden Fall jetzt da äh (.) die da anrufen werden und wir dann doch drüber reden werden. Mit so ‘nem Gespräch und sowas alles. Und äh, die dann auch Verständnis dafür haben und auch sagen, dass wenn wir so Hilfe beim Lernen und so brauchen, dann suchen die auch extra Nachhilfe, was die dann auch so bezahlen. Und das ist halt einfach: man kann das so halt eben gar nicht vergleichen, mit Leuten, die zu Hause wohnen. #00:34:28-7# (GER15, Hauptschule)
at home” to be. The same applies for the “discussion” about issues related to school and assessment as well as for the perceived absence of “understanding”. This suggests that the responsibility for the grade and for school-related issues is perceived to be mostly laid on pupils themselves.

Second, this quote is typical for the three interviews conducted in this Hauptschule in terms of how the pupils changed the thematic focus: while the question focused on the relation between assessment and parental support, pupils’ discussion thematically shifted to the everyday struggles they face. By a systematic analysis of each of these three interviews and a cross-comparison with other interviews, where it was looked at the stimuli given related to the just assessment issue, these shifts of focus showed to be the usual pattern of answering – always towards the everyday struggles in- and outside school, whereof their family background and the lack of family support is one important aspect. What can be concluded is that assessment, and just assessment in particular, plays a role in these pupils’ lives but to a much minor extent than what it does in comparison to other interviewed pupils. However, this seems by no means to be a matter of a general disinterest in school or in grades but rather a question of what these pupils primarily have to focus on because of the certain circumstances they need to handle in their everyday lives. Hence, family background and support outside school in general and in particular in relation to assessment, is not just characterised by the lack of it contributing to their factual and perceived reduced educational life chances; but it additionally needs to be understood as one more obstacle\textsuperscript{132}.

This becomes certainly visible when it is compared to sequences from interviews in other school-types, when pupils talk about their family background and the support they receive regarding assessment in school. Exemplarily, the pupil Marina, attending a Gesamtschule, explains how her mother, a teacher herself, supported her actively during grade talks in school that focused on unjust grading:

\begin{quote}
Marina: Well, in my case it’s like, first, my mum goes there [to the grade talk with the teacher, B.V]. Simply, because she’s a teacher herself. And umm (4) and then she can talk professionally there with the teachers and then put appropriate pressure on them. Because she also knows what you need to pay attention to. And then just if; like with this teacher, she hasn’t carried out her duty so to speak. And then (..) I don’t know, if she’s really preparing for this [her
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{132} In relation to this, Boudon (1974) for example defined such effects of family background for pupils’ education as primary and secondary effects of origin.

The often difficult social conditions of pupils attending Hauptschule are also highlighted in Wellgraf’s (2012) ethnographic study, pointing out the interdependencies between these conditions and the educational system.
mother, B.V.]. But anyhow, she’s doing quite a good job. Don’t know.

I 2: You don’t know what she does exactly?

Marina: Well, she simply asks then/. Well regarding A.Teacher, until now it has been like, she just asked: what is it exactly that she has to do? And then he already got so nervous always [laughs]. And uh then, most of the time, the teachers themselves don’t know what you have to do in order to get the better grade. And here it’s a bit strange already. Yeah well. In the end she just concretely asks about the grades, why they’ve given them. And then this already puts so much pressure on them that they change something (. ) regarding the grade. Yes. (GER 11, Gesamtschule)\textsuperscript{133}

When Marina is asked how she and her parents prepare for such a grade talk with the teacher, it becomes clear that her mother comes along because of a certain purpose. The reason is that her mother is a teacher herself and therefore, she can “talk professionally there with the teachers and then put appropriate pressure on them“. This sort of action seems to be in the need of legitimisation since Marina explains that the teacher “hasn’t carried out her duty so to speak”. Thereby, a shift of responsibility becomes obvious, where the own actions of influencing the teacher’s assessment are reduced to “just concretely” asking questions. If this leads to a better grade, the modification of the grade is then the teacher’s decision, in which the teacher herself is responsible for since she cannot resist the “pressure”.

The aspect regarding the opportunities to modify grades by making use of an advantageous family background and parental support seems to be in the need of legitimisation and justification. Here, the reinterpretation of responsibility

\textsuperscript{133} Original sequence:
Marina: Also, bei mir ist es halt erst mal so, dass erst mal meine Mama hingeht. Weil die ist halt selber Lehrerin. Und ähm (4) und dann kann die da halt dann schon auch immer was vom Fach reden und den Lehrern dann natürlich auch dementsprechend Druck machen. Weil die auch weiss, worauf man achten muss. Und wenn jetzt halt auch, so wie bei der Lehrerin, die hat ja quasi ihre Pflicht nicht erfüllt. Und dann (...) ich weiss nicht, ob sie sich so richtig drauf vorbereit. Aber auf jeden Fall macht sie’s ganz gut. Weiss nicht. #00:41:32-3#
I 2: Was genau sie macht, weisste auch nicht? #00:41:32-3#
Marina: Ja, sie fragt halt dann/. Also bei A. Lehrer da war es halt bisher so, dass sie halt einfach nachgefragt hat: was genau muss sie denn machen? Und dann wurde der immer schon nervös [lacht]. Und ähm (...) dann wissen die Lehrer das ja meistens auch selber nicht so genau, was genau man jetzt machen muss um jetzt die bessere Note zu bekommen. Und da ist es halt immer so ein bisschen merkwürdig. Ja also. Im Endeffekt fragt sie nur genau nach, nach den Noten, warum man die gegeben hat. Und das macht den Lehrern dann meistens schon soviel Druck, dass die dann schon was ändern (.) an der Note. Ja. #00:42:04-6# (GER 11, Gesamtschule)
plays a vital role. This becomes especially obvious in a quote from August, pupil at Gymnasium. The quote is part of a sequence when pupils talked about teachers’ preferential treatment of certain pupils, which also matters for the grades that are received and therefore is related to injustice in the following way:

I 1: Well, do you feel that this happens a lot? That pupils are preferred and that this depends on sympathy?

August: Yes. Especially when you somehow (..) so (.) so, I don’t know. Always doing these extra assignments or also things like: in my Grundschule, I’ve been the worst nerd there. And then I always acted towards my teacher like being his friend. And he was a hunter as well and we have our own hunting area and my father meant as well: yes, invite him, and so. And since then I always had a One! [all laughing]. It was like this. Yes and so. Yes, well something like this can somehow as well/ Well, in my case this was of course advantageous for me. But actually, this isn’t ok. Well, a teacher really isn’t allowed to accept that, I think. (GER07, Gymnasium)

The quote shows how August tried to influence the teacher’s assessment in the past by having the opportunity to invite his teacher to go hunting, which led, in his memory, to the situation that he received the highest grades. The fact that he further says that “actually, this isn’t ok” can be understood as a moral evaluation of these actions and intentions, which are in contradiction to the fact that the result of these actions and intentions at the same time were “advantageous for me”. At this point, no attempts are undertaken to further elaborate and to deal with this contradiction; instead the contradiction is externally transferred by holding the teacher morally responsible for the better grades that becomes obvious by the comment that “a teacher is really not allowed to accept that”. Thus, the responsibility for the as unjust evaluated actions of influencing the teacher’s assessment is laid on the teacher and thereby externalised by the pupil.

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134 Original excerpt:
I 1: Also, das findet ihr, dass das viel passiert? Dass Schüler so bevorzugt werden und dass das so sympathieabhängig ist? #00:38:41-5#
August: Ja. Grade wenn man irgendwie (..) so (.) so, was weiss ich. Immer so diese Extraaufgaben macht oder auch so Sachen: bei mir in der Grundschule, da war ich halt eben so übelst der Streber. Und dann hab ich halt auch immer mit meinem Lehrer so einen auf Freund gemacht. Und der war halt auch Jäger und wir haben halt auch so ein eigenes Jagdrevier und mein Vater der meinte dann halt auch: ja, lad’ den doch mal ein und so. Und seit dem stand ich dann überraschend Eins! [alle lachen] So war das dann halt. Ja, und so. Ja, also sowas kann auch irgendwie auch/. Also in meinem Fall war das jetzt natürlich positiv für mich. Aber eigentlich geht das auch nicht. Also. Sowas darf man eigentlich als Lehrer ja gar nicht annehmen, find ich. #00:39:29-7# (GER07, Gymnasium)
In summary, it can be said that pupils in both countries consider family background and the related supportive opportunities as chances, which one simply has or lacks. These different preconditions are per se not seen as necessary to discuss, to question or to address. However, the different possibilities and opportunities by birth become relevant as soon as certain allocations are linked to it – like for example in the case of assessment and grades. Then, the differing possibilities and opportunities activate questions of justice and equality. In both countries, pupils consider the allocation of grades on the basis of their possibilities and opportunities by birth as incompatible with the equality norm, though to a different extent and following a different conceptual logic and emphasis.

The comparison reveals that the Swedish pupils generally talk less about the family background’s meaning in regard to assessment in school than the German pupils did. In addition, the comparison also showed the thematic differences with regard to what the Swedish pupils addressed as relevant to talk about in contrast to what the German pupils talked about.

For the pupils in the Swedish interviews, the family background is mostly relevant in terms of causing unequal preconditions for learning and, in addition to this, for the grades they can achieve. It is striking to see how the pupils in the Swedish interviews focus on discussing family background against the backdrop of the idea of equality and that they ascribe the school the major responsibility in compensating for those differences in relation to assessment. Pupils’ concrete experiences of injustice are tightly intertwined with a more general idea of equality, which they expect to be realised in school\textsuperscript{135}. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the meaning of inequality, here represented as different chances by birth, is necessarily interwoven with pupils’ factual everyday experience of diverging family backgrounds and its more or less direct relevance for the allocation of grades. Pupils mostly refer to factual differences they experience in school and in their own class, which means that the differences are something that they on a daily basis experience. These differences are a part of their everyday school life reality, they are concrete and visible\textsuperscript{136}. The experiences of having or lacking different chances by birth are then related to the more general concept of equality that seems to be quite strong, and which the pupils also expect to be mirrored in how the school is handling heterogeneity with regard to assessment.

\textsuperscript{135} See e.g. also Sivenbring (2016).

\textsuperscript{136} The heterogenic class composition in the Swedish school system that is emphasised here needs to be understood in comparison to the differentiated school system in Germany (see also Skolverket, 2012a, p. 63) and shall thereby not indicate that the absence of a homogenisation and segregation problematique is stated for the Swedish school system (regarding this issue see e.g. Trumberg, 2011; Andersson, Malmberg & Östh, 2010; Hansson and Gustafsson, 2016).
In contrast to the Swedish interviews, it could be shown that the idea of equality does not play such a central role for the pupils in the German interviews with regard to pupils’ experiences of the family background’s relevance for assessment and the school’s compensating role herein. Instead, at least to some extent there seems to be a school type related inner logic regarding the meaning of family background that is related to the more homogenous pupil composition with regards to pupils’ socio-economic background. This means that the structural differentiation of the educational system seems also to create distinct and more homogenous inner logics of the family background’s meaning for assessment, and in extension to this, for just assessment. In contrast to the pupils in the Swedish interviews, the pupils in the German interviews are not explicitly discussing the family background’s differences in terms of equality; rather they address this issue in relation to their parents’ possibilities to support them when it comes to influencing teachers’ assessment. It is assumed that this has to do with the fact that the range of differences regarding family background is smaller in the differentiated German system than in the Swedish one and thereby it is not that strongly experienced on an everyday basis (see e.g. Solga & Dombrowski, 2009, pp. 15). Because of this, the family background is not in focus per se in terms of an experienced basic inequality. This becomes clear by the fact that all pupils in the German interviews also openly share their family background’s relevance in relation to assessment – the pupils from Hauptschule share their thoughts about their particularly challenging family background and the pupils from the educational tracks preparing for higher education (Gesamtschule and Gymnasium), openly talk about their parents’ strategies and possibilities to support them to get a better grade. The fact that pupils from supportive families legitimise their advantages by lying the responsibility on the teacher, points on the one side towards that the pupils at the same time have an idea about some sort of an ethico-normative overall justice conception that is in contradiction to their concrete actions. However, on the other side, it becomes clear that this remains on a vaguer and more theoretical level, therefore it corresponds less with their experienced everyday lives.

This finding corresponds with Wegener’s work regarding justice conceptions’ different levels (Wegener, 1995, 1992). Here, Wegener differentiates between “primary” and “secondary” justice conceptions. The first ones refer to the overall societal justice norms, which are “more or less shared of all society members – independent of their status”. The second ones refer to those justice conceptions, which are “only shared by certain groups in society” (Wegener, 1992, p. 274). Primary and secondary justice conceptions do not have to be automatically consistent, but can differ. In this study, this gets for example obvious regarding the seemingly contradictory conceptions of pupils’ between their normative conceptions on the one side and their necessarily reinterpreted
conceptions on the other as way of legitimising personal advantages. This relation between different levels of justice conceptions is more explicitly picked up by the “Split-consciousness-theory” of Kluegel & Mateju (1995). According to this theory, individuals can hold “dominant ideology beliefs often (...) taught by various agents of socialisation”, while at the same time also holding “challenging beliefs and norms” that “derive more informally from everyday experience”. Both beliefs can “coexist[s; in original, B.V.] without any necessary force towards change” (p. 211). With regards to the findings of this study, this means that it can be assumed that the quite homogenous pupil composition as represented in the differentiated school-system in Germany seems to contribute to certain structures, which hold the “force towards change” on a low level. Furthermore, the fact that pupils openly share that they try to influence their teacher’s assessment, seems to be a quite legitimate form of action – at least, as long as pupils do not need to share these narrated practices in a joint interview with the pupils obviously lacking these opportunities, and as long as the responsibility is seen to belong to the teacher in the way shown above.

**7.1.2 Chances on the basis of abilities**

Similar to the category ‘family background’, also pupils’ conceptualisations within the category ‘abilities’ consists of aspects that matter for pupils in terms of just assessment in school. These aspects are mainly perceived as something one either has or that one is lacking; or if put in other words: from a pupils’ perspective, ‘ability’ needs to be understood as being allocated differently by birth.¹³⁷

The concept of ‘ability’ includes pupils’ conceptualisations of intelligence, talent, competences and skills and it stretches for example from the ability to concentrate on school work, over physical and motoric abilities relevant in relation to subjects like sports or crafts, to certain subject related abilities like memorising learning content like vocabularies, solving mathematical problems or using formulas in physics. Moreover, the ability to orally participate in class is also seen to be an ability that one either has or that one is lacking. From a pupils’ perspective, that means e.g. that one either can concentrate on school work or cannot, which then has consequences for all school-related work; or that one is either good in arithmetic or is not, which influences the opportunities to perform in the whole range of science subjects.

¹³⁷ See for example also Husén (1974) about the “key idea” of meritocracy that “talent is mainly inborn” (p.125), as well as Dweck’s (2015) research on individuals’ different mindsets regarding their intelligence and abilities.
Hence, it can be said that pupils clearly emphasise that ability, in their perspective, is a quite static aspect of learning and thereby also relevant for the grade they can achieve. The fact that ability is perceived as something quite static, which in addition is also allocated differently by birth, has certain consequences for pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment. Here, pupil’s reasoning about this issue is mostly focusing on questions regarding the appropriateness of different reference standards that are applied when assessing and grading.

The quote below will show the common reasoning of pupils in the Swedish interviews regarding this issue.

*Matiba:* Well it’s diffi/ well they nee/ well you have to be able to need, well some might be smarter than others. It might be a mean way to put it. But uhm. Some can’t manage the same stress as others either. But I feel like it’s like asking a, asking, okay, asking a monkey to climb a tree. It’s like really easy for a monkey, but if you perhaps ask a (.) FISH [laughs] to climb a tree, that’s like impossible. Everyone’s good at like different (.) things. So you can’t, like, judge a person by, I mean you can’t, like, compare one person to another (SWE 01)\(^2\)

Here, Matiba highlights from her point of view that all individuals have different levels of ability, which are in her example different levels of intelligence. At the same time, she also expresses that “it might be a mean way to put it” in this way, which indicates that stating people to be different by nature regarding their cognitive capacities is perceived as being somewhat of a taboo\(^3\). However, the fact that people have diverging abilities is not per se seen as a problem, but turns out to be problematic if pupils with diverging

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\(^1\)Original quote:

\(^2\)This applies for example also with regard to the issue of gifted pupils in Sweden, which can be said to have been a nearly invisible subject in the practical discourse as well as in research, compared to many other countries, see e.g. Dodillet’s (2016) discursive study on excellence initiatives in German and Swedish educational research. Moreover, Persson (2010) notes that “it is likely that nowhere is resistance to assist gifted students in school stronger than in the Scandinavian countries for historical, cultural, and political reasons, particularly in Sweden” (pp. 356–357). First in 2015, Skolverket published recommendations for how schools can support gifted pupils’ learning in general and in relation to different subjects (http://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/larande/sarskilt-begavade-elever/-1.230661; 2016-11-07). In addition, some first books got published with a focus on the pedagogical dimensions of this issue for teachers daily work (see e.g. Liljedahl, 2017).
abilities perceive to be expected to deal with the same content in the same way, if they need to reach the same educational goals and are furthermore assessed in relation to the same criterial standard. This is illustrated in her allegory of different animals that are assessed in their ability to climb a tree – a task characterised by different levels of difficulty (ranging between “really easy” to “impossible”) in relation to what one is really capable to. The quote thereby indicates that the assessment of abilities, which in turn, one either has or which one is lacking, by applying the same criteria reference standard for all, is seen as inappropriate.

This inappropriateness is furthermore perceived as a contradiction between justice conceptions operating on different levels. The criterial reference standard that teachers refer to when for example explaining their assessment decisions, is perceived as the ‘formally just way of assessing’, which creates contradictions in relation to the own conception of ability seen as inborn. This pattern emerges across the Swedish interviews:

Mohammad: //And then// then they should, when it comes to teaching, they shouldn’t go by the system all that much. They should rather check it by each person, I think.

I: What do you mean?

Mohammad: You know, the system shouldn’t be that difficult for them to use on each person. They can’t just like judge everyone the same and use s:s:systematic assessment.

I: But is it that way today?

Mohammad: Yeah. It’s got to be fair, of course. But you still have to check uhm (4) what the person can do and such. (SWE 03)140

This quote typically highlights how pupils perceive the assessment based on the knowledge requirements and thereby on the equal application of a criterial standard as the external norm for just assessment, since “it’s got to be fair, of course”. On the other hand, this criterial standardisation is conceptualised in

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140 Original sequence:  
"Mohammad: //Sen så// ska de ha, när det gäller undervisning, ska de inte gå efter systemet så här jätte mycket. Utan de ska kolla efter varje person, tycker jag. #00:36:02-7#  
I: Hur menar du då? #00:36:01-2#  
Mohammad: Nä men, det ska ju vara inte ett så svårt system som man kan gå efter hur varje person är. De kan liksom inte alla bara dra över en kam och sätta s:s:systematiskt betyg. #00:36:22-0#  
I: Men är det så det är idag? #00:36:20-6#  
Mohammad: Jo. Det måste ju vara rättvist, givetvist. Men man måste ju fortfarande kolla på eh (4) vad personen kan göra eller så.” #00:36:29-7# (SWE03)
terms of uniformity and it is perceived to exclude “what the person can do”. Thereby it does not fully sufficiently take the various individual possibilities and limitations into account. This indicates that the interviewed pupils see the criterial assessment standard as static as they perceive the abilities to be. Pupils’ underlying belief is that something is assessed that has to do with what they are basically capable to achieve. The risk here is that pupils feel that they lack self-efficacy as well as a real opportunity to influence the part of their grades that is based on ability. Hence they expect the teacher to compensate when allocating grades, by applying an individual reference standard besides the as uniform perceived criterial one.

Also within the **German** interviews, certain patterns of pupils reasoning regarding the character and consequences of abilities in relation to assessment turned out to be important in terms of justice. Pupils in the German interviews, likewise pupils in the Swedish interviews, perceive ability as something that is quite static and that one simply has or doesn’t has by birth:

Malte: Yes, but there has also been/. Well, in year five, we also had those support courses. Yes=Yes. Well, we especially have those for people who aren’t good, that they get supported there. And (. ) Math. I don’t’ get it, how can you (. ) be bad at it? Really. I don’t get it. Well (. ) yet, that’s a COMPLETELY LOGICAL subject. It’s entirely logical!

Laurenz: Yes. For YOU it’s logical. Because you //can think mathematically//.

Ronny: //Yes, well. That’s dyscalculia//. It’s innate. There’s nothing that can be done. Look at the LRS [Abbrev. for „Lese-Rechtschreibschwäche“, Dyslexia] people. If they do something. What would you do with them? You’ll not get them up to this level. Just doing two hours of support course with them wouldn’t make them better either.

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141 See also Dweck’s work on different “mindsets”, which are about different beliefs regarding intelligence. Dweck (e.g. 2015) differentiates between a “fixed mindset” of intelligence and talent versus a “growth mindset” of intelligence and talent. The “fixed mindset” of intelligence is characterised by the belief that intelligence and talent are fixed traits and solely responsible aspects for success or failure. The “growth mindset” of intelligence is characterised by the belief that effort and hard work can develop one’s abilities and thereby lead to success. Over the last decades, Dweck and colleagues provided extensive research on the relation between the implicit intelligence belief and academic motivation, learning and outcome (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck, 2007; Dweck 1986; Dweck and Legget, 1988; Haimovitz and Dweck 2016; Rattan, Savani, Naidu, and Dweck, 2012) pointing out the importance of concentrating on and supporting pupil’s “growth mindset”.

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Laurenz: Yes. Look. That’s the way it is for you. YOU get it, for you it’s logical. But, well/. You wanted to say something [to Ronny]?

Ronny: Nope.

Laurenz: Well, for example, if something in Math is explained to me, then it will simply doesn’t make any SENSE to me.

Malte: For me it will.

Laurenz: Yes. That’s what I mean! For you it makes SENSE. Likewise I’m quite good in English. I don’t know why I’m good in English. I don’t know why. But I can speak English fluently. Because of some reason. I NEVER study for English. I just know it.

Konrad: And handing in the test after half an hour.

Laurenz: And handing in the test after half an hour, went home, went to sleep again. Chillin’ day. But anyhow, nothing learnt. Why should I? I’m simply good. And you are of course simply good in Math. That’s the point.

I 1: Just different talents?

Ronny: Yes, exactly. You can’t get all on the same level.

Laurenz: Yes, that’s just impossible.\(^{142}\) (GER05, Gymnasium)

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\(^{142}\) Original sequence:
Malte: Ja aber da gab’s ja auch. Also in der fünften Klasse gab’s da ja auch diese Förderkurse bei uns. Ja=ja. Also, die sind ja extra dafür da, dass Leute, die nicht gut sind, dass die da gefördert werden. Und (.) Mathe. Ich verstehe’ nicht, wie man da (.) schlecht drin sein kann. Wirklich. Ich verstehe’s nicht. Also (.) das ist doch KOMPLETT LOGISCHES Fach. Das ist durch und durch logisch! #01:03:45-9#
Laurenz: Ja. Das ist für DICH logisch. Weil du //mathematisch denken kannst\/. #01:03:48-7#
Ronny: //Ja also. Das ist eine Rechenschwäche\/. Die ist angeboren jetzt. Da kann man nichts machen. Guck dir die LRS Leute an. Wenn die was machen. Was willst du mit denen machen? Die kriegst nicht auf den Level. Nur weil du jetzt zwei Stunden Förderkurs mit denen machst werden die ja auch nicht besser. #01:03:58-8#
Laurenz: Ja. Guck mal. Das ist bei dir so. DU blickst das, für dich ist das logisch. Aber, also/. Wolltest du was sagen [an Ronny]? #01:04:07-1#
Ronny: Ne. #01:04:07-2#
Laurenz: Also, zum Beispiel, wenn mir etwas gesagt wird in Mathe, dann ergibt das für mich einfach keinen SINN. #01:04:17-1#
Malte: Für mich schon. #01:04:17-1#
Konrad: Und nach ‘ner halben Stunde die Arbeit abgegeben. #01:04:27-9#
This sequence also illustrates how the pupils in both national contexts typically conceptualise ability. Having and lacking abilities are both seen as something one simply has or not by birth (even if the pupil Malte initially in this quote cannot understand how one could lack the ability to understand mathematics as “it is a COMPLETELY LOGICAL subject” for him). Furthermore, the quote also shows the quite static character of ability as something that one simply is good at or not and is neither related to learning nor it is related to development\(^{143}\). Finally, the sequence ends with pupils’ reasoning that it is “just impossible” to “get all on the same level”. That means that the different allocation of abilities is accepted in an unquestioned way and as a natural fact. It is seen as unchangeable and as a reason for why an equal level of outcome is impossible to reach. The school’s efforts to compensate those differing levels of ability by certain support courses don’t seem to change this in a considerable way.

In the German interviews, the possible differences in ability are also discussed, but mainly when pupils talked about their own ‘weaknesses’ and their relevance for grades. However, on the contrary to the Swedish interviews, there was another pattern relevant in the German interviews, which is about pupils’ expectation that the different levels of abilities shall be mirrored in the grade:

\[\text{Ronny: [...] In the other subjects [except sports, B.V.], there you can just, yes, ehm (.) put down a horizon of expectation and say: good, well, if you don’t achieve this, then you’re simply in the range of the poor. And if not, then not. (GER05, Gymnasium)}^{144}\]

This quote represents a pattern of pupils’ view in the German interviews that can in general be said be stricter regarding to how the lack of their peers’ abilities should be handled in school. Since ability is conceptualised as naturally given, the unequal allocation of abilities per se is not questioned but instead pupils concentrate on the unequal treatment by teachers in terms of
assessment. The following sequence will illustrate this pattern and is about a classmate, who is seen to be quite passive during lessons:

Sergej: //Yes, for example it’s LIKE//: Sandy is such a quiet girl in our class. Grade for oral participation, how would I rate her? Four, Five?

Korbinian: Mhm. Grade for oral participation? //Five//.

Michelle: //Four//.

Sergej: Examinations, she always writes One, tests One.

Korbinian: Like me. Well. Basically/.

Sergej: What does she get on the certificate? A One! We are getting upset about it. What is Mr. P.teacher saying about it? Sandy is such a shy girl. Why should I, because she=just because she is shy, why should I penalise her for it? And=and shall I be shy now as well, writing Ones in the test - I would certainly not get a One on the certificate. If so, a Three or a Four. (GER04, Hauptschule)

This sequence stands exemplarily for the two general patterns in the German interviews, namely on the one hand that pupils experience that teachers can compensate classmates more or less explicitly for lacking abilities or weaknesses. On the other hand, it stands for the pattern that the same or even the better grade allocated despite different levels of ability is seen as unjust. For pupils, teacher’s justification becomes the reference standard that is clearly pointing towards an individual reference standard in terms of compensating the classmate. Furthermore, class-internal competition is seen to be in the need of an equal reference standard which should be the same for all

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145 Original sequence:
Sergej: //Ja, das ist zum Beispiel SO//: Sandy ist so ein ruhiges Mädchen in der Klasse. Mündliche Note, wie würd’ ich sie einschätzen? Vier, Fünf? #00:18:14-8#
Korbinian: Mhm. Mündliche Note? //Fünf//. #00:18:17-6#
Michelle: //Vier//. #00:18:17-6#
Sergej: Arbeiten schreibt sie immer Eins, Test Eins. #00:18:23-2#
Korbinian: So wie ich. Also. Im Grunde/. #00:18:24-8#

146 This finding is e.g. supported by a study of Resh (2009) on teacher’s justice principles applied for assessment, showing that teachers compensate pupils with lower performance level by including also other aspects in their assessment.
pupils. The different outcome entailed is seen, likewise the ability per se, as a more or less natural consequence. This becomes certainly visible for example in the following sequence, when teachers justify a better grade in oral presentations by stating that girls generally are shyer:

Moustafa: Yes! Well in some parts, it’s split in strange ways a bit. With the grade-remission [sic!], donations [sic!]. Or for example, teachers also say: yes, the girls are shyer during oral presentation. Now let’s be honest: if I stand there and rambling in the front, then it can be graded in the same way.

I 1: Well, this can then be seen //with the//.

Moustafa: //Yes and if you//, if you’re shy, then that’s bad luck. Then I’ll have bad luck if they will write better grades, than those will have bad luck if I will be better in the oral part. (GER01, Realschule)\textsuperscript{147}

Besides the fact that this quote illustrates the aspect of gender inequality in assessment, Moustafa explains that he experiences that teachers use the ascribed lack of ability as a compensating assessment criteria, which he considers to be illegitimate. Instead he advocates for an assessment standard applied equally to all pupils, regardless their level of ability. The different outcome as a result of this general assessment standard is not generally seen as problematic. However, in a quite strict way towards his peers it is seen as legitimised more as a matter of “luck”. Thereby it stands for the logical extension of an unequal allocation of abilities that is perceived as natural.

The comparison shows that ability in both contexts is seen as something that one simply has or not by birth, which can be said to be a conception about ability that is close to what Dweck (e.g. 2015) calls for a ‘fixed mind-set’ regarding pupils’ implicit beliefs about intelligence. From a pupils’ perspective, one ‘is’ simply good in mathematics, language or sports, or one is not. For the interviewed pupils, different levels of ability mirror natural differences which are not necessarily linked to inequality but which can be described as an equality of the different. Even if this was the general pattern in

\textsuperscript{147} Original quote:
Moustafa: Ja! Also, in manchen Teilen, da ist das dann ein wenig komisch gesplittet. Mit der Notenvergeben, Vergabung. Oder zum Beispiel sagen die Lehrer auch: ja, die Mädchen sind schüchtern beim Vortrag. Ja jetzt also mal ehrlich: wenn ich da vorne steh’ und laber’, dann kann das gleich benotet werden. #01:04:05-6#
I 1: Also, das sieht man //dann an den//. #01:04:06-3#
Moustafa: //Ja und wenn man//, wenn man schüchtern ist, dann hat man ähm, Pech gehabt. Dann hab’ ich Pech, wenn die bessere Noten schreiben, dann hab’n die Pech, wenn ich mündlich besser bin. #01:04:16-0# (GER01, Realschule)
both contexts, in the Swedish interviews clearly emerged, that pupils felt the need to explain and justify their view on a natural allocation of abilities. This became certainly obvious when talked about cognitive abilities like for example, in their view, general intelligence\textsuperscript{148}. However, the differences in ability become a question of justice as soon as abilities are a part of what is assessed and graded. Here, the Swedish and the German pupils have different expectations on how the different abilities should be handled in relation to assessment:

Overall, the Swedish pupils’ reasoning about the relationship between ability and just assessment is more theoretical in character, in contrast to the German pupils’ reasoning, which is much more linked to concrete examples from their everyday school life. Generally speaking, Swedish pupils show in their reasoning that the existing general assessment criteria are quite central in their everyday experience of being graded and assessed and that they necessarily need to handle them in some way. At the same time, these criterial standards are seen as a sort of overall applied normative standard for just assessment: pupils perceive that the same standards used for all is formally seen as just. That means that the official conception of justice is characterised by equality. However, since they also have the strong conception of individually different abilities, they highlight school’s responsibility to compensate for these individual differences when allocating grades\textsuperscript{149}. They perceive the same criterial reference standard applied for all pupils as unjust in terms of insufficiency as it does not pay attention to the diverging abilities which they themselves, from their perspective, cannot be hold responsible for.

In contrast to the pupils interviewed in Sweden, pupils in the German interviews seem stricter in the way of how school should handle pupils’ different levels of ability. Pupils in the German interviews say that they have experienced how teachers compensate classmates for lacking abilities. This compensation is characterised by the same grades allocated despite different levels of ability. This means that pupils experience that teachers include certain abilities in the assessment of certain pupils, which are not considered for other pupils’ grade. That implies that pupils perceive that teachers use different, individual and teacher-dependent criteria for grade allocation. The perceived injustice is thereby a matter of feeling at disadvantage in terms of an

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{148} In contrast, this seemed to be less problematic concerning for example certain physical abilities that matter for performances in, for example, sports.  
\textsuperscript{149} In a wider sense, this also could be understood as the school’s responsibility of helping all pupils to reach the minimal standard (which is nowadays the grade E). This would mean an allocation in accordance with the principle of “equality of outcome”. This is also highlighted by Wahlström (2002) regarding the aim- and knowledge based curriculum in Sweden: “The standard for equivalence is the result, which is to get at least the grade passed in all subjects at the end of spring term in year 9. If the pupil received passed grades, he/she also received an equivalent education” (p. 242, transl. B.V.).}
unequal treatment, which becomes obvious by the social comparison of the classmates’ assessment.

Contrary to the pupils in the Swedish interviews, the pupils interviewed in Germany do not see the school’s primary responsibility in compensation, but more in applying an objective standard for assessing pupils’ abilities. Different grades resulting from using the same objective standard for assessing different levels of ability are described as a natural consequence and a matter of luck.

Overall, the comparison of pupils’ conceptualisations of ‘ability’ with regard to assessment can also basically be seen as unveiling the tension between different standards of reference in educational systems that are characterised by the simultaneity of standardisation and individualisation. To some extent, this is also tangent in the basic dilemma that generally underlies assessment: the societal claim of selection and allocation on the one side and the pedagogical task of individual learning support on the other (Erickson & Gustafsson, 2014; Gerrevall, 2008; Tillmann & Vollstädt, 1999). While this ambiguous (and often seen as contradictory) task has mainly been examined from the perspective of those who are obliged to assess, e.g. studies focusing on how teachers handle this task’s duality (Streckeisen et al., 2007), the results of this study show that the ambiguity of assessment also reaches into the scope of pupils’ experiences. This suggests that the process of meaning-making negotiation regarding this ambiguity is not only limited to teachers’ continual process of balancing their assessment practice (Falkenberg, 2017); but that it is also a part of pupils’ scope of experience. Here, certain conceptions of justice of different actors and levels are contrasted and thereby also they also create a field of tension for pupils. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear that this field of tension is, at least to some extent, influenced by the context-specific logics and forms of standardisation and individualisation in Sweden and Germany. Regarding the category of “ability” and its relation to just assessment, this means that these context-specific logics and forms of standardisation and individualisation seem to have consequences for how pupils conceptualise just assessment, though they hold the same belief of it as a static conceptualised “ability”. The responsibility to reduce the experienced tension is though laid on the teachers who are grading them.

150 For a comparison between pupils and teachers in Sweden regarding this issue see also Falkenberg, Vogt and Waldow (2017).
7.1.3 Interim résumé

In this chapter, it could be shown, that chances and opportunities given by birth, matter from a pupils’ perspective in diverse ways in terms of justice. Furthermore, it was clarified, how the interviewed pupils conceptualise the relevance of these chances in relation to assessment, and in particular, to just assessment. Here, the main patterns within this analytical category focus on two thematic dimensions: on the one hand the relevance of pupils’ family backgrounds for assessment and achieved grades, and on the other, the level of ability. This implies that pupils’ background as a part of their individual conditions, initially located outside school as well as their abilities perceived as a part of their self, enters the institutionalised sphere of educational assessment. By this, the boundaries between a) school as an institution as well as assessment as an institutionalised practice and b) the broader contextual relations of pupils’ life and self become blurred to some extent – at least with regard to pupils’ justice conceptions.

Moreover, the chapter also shows that the chances, which are related to family background as well as the level of ability, are seen as innate and quite static. Expressed in a more simplistic way, it could be said that they are seen as differences of chances that one either has by birth or lacks. As such, these differences per se are not considered as problematic in terms of justice – it first turns out to be a justice issue for pupils, when these initial differences are linked to the allocation of different chances in the classroom. Here, the critical and cross-contextually shared point is, that pupils’ ascribe the school the responsibility for how these innate differences are handled. This seems to apply for a general level, as well as it seems to apply for the very concrete everyday level in the classroom.

Besides these shared conceptual aspects, the context-sensitive comparison also revealed context-dependent differences of pupils’ conceptions, which are based on their everyday experiences in the classroom. For the Swedish pupils, these can be summarised as being characterised by a more overall idea of the school being responsible for compensating for those innate differences, and for equalising them. Here, analysis showed that standardisation can be in conflict with the norm of individualisation with regard to pupils’ compensatory conception. In contrast, this conception is less existent in the German interview data. Rather, German pupils’ conceptions show parallels to the equity principle, and in addition their conceptions seem to be school type-related. School’s responsibility is more seen in applying the same objective frame of reference for all pupils and less in compensation. In both, the Swedish as well as the German sample, the comparatively heterogeneous or homogenous class composition respectively, and the thereof resulting
consequences, might contribute to certain experiences regarding these differences, which in turn matter for pupils’ conceptions.

After pupils’ conceptions regarding the innate chances and opportunities were presented, the following chapter will now shed light on pupils’ conceptions related to chances they perceive that they are ‘given’.

7.2 Externalised responsibility - Chances one is given

In addition to the dimensions regarding chances and opportunities that one simply ‘has’, there are also aspects of pupils’ conceptions which can be said to be related to chances that pupils perceive being ‘given’. Those chances and opportunities are the (pre-)conditions, which pupils find that assessment is related to and based upon and therefore in extension to this, relevant in terms of justice.

Regarding those ‘given’ opportunities and chances, pupils perceive that they cannot influence or control these (pre-)conditions and ascribe the teachers or the system in general the responsibility for the following aspects:

- basic conditions of learning in terms of teaching quality, classroom-management and teaching organisation, which provide the basis for assessment and are relevant for the grade that can be achieved
- opportunities to perform and to show competences one later on is assessed in
- teacher’s ‘good will’ to use the assessment systems’ scope of discretion to the pupils’ advantage
- the absence of diverging kinds of ex-ante ascriptions and categorisations of pupils

In the following, each of these analytical dimensions will be illustrated. The chapter will conclude with an interim résumé.
7.2.1 Chances to learn

The analytical concept ‘chances to learn’ is about pupils’ conceptions regarding certain conditions of just assessment, which are temporally situated before grading takes place and thematically situated in teaching. That means that these conditions are not directly related to the assessment procedure but that they play an important role for the pupils with regard to just assessment and in extension to this, for just grading. Through this, once again it gets clear that just assessment is a quite complex issue for pupils, whose meaning hardly can be understood isolated from many other aspects in pupils’ everyday school life. Focusing merely on grading would exclude pupils’ meaning making patterns of interdependence and thereby it would miss the opportunity to gain insights in pupils’ own meaning-making relevance structures.

One of these interdependent patterns that showed to be relevant for how pupils experience and how they think about just assessment in school, is that pupils find that the everyday teaching in the classroom creates certain conditions for their learning and thereby for the just conditions of grade allocation. Pupils in the German as well as in the Swedish interviews perceive these conditions as being beyond their control and influence. Aspects such as ‘Teaching quality’, the ‘Quality of teachers’ class-leadership’ and the ‘Organisation of teaching’, were repetitively taken up in all interviews. Pupils perceive that these aspects are relevant for their opportunities to learn the things that they later on get assessed and graded on and which they perceive that they at the same time cannot influence.

From a pupils’ point of view, they are fully dependent on how these aspects are handled and on how far they are given the chance to learn and to understand what they later on are graded on. Therefore, they lay the responsibility for poor or good grades in regard to these aspects mainly on teachers. However, even if these aspects of teaching as such cannot be discussed in detail here but read elsewhere151, the chapter will provide insights in this issue but with a focus on the relation to just assessment from a pupils’ perspective.

151 See e.g. Darling-Hammond (2000); Brophy (2000); Håkansson and Sundberg (2012); Harris and Sass (2011); Helmke (2009); Weinert (1996); Ditton (2002); Clausen (2002); Grönqvist and Vlachos (2008); Hansson and Gustafsson (2016).
7.2.1.1 Teaching quality

The analytical category ‘teaching quality’ is aiming at pupils’ perception on how far the teacher is able to support their learning process. Overall, the aspects brought up by pupils characterising good or poor teaching with regard to assessment, can be summarised in the following analytical concepts and are aiming at teacher’s ability to provide:

a) ‘Individualised support’, which is about teachers’ ability to see the learning process and content from the individual pupil’s perspective and to provide a form of explanation that supports pupils’ understanding and learning.

b) ‘A variety of teaching methods’\(^{152}\), which means that teachers use different and variable teaching methods that are adapted to the specific teaching content, the class and/or the individual pupil and which support pupils understanding and learning and increase pupils learning motivation.

c) ‘A stable corpus of professional subject knowledge’, which is about teachers’ own professional knowledge within the subject they are teaching. Pupils perceive that certain teachers cannot answer questions in an adequate way, and they themselves seem to lack skills and knowledge that they claim from pupils and sometimes even teach the wrong facts. In the German interviews, this mainly played a role in relation to unplanned substitute teachers in cases when the ordinary teacher was not able to work. Pupils in the Swedish interviews mainly emphasised an as insufficient perceived subject knowledge for both, ordinary teachers as well as for teachers who lack adequate qualification for the subject, or sometimes even a teaching diploma. Pupils often explain this either with the school’s lack of financial resources or with low-level admission criteria within teacher education\(^{153}\).

\(^{152}\) Regarding this issue, Lilliedahl, Sundberg, and Wahlström (2016) note in their evaluation of the Swedish reform implemented in 2011, that teaching repertoires are again more focusing on instructing the whole class (if compared to the more individual teaching repertoires applied when teaching was based on the foregoing curriculum LpO94).

Regarding the variety of teaching methods in the German context, Breidenstein (2006) for example notes that no systematic studies were undertaken since 1980s (which also is in line with the literature research done for this study) to examine the applied teaching methods. However, Breidenstein (2006) assumes that ex-cathedra teaching methods cover about 70-80 % of the teaching methods applied in German classrooms. He also highlights the importance to discuss ex-cathedra teaching rather in terms of quality instead of dichotomous generalisations, such as ex-cathedra teaching per se would be more problematic than individualised teaching settings (p.94-95).

\(^{153}\) This issue has been widely discussed in the media during the last years and resulted in a general salary increase for teachers as well as a reform of teacher education.
d) ‘Motivational support’, meaning the teacher’s ability to encourage pupils to reach higher aims. This includes as well that the teacher is able to acknowledge pupils learning effort.

e) ‘Authentic enthusiasm’, which means that the teacher conveys his/her own genuine and persuasive interest and joy in the subject and at the same time avoids acting too much in a ‘teacher role’.

Though these findings would have been very interesting to examine in a deeper comparative analysis, the analytical focus here is on the contextualisation that pupils make\(^{154}\) that such teacher abilities form the basic foundations for their learning, which they as pupils in turn are later graded on.

Hence, ‘teaching quality’ goes for the interviewed pupils beyond learning in terms of being perceived as more fun, more motivating or more meaningful. Rather, ‘teaching quality’ is about the causal relevance with regard to the grades they can achieve.

This conception can be exemplified by the following quote from a Swedish interview:

\[\text{Louise: I mean=mean the responsibility is mine. I mean that I (...) that I get to take the consequences for it, so to speak like. I mean that she, she can't really teach but still it's down to me to (...) to know. I mean I HAVE TO write the right stuff. Even though SHE might not have taught me. Even though she should teach me. I mean, you have to like (4)/. I mean you have to like work A LOT at home and in the books and that when she //doesn't know//. (SWE05) }^{155}\]

Here, Louise describes the relation between the teacher’s ability to teach and to assess, which can be understood as a reversed causal ability chain of assessment: the grade is dependent on pupils knowledge and abilities, which in turn are dependent on their opportunity to learn, which in turn is dependent on teachers’ ability to teach and which the pupil overall perceives not being given the chance to influence. For pupils, this raises the question whose abilities the ones are that get assessed and graded and in extension, who can be

\(^{154}\) Even if the teaching quality aspect cannot be discussed in its entirety in this study, the interested reader is referred to, for example Helmke (2009) or Clausen (2002) for the German context and Sundberg & Håkansson (2012) for the Swedish context. For an international perspective regarding the issue of teaching quality, see e.g. Brophy (2000).

\(^{155}\) Original quote:

hold responsible for a certain grade in the end. Since the question of responsibility is intertwined to the question of legitimacy, this issue is relevant in relation to pupils’ justice conceptions: if the responsibility for the grade lies on the pupil, the whole assessment procedure is legitimate; if parts of the responsibility, like in this case the teaching quality, is laid upon the teacher, the legitimacy of the assessment procedure gets reduced from a pupils’ perspective and thereby can be questioned by pupils in terms of justice.

This principle applies for all the aspects of teachers’ abilities named above and was also repetitively described in the German interviews which shall be illustrated with the following quote:

Moustafa: Or you’re not interested because the teacher is doing the lesson bo(.)ring. It’s often like that as well. And with some teachers, you’re sitting there and then you’ve lost interest after the lesson. And then you’ll see that in the grades. Well, most of the teachers always say: that has to do with the pupil. But often it also has to do with the teacher. It’s not possible that this uhm (.) has to do with the pupils when 26 pupils don’t like the teacher. Or finding that the=the lessons are boring. (GER01, Realschule)\textsuperscript{156}

By this quote, the responsibility-legitimacy logic of ‘teaching quality’ can be illustrated: boring lessons are described as an aspect of poor teaching quality\textsuperscript{157}, which leads to poor learning motivation and both, the poor teaching quality and the resulting demotivation are seen to be mirrored in the poor grade. Additionally, the poor grade is perceived as necessary to be explained in terms of whom can be held responsible for the poor grade. The fact that the same teacher, who was seen to have taught with a poor quality, ascribes the pupil the responsibility for the poor grade is seen as an unjust allegation. Even this seems to be necessary to be justified and is therefore proved by the explanation that all pupils in the class reflect in the same way. If all pupils in the class experienced the same teaching and all conclude that the quality was poor, then the responsibility for the poor grade cannot be ascribed to the pupil. Therefore, injustice arises in a twofold way: the grade that is depending on

\textsuperscript{156} Original quote:

\textsuperscript{157} See for e.g. also Breidenstein’s (2006) ethnographic study on pupil’s participation during lessons and particularly the chapter on the expression and meaning of pupil’s boredom in school (p.65-83).
the teaching quality one cannot influence and the responsibility that is laid upon the pupils.

As already indicated above, there are similar basic aspects related to ‘Teaching quality’ addressed by pupils in the Swedish as well as in the German interviews, which follow similar rationales. This suggests that the aspects ‘Individualised support’, ‘A variety of teaching methods’, ‘A stable corpus of subject knowledge’, ‘Motivation support’ and ‘Authentic enthusiasm’ are fundamental conceptions of quality criteria pupils hold in relation to good teaching, regardless the system-immanent differences that otherwise could have been expected to influence the pupil’s teaching experience. Pupils perceive teachers to be responsible for this experience in regard to assessment and grading, and therefore, these aspects of ‘teaching quality’ need to be understood as one of the basic preconditions of just grading.

7.2.1.2 Teachers’ ability of class-leadership

Besides ‘Teaching quality’, pupils in both contexts highlighted the ‘Ability of class leadership’ as another aspect of teachers’ responsibility. The ability of class-leadership can be summarised as a teacher’s ability to lead and to manage the class in a way that supports a learning environment, which is characterised by an adequate alternation of concentration and relaxation, of work focus and relation focus.

Due to reasons of clarity beginning with a German interview this time, the following sequence shows how pupils describe this interplay exemplified by a teacher that has a leadership style that is perceived as one that supports their learning:

Frederike: With that teacher, it’s not like being mega strict or so. But she really can control //the// class.

Manuel: //Yep//.

Frederike: And we really learn something with her. Because you also do/. Well, this is mostly the case with her. Well, you also do the homework and ehm (.). Well, with her/. Well you’re not always really interested in school. But it’s more fun then, than with other teachers, just wri//ting// something on the board.
The pupils in this sequence describe how the teacher’s ability to control the class and to manage an adequate level of work focus and relation focus influences their learning in class as well as their motivation to do their homework. What is described in this sequence as a teacher’s ability to control the class by leading through a well-balanced mixture of “not being mega strict” and being able to “really […] control //the// class”, of having “fun with her sometimes” and being “serious again. So that we continue with learning” is seen as the basic leadership competence of a teacher.\(^{159}\)

Furthermore, imbalance is described as an aspect, which negatively influences pupils’ learning in diverging ways and thereby it is also seen as a relevant aspect regarding the grades they can receive. A typical situation outlined in a Swedish interview, where an imbalance is seen to affect the chance for learning, is the following:

_Emelia: and there’s like some/ I mean you have to have teachers who can be both/. I mean both like GENTLE and like k:kinder when it comes to telling off //because otherwise our class won’t listen//._

_Finja: // I mean if I get to// fiddle with my phone and be a bit messy. Then I will! I need a teacher who says: NO, NO, NO!_
Carolin: Yeah, exactly!

Emelia: Mhm. Not saying: Uh, don’t fiddle with your mobile. Don’t fiddle with your mobile. Don’t fiddle/. And then //you keep going five more minutes. Next time I’ll take it!!

Finja: //I can’t help fiddling with my phone//. I need someone to tell me off when I do. Because if I get to do a little bit what I want, because it’s like hard for me. I will do like at home/.

Emelia: Yeah but like [D.teacher]. He never takes the mobile.

Carolin: Nah, but he just says like: uh like put the mobile down.

Finja: Uhu, and then when he takes it I go up there and get it and he says like //NOTHING// [laughs].

Emelia: //In front of// his eyes you can grab it: I’m taking it now! And he says NOTHING! And that’s quite bad. Sure. Then it’s up to you to take advantage (...) of/ or the class, but at the same time: if you’re not able to? You’re like stuck to your phone. If you’re like told off like in a strict way. Then you won’t grab the phone. (SWE04)\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{160} Original sequence:
Emelia: och det är alltså vissata. Alltså man måste ha lärare som kan vara både/. Alltså både så här MJUK och så här s:ssnällare och när det behövs säga till //för annars lyssnar inte vår klass//.
#00:35:39-9#
Finja: //Alltså om jag har möjlighet att// pilla med min mobil och vara lite slarvigt. Då gör jag det! Jag måste ha en lärare som säger: NEJ, NEJ, NEJ! #00:35:44-6#
Carolin: Ah precis. #00:35:47-8#
Finja: //jag kan inte låta bli att pilla på mobilen//. Jag måste ha någon som säger till för att jag gör det. För om jag får göra lite som jag vill för jag har lite svårt så här. Jag tänker ju göra som hemma/.
#00:36:03-6#
Emelia: Ja men typ som [D.läraren]. Han tar ju aldrig mobilen. #00:36:06-0#
Carolin: Nå men han säger ju bara: ah men lägg ner mobilen. #00:36:10-9#
Finja: Ah och sen så när han tar den så går jag fram och hämtar den och så säger han typ //INGENTING// [skrattar]. #00:36:12-5#
Carolin: //Ah!/ [skrattar]. #00:36:12-5#
Likewise it was the case with ‘Teaching quality’ and ‘Class leadership’, pupils in the Swedish as well as in the German interviews also brought up issues that were categorised as ‘Teaching organisation’. ‘Teaching organisation’ has to do with how teachers organise their teaching in terms of material and timely aspects. This material and timely aspects are additional preconditions, which pupils perceive as basically important in relation to the chances they are given to learn and to understand what they later on are assessed and graded on. With regard to material aspects, pupils for example can find it unjust if assessment situations require access to certain materials, which at the same time are not provided. This can include: the lack of access to adequate equipment (e.g. computer hardware and software, tools in arts and crafts etc.), which then reduces the quality of their work and thereby their chance to receive a certain grade; or the lack of high quality textbooks, which pupils are particularly dependent on in order to prepare for tests if ‘Teaching quality’ is at the same time perceived as poor. This principle applies for pupils in both contexts and can be exemplified by the following sequence from a German interview:

Karl: And for example [harrumphing] in Biology: […]. And then uhm (..) then for once I was uhm (.) sick a few classes. And uhm (.) then they just got such a paper, which I just (..)/. […]. Then=then one day I just/. Well, I have been there, then I missed one class and then next class I have been there again and then I asked the teacher if she could give me the paper. Then SHE said to me I should get it myself. But I can’t get it myself, if the teacher doesn’t give me something. Yes and then (..) then we also did a test, where this paper was included. Then I wrote there: well, I don’t have this paper. How //I//.

Moustafa: //You should// get it yourself?

Karl: Yes. And then I couldn’t do anything about it. Yes and if I for example/. If I then would hand in the portfolio, then it would say: well, the paper is missing. But how should //I//.

This sequence gives a more detailed insight in how the imbalance of kindness and assertiveness is perceived as an inadequate leadership. The consequence thereof is influencing pupils’ learning as the focus in this situation is on the discussion about the use of the mobile phone and this applies for the pupils’ focus as well as for the teacher’s focus. Furthermore, it can be assumed that such situations also distract other pupils in the class, redirecting even their attention to the mobile phone discussion going on in class. Thereby focus is taken from learning and teaching, and from a pupils’ point of view, it reduces their chances to learn and to understand, and in extension, it affects their grades.

This also applies for example to the multiple situations pupils described in the interviews in both countries regarding teachers who seem to lack the ability to establish a quiet and concentrated working atmosphere, where one pupil adversely affect the lesson for a whole class and in which some teachers are perceived as having problems to handle this in an adequate way. The responsibility for poor grades resulting from such situations is ascribed to the teacher and it is based on the same principles as those applied for ‘Teaching quality’

Amanda: Uhu. And if there’s one or two who don’t want to, then the whole lecture ends up debating with her. And then it’s hard for the rest of us who want to learn. Which also affects our grades (..). (SWE01)161

Although the character of situations challenging teachers’ ability of class leadership can be different according to what Swedish and German pupils experience (e.g. the mobile phone situation was repeatedly named in Swedish interviews but not at all in the German interviews162), pupils conceptualisation of teachers’ ability of class leadership is following equivalent reasoning according to its meaning for assessment. This suggests, like it was the case regarding ‘Teaching quality’, that there are certain basic criteria for pupils characterising a good leadership. Pupils’ perceive that the teacher is responsible for this and they perceive it as a fundamental precondition for learning and in extension to this, for just assessment and grading.

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161 Original quote:
Amanda: Ah. Och om det är en eller två som inte vill, så kan hela lektionen går ut på att de debatterar med henne. Och då blir det svårt för oss andra, som vill lära oss. Som också då påverkar våra betyg (..). (SWE01)

162 See also e.g. Billmayer’s (2015) comparative study on discipline in the Swedish and the German classroom, which supports the finding regarding the mobile-phone issue (p.110).
7.2.1.3 Organisation of teaching

Likewise it was the case with ‘Teaching quality and ‘Class leadership’, pupils in the Swedish as well as in the German interviews also brought up issues that were categorised as ‘Teaching organisation’. ‘Teaching organisation’ has to do with how teachers organise their teaching in terms of material and timely aspects. This material and timely aspects are additional preconditions, which pupils perceive as basically important in relation to the chances they are given to learn and to understand what they later on are assessed and graded on.

With regard to material aspects, pupils for example can find it unjust if assessment situations require access to certain materials, which at the same time are not provided. This can include: the lack of access to adequate equipment (e.g. computer hardware and software, tools in arts and crafts etc.), which then reduces the quality of their work and thereby their chance to receive a certain grade; or the lack of high quality textbooks, which pupils are particularly dependent on in order to prepare for tests if ‘Teaching quality’ is at the same time perceived as poor. This principle applies for pupils in both contexts and can be exemplified by the following sequence from a German interview:

Karl: And for example [harrumphing] in Biology: [...] And then uhm (..) then for once I was uhm (.) sick a few classes. And uhm (.) then they just got such a paper, which I just (..)/. [...] Then=then one day I just/. Well, I have been there, then I missed one class and then next class I have been there again and then I asked the teacher if she could give me the paper. Then SHE said to me I should get it myself. But I can’t get it myself, if the teacher doesn’t give me something. Yes and then (..) then we also did a test, where this paper was included. Then I wrote there: well, I don’t have this paper. How shall //I//.

Moustafa: //You should// get it yourself?

Karl: Yes. And then I couldn’t do anything about it. Yes and if I for example/. If I then would hand in the portfolio, then it would say: well, the paper is missing. But how should I/. If SHE HERSELF can’t give it to me, how should I give it to me myself?

(GER01, Realschule)

163 Original sequence:

This sequence stands exemplarily for lesson materials that also matter for learning and assessment and which the pupils perceive not to have been given access to. The point here is that requirements and conditions are not perceived to be in balance. Here, pupils’ reasoning about the mutual shift of responsibility becomes obvious again: the teacher lays the responsibility to get the paper handed out during the pupil’s absence on the pupil, and the pupil does not know how to help himself in order to solve the problem. Since the content of the paper is part of a written test that is graded as well as the paper as a material object per se is part of a portfolio that also will be graded in the end, will the fact that he has not access to the paper bring consequences for his grade.

The same principle becomes also obvious in the Swedish interviews:

Maja: And sometimes I think, they don’t give any good explanations to why they’ve put the grade that (. ) like one of our Swedish teachers, she uh, she didn’t give me any good grades and she never gave me any reasons for why and I think that was a bit bad. She just said that I hadn’t handed in (...) my uhm, my Swedish story in time. But that was because we didn’t have a printer at school that worked. [...] So you couldn’t kind of print the assignment. And I don’t think that was a good reason to lower me. [...] (SWE02)

Besides the aspect of the legitimacy of the teacher’s explanation of the grade, this quote also highlights, that the pupil couldn’t fulfil the task due to the lack of material – in this case a printer at school that works. So the provision of adequate materials used for learning and assessment are as well seen as a basic precondition for just assessment, which the teacher is seen as being responsible for to provide or at least to take into account when allocating
grades. Pupils perceive that they have no possibility to influence such material preconditions for learning and in extension to this, for assessment. Consequently, they reject the responsibility they are ascribed. Even here, a double injustice is perceived: on the one hand that something is graded, which pupils cannot influence and on the other hand, which they are hold responsible for.

Besides these material aspects, pupils in Swedish and German interviews also emphasise the timely aspects of ‘Teaching organisation’ as determining the preconditions for just assessment. These timely aspects are about teachers’ time planning in relation to the learning content, which is assessed and graded.

An example for this is pupils’ experience of getting graded for content that they were not given enough time to learn in lessons. Even here, the before explained shift of responsibility becomes visible. This can be exemplified with a quote from a German interview:

Karl: Regarding her, I also find/. Well, the Biology teacher. [...] Well, we had all the cancelled classes. Well, like seven, eight weeks in a row. When we had all the substitute teachers. And then she said to us: well, I don’t even know now how to grade you. [...] And then I think in beforehand: well it’s her own fault anyway, if she/. Because I noticed that she HAS BEEN at school and yet we had no Biology. And then I think: why/. Well, basically she makes it like this herself that we don’t have Biology and then she’s whining that SHE can’t grade us. And then my grade suffers from this as well. (GER01, Realschule)\(^{165}\)

The pupil sees the teacher as responsible for the lack of time provided for learning the content, which he will get graded for later on. Even here, the injustice lies in the fact that he has to bear the consequences for a situation, which he himself at the same time cannot influence. That means that his grade is allocated nonetheless as if he would be responsible.

The same conceptualisation emerged also from the Swedish interviews, here in relation to the national tests:

\(^{165}\)Original quote:
Karl: Bei der find’ ich auch/. Also der Biologielehrerin. [...] Also wir hatten ja den ganzen Stundenausfall. Also irgendwie sieben, acht Wochen am Stück. Wo dann die ganzen Vertretungslehrer waren. Und dann hat sie zu uns gesagt: ja, ich weiss jetzt ja auch gar nicht, wie ich euch benoten soll. [...] Und dann denk’ ich mir im Vorfeld: ja die ist doch selbst schuld, wenn sie/. Weil ich hab’ manchmal mitbekommen, sie WAR an der Schule und wir hatten trotzdem kein Biologie. Und dann denk’ ich mir: wieso/. Also, die macht das ja praktisch von sich aus selber so, dass wir kein Bio haben und dann heult sie rum, dass SIE uns nicht benoten kann. Und darunter leidet dann ja auch meine Note. #00:23:34-7#
This sequence exemplarily shows that pupils perceive the teacher's organisation of teaching time in relation to the learning content as inadequate. Moreover, the teacher's ability to plan teaching time and learning content is seen as relevant for their chances to learn and in extension, for the grades they can achieve. Even here, pupils perceive that they have to bear the consequences of something that they cannot influence themselves, since "he doesn't lose ANYTHING. It's just US like. Who do." It is therefore, pupils highlight the relevance of teacher's responsibility with regard to the aspect of time planning as a relevant precondition for a just grade allocation.

Overall, the comparison revealed that the aspects of 'Teaching quality', 'Class leadership' and 'Teaching organisation' are vitally important for pupils in both contexts when it comes to just assessment. Furthermore, the characteristics of these three aspects in relation to just assessment might differ with regard to the thematic content but are quite similar regarding the underlying rationales. The general conception is that these three aspects are basic preconditions, which either support or impede their learning and thereby also influence their chances to achieve certain grades. For pupils, the injustice that results thereof, lies in the fact that grades are supposed to reflect their level of knowledge and competences, while grades in addition also are seen to mirror other, more implicit aspects. These aspects are perceived to lie beyond pupils' control and influence and are related to teachers' abilities. Hence, pupils perceive a double

Evelina: Last year we had Geography during one class. One forty five minutes class. In a whole year. And now he says that the (..) uhm, what’s it called, National Test! That it’ll be either on Social Science or Geography.

Nelly: And Geography isn’t like/. We know maybe (..) the countries in Europe.

Evelina: I mean, we haven’t gone through like anything.

Hannah: //NOPE.//

Pauline: //No//.

Algat: //But// not even that.

I: But how does it feel when you might be doing the National Test and have/?

Evelina: I mean, it’s sick. I don’t know what he’s been thinking. Because he/ like now/ I mean I TOLD him last year, when there was this like talk and he just: uhu, what do you think then? I just like: we had VERY little Geography. We had VERY much Social Science. He just: uhu, I know. It just happened that way. I planned it a bit wrong. Sort of. And then like: We’re jus/ we’re just focusing on Geography NEXT YEAR. [...] [...]

Evelina: Becau=because he=he likes/ he likes Social Science. That’s obvious. He kind of thinks it’s so much fun. But it can get a bit/. I mean it can affect us too. Because if we’re going to have Geography in the National Test. And we keep talking about Social Science for another term //so that you like// have every year/. That gets really/. 

Pauline: //he doesn’t lose//.

Evelina: That gets really hard.

Pauline: He doesn’t lose ANYTHING. It’s just US like. Who do. (SWE06)166

166Original sequence:
This sequence exemplarily shows that pupils perceive the teacher’s organisation of teaching time in relation to the learning content as inadequate. Moreover, the teacher’s ability to plan teaching time and learning content is seen as relevant for their chances to learn and in extension to this, for the grades they can achieve. Even here, pupils perceive that they have to bear the consequences of something that they cannot influence themselves, since “he doesn’t lose ANYTHING. It’s just US like. Who do”. It is therefore, pupils highlight the relevance of teacher’s responsibility with regard to the aspect of time planning as a relevant precondition for a just grade allocation.

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Evelina: Förra året hade vi ju geografi under en lektion. En fyrtiominuters lektion. På ett helt år. Och nu säger han att i (..) eh, vad heter det (..) nationella! Att det antingen kommer vara samhälle eller geografi. #00:58:49-5#
Nelly: Och geografi är liksom inte/. Vi kan kanske (..) Europas länder. #00:58:54-0#
Evelina: Alltså vi har inte gått igenom typ någonting. #00:58:55-3#
Hannah: //NÅ.//. #00:58:55-3#
Pauline: //Nej/. #00:58:55-3#
Algot: //Men// inte ens det. #00:58:56-8#
I: Men hur känns det att ni kanske ska skriva nationella och har/? #00:58:59-9#
…
Pauline: //han förlorar ju/. #01:00:02-3#
Evelina: Det blir väldigt jobbigt. #01:00:05-6#
Pauline: Han förlorar ju INGENTING på detta. Det är ju BARA vi. Som gör det. (SWE06)

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166 Original sequence:
injustice here: on the one hand, the unjustified ascription of responsibility and on the other hand, a lack of possibilities to influence and change these preconditions.

7.2.2 Chances to show competences

Another central aspect of pupils’ everyday experiences with assessment in school is that the oral demonstration of their knowledge and abilities is of vital importance for the grades they can achieve. Here, pupils perceive that they are held responsible for making their competences visible, which also means that pupils experience the inferential character of assessment. On the other hand, they experience as well that they are not always given the possibility to do so. Consequently, pupils perceive their teachers to be responsible for providing adequate conditions that enable them to show those competences, which the grade, later on, is based upon. The way in which this aspect is represented in both contexts is shown below:

For pupils in the Swedish interviews, their oral participation in class is an important chance to show their competences. However, this chance is perceived being linked to conditions that are decisive in terms of having the possibility at all to use this chance and in terms of being able to take it. In the following sequence, Sara point out that according to her teacher’s feedback, she needs to be more active during lessons and needs to take the chances provided in class to increase oral participation if she wants to improve her grade. In everyday lessons, however, this is difficult for her to realise though:

Sara: Uhu. And then it’s probably those who stick out the most. They get the question as well.

Marina: Yeah.

Sara: So it doesn’t matter if you sit there with your hand raised screaming: I know this! Screaming it straight out. So you just sit there and/ [inhales, disappointed]. So. (SWE02)

168 The in-vivo codes for this category were “visa vad man kan” and “Zeigen was man kann”. Both are about showing what one is able to do, what one knows, which skills and competences one has. This is summarised here in the concept of ‘competences’, which is thereby more of an empirically connoted concept. For a deeper insight regarding the theoretical discussions of the concept of ‘competences’ in both contexts see e.g. Hartig and Klieme (2006), Weinert (2002) as well as Carlgren, Forsberg and Lindbergh (2009).

169 Original sequence:
Sara: Ah. Och sen är det väl så att de som syns mest. De får ju frågan med. #00:26:24-6#
This sequence illustrates how pupils experience themselves as dependent on the chances they are either given or not given by the teacher. That means, that the responsibility to take the chance, which was laid on her by the teacher as a basic requirement to improve the grade, in turn is seen as basically dependent on how far the teacher gives her an adequate chance to show the required competences. Further, it becomes clear that this also has to do with how the teacher allocates these chances in the classroom. The teacher’s questions are something that the pupil needs to ‘get’ in order to have the chance to ‘give’ the right answer. Form this point of view, the allocation process regarding questions and answers is characterised by an internal class competition between peers. The classroom situation ‘oral participation’, which is used for assessment and matters for pupils’ grade, thereby becomes a situation in which pupils compete with each other for the chance to give the right answer. Through this, the ‘formal’ chance of oral participation is determined by the ‘factual’ chances given by the teacher during an allocative process. From a pupils’ perspective, the allocation criterion for getting the question is how much one can succeed in attracting the teacher’s attention.

Moreover, if pupils have been allocated the chance to speak; so if the formal chance has turned into the factual chance to show their competences; the situation of oral participation is seen to be linked again to certain conditions. Pupils perceive that there is just a certain kind of competences that are seen as valuable in regard to assessment. The following sequence will illustrate this and is thematically embedded in a discussion about the need to give the teacher a basis for assessing their ability of abstract reasoning:

I: And it means you always have to talk in front of the whole class?

Emelia: No but, not always but OFTEN it’s like that.

Finja If you’re going to/. If you have to motivate why you’re thinking this way, and like/. Thing’s like, maybe they want you to go in there and think and to get an A then you should really go in there and really explain why you’ve had that exact thought.

Emelia: And then like pros and cons and what it was like then and now and and, uhm, why it’s good to think the way I do and why it’s not good to think the way I do and why it’s good to think in the other way and why it’s not good. So it’s, it’s/. I mean you have to (..) [sighs] I mean yes, I don’t really know how to explain.

Marina: Jo. #00:26:23-6#

Sara: Så det spelar ju ingen roll om man sitter där och räcker upp handen och skriker sen: jag kan det här! Och skriker det så här rakt ut. Så bara sitter man ju där och/ [drar in luften, besviken]. Så. #00:26:34-8# (SWE02)
Carolin: And then it feels like if you CAN EXPLAIN then it doesn’t matter that much if you’ve got a lot of facts because then you get good grades.

Emelia: Uhm. As=as=as long as you can talk and present your opinion you can have good grades, like. And that’s (.) mostly negative I think. Even if it would’ve been like easy for me and that, then it still would’ve been so and so. Because you can’t really learn that much. I don’t think. (SWE04) 

This sequence exemplarily shows that the interviewed pupils perceive that there are certain competences that are more important for assessment than others. Pupils describe that they experience that competences related to explanation and analysis are of greater value for the grade than the factual subject specific knowledge is. It becomes obvious that pupils perceive that the visualisation of these cognitive processes for the teacher is a basic precondition for making these competences assessable at all. By this, the provided chances are by no means only chances but rather experienced as an obligatory necessity. It is striking how pupils describe the competences related to explanation and analysis mostly in terms of methodical abilities and how these are contrasted with knowledge in terms of “facts”. Furthermore it becomes clear, how pupils perceive these methodical abilities in an almost mechanical way. In order to get a good grade, they believe that they merely need to show their ability of making their cognitive processes explicit in terms of simple dichotomies regarding an arbitrary content “like pros and cons and what it was like then and now and and, uh.. why it’s good to think the way I do and why it’s not good to think the way I do and why it’s good to think in the other way and why it’s not good”. In this sense, the competences that
matter for the grade are conceptualised as a sort of catalogue of more or less ‘simple’ and dichotomous methodical abilities. From a pupils’ perspective, it is these methodical abilities that need to be showed in order to have the chance to receive a certain grade.

In addition to this, the necessary visualisation of competences is also perceived to a great extent as being based on pupils’ verbal abilities, which also carries consequences for their grades in all other subjects. This applies particularly with regard to the ability to explicate the above illustrated cognitive processes. The following sequence is embedded in a thematic context where the pupil Algot recounts his difficulties to describe with exact words how he handled a certain task in the subject of Technics. That means that he successfully solved the technical problem of an electrical circuit but wasn’t able to concretely explain with words how and why he did it the way he did. This led to the lowest possible grade:

*Nelly: Yes, when you’re supposed to do an assignment. And then you’re not that good at wording it. That’s how I feel. You might not be that good at EXPRESSING yourself about the thing you want to write. But then you’re still really good at that subject. And then you get a lowered grade when they can’t really get what you’ve written. And I can understand that they can’t understand really (.) exactly what I’ve written (.) what it is. But still that you/. Because it feels a bit weird: if you’ve like got a technical thing. And then you’ve got an assignment. And you score badly on that. But you’re good really. Because perhaps that was what you were lowered on, Algot? But that you’re good at Science. And it still feels weird because you’ve still got Science and not (...) I mean/.

Hannah: Swedish, like.

Nelly: Uhu.

Hannah: And then you, you might express your technology by BUILDING what you’re doing. And/ because that=that=that=that’s really your thing like. And then you might not be able to write everything down on a PAPER in the same way like. And then it’s bad for you to get lowered just because you might not be able to EXPRESS yourself. I mean it’s really weird. When technology is about like (.) BUILDING. (SWE06)*

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172 Original sequence:
This sequence exemplarily represents another dimension of the necessary visualisation of competences: the necessity of the ability to verbalise. This means pupils’ experience that their ability to describe their analytical or logical operations is perceived as a foundation for the grades allocated. Furthermore, this is seen as being independent from the subject, which is perceived as “really weird” since the main competences perceived as crucially for this subject, for example “BUILDING”, is exchanged for the ability of “EXPRESSING yourself”. The injustice here lies then for the pupils in the fact that one is graded for general verbal abilities instead of for subject specific competences because: if “you’re still really good” but “maybe you cannot write everything down on a PAPER (…)” this can lead to a lower grade “just because you might not be able to EXPRESS yourself”\(^ {171} \). Consequently, the chance to show competences needs also to be understood in terms of pupils’ abilities to verbalise their thinking, which is perceived as being of great relevance for the grade they can achieve.

Similar to the Swedish interviews, the pupils in the German interviews also emphasise the grade as depending on the chances to show their competences, which first and foremost are given by the teacher:

*Mirjam: And this always depends on classes, how teachers structure it and then they just say: well, you need to participate more. But the classes sometimes don’t provide the opportunity at all to do that.*

\textit{(GER03, Realschule)}\(^ {174} \)

This quote exemplifies that the German pupils also emphasise that teachers lay the responsibility for grade improvement through increased participation on them. Here, the injustice is related to the fact that classes do not always

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\(^{171} \)Original quote:


\textit{(GER03, Realschule)}

\(^{173} \)Compare to the intentions to strengthen subject-specific knowledge, when the curriculum Lgr11 was implemented in year 2011 (e.g. Nordin and Sundberg 2016, particularly on p. 323).

\(^{174} \)Original quote:
provide the chance to participate more and that participation is determined by certain conditions. Teachers are perceived to pre-allocate the chances to show competences by structuring classes in certain ways. This sort of pre-allocating chances applies equally for all pupils in the class and thereby it can be understood as a ‘general pre-allocation of chances’ to receive a certain grade.

However, besides this ‘general pre-allocation of chances’, analysis revealed also another type of allocation of chances, which depends on who the teacher decides to allow for answering a question. That means that the teacher individually allocates the right to speak and therefore this can be seen as a sort of ‘individual pre-allocation of chances’:

Elisabeth: [...] Well, Math isn’t my favourite subject either and I’m not that TALENTED in it either. But: then, if I raise my hand, then I don’t even get the question! That makes me SO upset, right? Then I say to mum: yes mum, I really raise my hand THAT often, but he doesn’t even ask me. And uhm, then mum: yes, but then he’s seen you anyway. He knows: if you’re raising your hand, then he knows that you KNOW it.[...] But if you don’t get asked. Yes.

(GER08, Gymnasium)\textsuperscript{175}

Raising hands can be understood as a way to show a sort of ‘willingness’ to perform and to make one’s competences visible in order to receive a certain grade\textsuperscript{176}. By raising hands, the pupil meets the teacher’s requirements to participate during lesson. However, it seems neither to be clear for the pupil if this demonstration of willingness is enough nor if it was what the teacher meant, when he asked for more participation. To actually get asked by the teacher, and thereby to be given the chance to answer, is seen as an even more important way to show more than willingness, that is to say, to show that one knows the right answer. This chance of showing that one knows the right

\textsuperscript{175}Original quote:

(GER08, Gymnasium)

\textsuperscript{176}In an ethnographic study on pupils’ participation during lesson, Breidenstein (2006) differentiates between the following different forms of participation: “Wanting to get asked” (“Drankommen wollen”), which is about pupils’ wish to get asked by the teacher, “Getting asked” (“Drangenommen werden”), which is about teachers selection of one pupil to answer the question and “Answering” (“Dransein”), which finally is about the pupil’s answer to the question. Breidenstein further suggests understanding the signal of raising a hand as an offer from the pupil to make a contribution and a signal for the teacher to select this pupil for answering the question (p.102).

See also Sahlström (1999) regarding the construction of differences in Swedish classrooms with a focus on pupils’ participation.
answer is a chance that one is not given if the teacher is not allocating the word to the individual pupil. The injustice then results from an ‘individual allocation of chances’, which is selective in character, since one pupil gets the chance from the teacher, while another does not. This conception becomes even more obvious in the following quote:

Lilly: No, I get asked from time to time, but really seldom and for example in Melanie’s case it’s like she raises her hand much more often than I do right now and she never gets the question. She is ignored, he [the teacher, B.V.] looks at her, knows that orally [...] orally she’s not that good and she doesn’t get the word either. And then, most of the time, the better ones get the word. For example, we have someone, who is/ who is really good, who knows everything in some way and ehm, he just gets the word and then you’re simply deprived of the chance. Well, I’m fine with him knowing everything, but I find the others should also be given the chance to reflect a bit. And if it doesn’t work fast enough, then someone who knows gets asked. And I find this a bit unfair because you can’t improve your grade then, if you can’t show. (GER13, Hauptschule)

This quote illustrates the character of the individually allocated chance to “get asked” and thereby to show that one “is really good” and that one “knows” the right answer. But as emphasised in this quote: it is not just only about to know the right answer but one also needs to follow particular rules – in this case that the right answer needs to be said quickly after one has been asked. Hence, injustice is based on the fact that the grade is dependent on the individual allocation of chances as well as on how far pupils can adapt to particular rules, like for example, to quickly answer a question.

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177 Original quote:
Lilly: Ne, ich werde äh zwischendurch mal rangenommen, aber voll sehr selten und zum Beispiel bei Melanie ist das so, die meldet sich auch öfters im Moment als ich und die wird halt irgendwie nie drangenommen, die wird immer übersehen, er guckt die zwar an, weiß genau die ist mündlich/ [...]Mündlich überhaupt nicht gut so und die wird halt trotzdem oft nicht dran genommen, und dann werden meistens die Besserer dran genommen. Zum Beispiel, wir haben einen, der steht/ der ist wirklich gut, der weiß irgendwie alles und äh der wird einfach dann drangenommen und dann wird einem direkt die Chance so genommen. Also ich habe da nichts gegen so, dass der alles weiß, aber ich finde man sollte den anderen auch die Chance geben bisschen zu überlegen. Und wenn dem das nicht schnell genug geht, dann wird halt einer drangenommen, der das weiß und ich finde das ein bisschen ungerecht, weil dann kann man seine Note auch nicht verbessern, wenn man sich nicht zeigen kann halt. #00:40:14-3# (GER13, Hauptschule)

178 Rowe (1987) for example found that the average “wait-time” for teachers after they asked a question is not exceeding more than 1,5 seconds. A “wait-time” of at least 3 seconds showed to have positive effects on pupils learning and outcome as well as on teaching quality.
This individual allocation of chances matters for all the little assessment situations in everyday lessons as well as it can also play a decisive role for the final grade:

*Tobias*: Because I was between two grades and then he asked me during class [all the time, B.V.]. And asked me to go to the board and then given me the better grade anyhow. Because then he has seen: because he knew, I //still// have.

*Sergej*: //That’s// favouritism!

*Tobias*: Why favouritism? He just gave me the chance, to show it one more time. Well if I/. Well he just wasn’t sure, whether I should get a Three or a Four. And then ehm, then he just asked me a bit more during this class (...) on this topic and ehm, then it just wasn’t bad. Well it was good. Like he thought. And then I got a ‘Satisfactory’ on the certificate. (GER04, Hauptschule)

This sequence illustrates how the individual allocation of chances to orally show competences can be understood as a source for injustice. The teacher gave Tobias the chance to improve his grade by allocating the chance during class to show whether his competences correspond more to a Three than to a Four. This chance is seen as unjust by his classmate and perceived as an illegitimate “favouritism!” In turn, Tobias justifies the teacher’s decision by stating that the chance he was given would just have been a possibility for the teacher to ensure his assessment. This is also the primary argument of justification here: that the chance allocated was not influencing the grade per se, since the teacher just provided the chance “to show it one more time” and thereby only verified an already made decision. Even this sequence makes clear that teachers’ allocation of chances to show competences is a potential source for injustice – in this case since the chances are allocated differently to individual pupils, which implies an unjust perceived selection of the teacher.

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179 Original excerpt:

Tobias: Weil da stand ich auch zwischen zwei Noten und da hat er mich im Unterricht fast nur drangenommen. Und mich an die Tafel geschickt und hat mir dann trotzdem die bessere Note gegeben. Weil dann hat er gesehen: weil er wusste, ich hab’s //trotzdem//. #00:28:49-3#

Sergej: //Das ist// bevorzugen! #00:28:50-0#

Tobias: Warum bevorzugen? Er hat mir einfach nur die Chance geboten, mich so nochmal zu zeigen. Also wenn ich/. Also er war sich halt nicht sicher, ob ich ‘ne Drei oder ‘ne Vier krieg’. Und dann äh, dann hat er mich halt ein bisschen mehr dran genommen in der Stunde (...) bei dem Thema und dann äh, dann war’s halt nicht schlecht. Also es war gut. So wie er dachte. Und dann hab ich ein Befriedigend auf’m Zeugnis bekommen.
Overall, it could be shown for pupils in both contexts that the oral demonstration of competencies is perceived to be an important aspect regarding the grade they can achieve. That implies, that the chances to show competences are not only chances but that they also come along with the basic necessity to do so. Breidenstein (2010) sees the “demonstration and communication of learning” as “the central problem of educational interaction” (p. 879, Transl. B.V.) since

“learning per se is not directly observable, individual’s knowledge and its development as such are not accessible for others. But teaching is in the need of reassurance that learning takes place. Learning needs to be made observable and communicable”

(p.879, Transl. B.V.).

Besides the general necessity of observable and communicable learning that is addressed here and the inferential character of assessment in general (Bennett, 2011), the idea and practices of accountability as well as the performativity pressures (Ball, 2003), together with curricula increasingly focusing on outcome (Alvunger, Sundberg, & Wahlström, 2017) showed also in the present study to matter for how pupils perceive assessment. However, with regard to justice, the point for pupils in both contexts is that they are hold responsible for ‘delivering’ the basis for teacher’s assessment, while they at the same time can perceive that they are not given the chance to do so. That means that the basis on which grades are allocated is dependent on how teachers allocate the chances to show one’s competences. Hence, before a pupil can demonstrate competences and make them visible for the teacher, the pupil first needs to get the chance to do so. At least regarding the everyday assessment forms in the classroom, these chances are characterised by interaction that is dependent on the more or less implicit selection practices of teachers. Thereby, the responsibility for providing the basic preconditions for showing competences lies from a pupil perspective in teachers, who overall provide or limit pupils’ chances to orally demonstrate their competences.

While the demonstration of competences is for pupils in the German interviews first and foremost a matter of giving the right answer on a question and thereby merely focusing on facts that can be answered either right or wrong; the demonstration of competences is for pupils in the Swedish interviews characterised by an additional aspect that further stretches the scope for the perceived injustice.

Pupils in the Swedish interviews perceive that certain competences, which imply a sort of a methodical dimension, are highly valued when it comes to assessment. From their point of view, such methodical competences mainly refer to the communication of their cognitive processes and their reasoning
(see also Englund, Forsberg, & Sundberg, 2012, p. 12 regarding the different forms and qualities of knowledge expressed in the knowledge requirements). For pupils, the perceived injustice is related to the fact that their general verbal abilities to make their cognitive processes explicit are decisive for the grade they can achieve. This is further aggrandizes since pupils also perceive that their factual and subject-specific knowledge is not adequately mirrored in the grade they receive.

7.2.3 Chances through teachers’ use of the scope of discretion

For the interviewed pupils in both contexts, teachers are perceived to have a certain scope of interpretation when assessing. This scope of interpretation implies certain possibilities to decide about the grade beyond objective criteria and standards. Moreover, these possibilities are perceived as the chances to receive a certain grade, which the teacher either provides or withholds by deciding how pupils’ performance shall be valued in relation to a certain frame of reference.

Here, teachers’ scope of interpretation can be understood as being related to the general interpretation process that is automatically intertwined with assessment as well as to the need for interpretation and situated concretisation of assessment criteria or at least of some reference standard. However, from a pupils’ perspective, the scope of discretion goes beyond interpretation: it also includes a dimension of discretion that is linked to a decision. This means that the decision made on the basis of discretion is not necessarily dependent on interpretation - a teacher can make an interpretation and nonetheless make another decision which is not based on the interpretation but based on other aspects.

Pupils experience that teachers use this scope of discretion for different purposes like e.g. pedagogical purposes, which can focus on the individual pupil as well as on the whole class or pupils in general. Examples of these pedagogical purposes are: motivation, compensation and reward or disciplining, which furthermore are often perceived being related to sympathy or antipathy and thus they can affect the evaluations’ character. Pupils’ concept of teachers’ ‘scope of discretion’ is mainly based on their experiences that teachers act different and make different evaluative decisions despite pupils’ equivalent performance. In the following, this concept shall be differentiated further along the context specific illustrations of how pupils in the Swedish and in the German interviews typically relate to the analytical concept of ‘scope of discretion’.
In the Swedish interviews, it became obvious that pupils perceive there is a kind of scope of interpretation for teachers’ evaluations that is relevant for grade allocation. A typical interview sequence regarding this issue is the following:

Evelina: But the thing is like, all teachers don’t do the same. Some are like REALLY stingy and some aren’t.

[...]

Hannah: They’ve got like the papers where it says: she needs GOOD knowledge for and E and she needs that. But it feels like everyone’s understood it differently. Everyone’s like got it different: what is GOOD knowledge, what is just a bit good knowledge, what is really good knowledge? And it feels as if some, I mean this really good knowledge is like really easy. But some could be that the good knowledge, that’s not possible to achieve because they recon it should be super-duper great.

Nelly: Uhu, everyone understands it like really differently.

Hannah: Uhu, it’s like an understanding on its own. (SWE06)\(^{180}\)

In this sequence, it becomes clear that Hannah perceives that there is some sort of documents, “papers, where it says” how their performance shall be valued in relation to the quality of knowledge expressed in these “papers”. Evelina, however, perceives that “everyone’s understood it differently” and here, the “it” is concretely related to the value words in the knowledge requirements\(^{181}\). She thereby analyses the scope of interpretation as being linked to the interpretation of this value words: “what is GOOD knowledge,

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\(^{180}\) Original sequence:

Evelina: Men grejen är ju att alla lärare gör ju inte likadant. Vissa är ju typ JÄTTE snåla och vissa är inte alls det. #00:39:03-9#

[...]

Hannah: De har ju pappren var det står: hon ska ha GODA kunskaper för att få ett E och hon ska ha det. Men det känn som att alla har tolkat det här olika. Alla har liksom olika: vad är GOD kunskap, vad är lite halvt bra kunskap, vad är jätte bra kunskap? Och det känn som när vissa, alltså den här jätte bra kunskapen är liksom ganska enkel. Men visska kan det vara att de goda kunskaperna de går liksom aldrig uppnå för de tänker att det ska vara superduper bra. #00:39:53-1#

Nelly: Ah, alla tolkar det ju väldigt olika. #00:39:57-4#

Hannah: Ah, det är som en egen uppfattning. #00:39:58-8# (SWE06)

\(^{181}\) This finding of pupils’ perception is supported by the evaluation report done by Wahlström and Sundberg (2015) as well as the evaluation of the Lgr11 assessment system done by Skolverket in 2016, according to which the majority of teachers perceive the knowledge requirements as including a great scope for interpretation and that the interpretation of the value words (värdeord) is perceived as problematic with regard to equivalent assessment (Skolverket, 2016e, pp. 44–48).
what is just a bit good knowledge, what is really good knowledge?”). Hence, this leads to the relativity of the grade, since the quality level of “good knowledge” means different in quality for different teachers. In addition to the awareness about the interpretative character of grades, pupils experience that they get different grades by different teachers regardless of their performance’s quality. That means that despite of the existence of detailed assessment criteria, pupils perceive assessment as being based on teachers “understanding” of the knowledge requirements. When one follows this analytical thread one can understand why the pupil Evelina in the beginning of this sequence talks about teachers’ different levels of ‘stinginess’ in relation to grade allocation. The conception of ‘stinginess’ and its opposite ‘generosity’, supports the conceptualisation that grades are perceived as something, which the teacher, additionally to the interpretation, decides upon – within the frames of the scope of discretion and in relation to grade evaluation and subsequently to grade allocation.

Furthermore, analysis shows that Swedish pupils’ perceive assessment as a quite complex practice. This becomes visible in the following sequence where pupils talk about their mathematics teacher, who is perceived to grade them merely on the basis of written tests:

Louise: **// Uhu but, if you HAVEN’T// (.) got an A on all the tests, but you’ve got a B on a test well then he grades you with a B. So he might make it a bit easy for himself, it feels like (4). And then, [C.teacher] it feels like. She’s not that strict, it feels like. If you’ve got something on a C level, then you can get an A minus like.**

Elin: **Uhu, she thinks that, that, that you’re like still worth an A if you’ve worked hard for it like. So it’s like really hard to get an A on everything.**

Louise: **So it’s really REALLY REALLY different what teachers are like. So you have to like I said before: you have to learn how each teacher, how they think and such. You have to figure out how teachers grade you and such. So you figure that out.** (SWE05)

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182 Original sequence:

Elin: **Ah, hon tycker liksom att att att man är ändå värd ett A om man har jobbat för det liksom. Så det är liksom väldigt svårt att få A på allt. #00:14:05-1#**

Louise: **Så det är liksom VÄLDIGT VÄLDIGT olika hur olika lärare är. Så man får ju som jag sagt innan: man får ju lära sig hur varje lärare, hur de tänker eller så. Man får lära sig hur lärarna betygssätter och så. Så man lär sig det. #00:14:19-0# (SWE05)**
In this sequence, Louise highlights that the mathematics teacher, who is grading them solely on the basis of the written tests “might make it a bit easy for himself”. This connotes on the one hand a limitation of the teacher’s scope of decision: it is the written tests that mainly decide upon pupils’ grades. On the other hand, it also visualises, how pupils perceive the teachers’ legitimating practice, which is about objectification. This also implies a quite implicit pedagogical dimension: if the grade obviously is a logical outcome of the test results and if this is moreover consequently communicated with pupils, then pupils will question or appeal less against the decision. It is in this sense that Louise means that the teacher “might make it a bit easy for himself”. The injustice lies for the pupils in the fact that this strategy makes it “really hard to get an A” and that they are dependent on this teacher’s interpretation of the regulations for assessment as well as on his interpretation of the knowledge requirements. This becomes especially clear when pupils contrast this teacher’s assessment practice with the one of another teacher. This teacher is perceived to compensate pupils for their invested effort, by using a wider scope of interpretation for what is necessary to receive an A. Even here, it becomes obvious that the “C.teacher” needs to legitimate her assessment, or more precisely, her compensation. The teacher is not allocating an A but an imaginary “A minus” (which does not exist formally). This may indicate, that this strategy allows the teacher to balance the knowledge requirements and the grade that pupils are “still worth” due to their invested effort. It is from such experiences of teachers’ implicit and explicit practices, pupils conclude that there is a scope of interpretation for teachers’ assessment and that teachers’ scope of discretion is differing. This leads to the conception that “one has to learn how every teacher, how they think” and “how teachers grade”, meaning that pupils feel the need to decode and analyse each teacher’s assessment practices as well as their individual implicit frameworks of interpretation and discretion. This ‘understanding of the other’, teachers’ assessment practice and the underlying implicit frameworks of interpretation and discretion, are seen as a necessary precondition for understanding assessment in general.

As shown above, pupils perceive that teachers can use the scope of discretion for pedagogical purposes like compensation or reward, which in addition also

183 Regarding this matter, Skolverket (2016e) comes to the following conclusion in the evaluation report regarding the Lgr11 assessment system: “Teachers also name problems according to the grade A (...) that all parts of the knowledge requirements have to be reached that a pupil can get the grade A. (...) The differences between different teachers’ way to handle the knowledge requirements is mainly about the level of consciousness, structure and detail in relation between knowledge requirements, teaching, assessment. This also implies a broad variation according to what teachers perceive and use as the basis for their assessment. […] That all parts of the knowledge requirements need to be reached or largely reached is often perceived as unjust” (p.7-8, Transl.B.V.)

184 See also chapter 5.3 regarding the perceived and experienced imperative to understand assessment.
can be experienced being related to sympathy. On the other hand, pupils in the Swedish interviews also tell about situations where teachers use grades for disciplining them for inadequate behaviour, which is also experienced being related to antipathy. The next sequence will show the logic behind the use of the scope of discretion for the pedagogical purpose of disciplining and its relation to perceived antipathy:

Linus: Uhu, but she puts like/, I mean sh/, I mean either she’s nice () or she’s //not nice/>.  
Mohammad: //I mean, I don’t like// her because she can ehm/ she ehm/ she’s different to the students. I mean, it’s about/.  
Linus: There’s a lot of favouritism //like//.  
Carl: //Uhu, it is//  
Mohammad: //Uhu, I don’t like// it.  
Linus: Nope.  
I: So that’s something you can feel //stra///.  
Linus: //And then// then she lowers the grade when you talk in class and I’ve been round to all the other teachers and asked about it: can you lower the grades if you’re like talking in class? And: no. Everyone’s said. Except for her then. So, uhu: who are you supposed to trust? ONE teacher or TEN others? Of course you trust the other ten.

Carl: Uhu, they have to follow all these/ I mean this, this matrix right. And it doesn’t say anything about what they’re like in class. (SWE03)\(^1\)\(^8\)

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\(^1\)\(^8\)Original sequence:
Linus: Ah men hon sätter ju/, alltså ho/, alltså antingen är hon snäll () eller så är //hon inte snäll///. #00:24:56-9#  
Mohammad: //Alltså jag gillar inte// henne för hon kan eh/ hon eh/ hon är olika mot eleverna. Alltså det handlat om/. #00:25:03-8#  
Linus: Det är mycket favoriserande //liksom//. #00:25:04-9#  
Carl: //Ah, det är det// #00:25:04-9#  
Mohammad: //Ah, det gillar jag// inte. #00:25:04-4#  
Linus: Nej. #00:25:08-1#  
I: Så det är något ni kan känna //där//. #00:25:10-8#  
First and foremost, this sequence shows that the pupils perceive that the teacher makes differences in assessment, not being based on their performance, but on something else, which is questioned by the pupils. When one takes a closer look on this sequence, then it becomes visible that it is not the pedagogical purpose as such that underlies the downgrading and which seems to cause a feeling of being unjustly treated. Instead, it seems to be the teacher’s obvious “favouritism” and the disadvantage of certain pupils. This is perceived as being intertwined with sympathy and antipathy, since the teacher is perceived as treating pupils differently with regard to either to be nice to certain pupils or not. Pupils perceive that the teacher uses her scope of discretion in order to grade pupils differently on the basis of her own feelings towards these pupils. Teachers’ scope of discretion used for upgrading or downgrading certain pupils on the basis of sympathy or antipathy, is thereby especially questioned by pupils in terms of criteria for ‘interpersonal justice’ (Colquitt, 2001)\(^\text{186}\). This leads to a loss of trust, why Carl also asked “ten other” teachers if the experienced downgrading was in line with the assessment rules.

Overall, the pupils in the \textit{German} interviews also experience that there is a scope of discretion in teachers’ assessment, which becomes obvious in teachers’ different assessment practices and justifications. For example, this is the case when the final grade is not in accordance with the ‘arithmetic logic’, that is to say if the received final grade deviates considerably in a positive or in a negative way from the calculated final grade\(^\text{187}\). The following sequence shows how pupils experience this relativity of grades. Here, pupils attending \textit{Hauptschule} perceive that they are getting better grades than expected in the subject of music:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Berat:} He’s a music teacher, Mr. H.teacher. We all like him so much because we can talk so much in his classes. Though he still writes down the grades as low but //then you’ll get//.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Mareike:} //Anyway you get// good grades on the certificate.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Berat:} I don’t know how he does this.
\end{quote}
II: How do you mean?

Berat: Well, he said: you can be noisy but then you’ll need to accept the grade you’ve deserved for the ehm for the=the class. Anyway get/.

II: Then you have to accept it?

Berat: //Exactly//.

Mareike: //Yes//.

Berat: And nonetheless you then will get, no matter how many Fives you’ll get: in the end you’ll nonetheless have a Three on the certificate. Always. (GER15, Hauptschule)

Here, it becomes visible that the teacher is perceived to use the “low” grades as a pedagogical tool for stopping pupils from talking too much during class. The responsibility for the consequences is laid on pupils in terms of a low grade.

However, the pupils in this sequence describe that it is not clear to them how the continuously allocated Fives turn into Threes on the certificate, since this contradicts their expectation based on their ‘arithmetic logic’. Berat more concretely wonders: “I don’t know how he manages this”, particularly since the grades received during the school year are “written down”, like it is the case with the grade on the certificate. This indicates that the action of writing down the grades has the character of a fixation. The obvious change of grades that otherwise are expected to be fixed, reveals thereby the grade’s relativity – a relativity that is linked to teachers’ scope of discretion, resulting in the teacher’s decision to allocate a Three. The actual process of the teacher’s

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188 Original sequence:
Berat: Er ist Musiklehrer, Herr H.Lehrer. Den finden wir alle so gut, weil wir bei dem so viel reden kann. Er schreibt die Noten zwar trotzdem schlecht auf aber //dann kriegt man//. #00:38:29-7#
Mareike: //Kriegt man trotzdem// gute Noten auf’m Zeugnis. #00:38:30-9#
Berat: Ich weiss nicht, wie der das macht . #00:38:34-0#
I 1: wie jetzt? #00:38:34-0#
Berat: Also: er hat gesagt: ihr könnt laut sein aber ihr müsst die Note dann kassieren, die ihr dann verdient habt für die, åh, für die= die Stunde . Trotzdem kriegt/ #00:38:40-1#
I 1: Die muss man dann so akzeptieren? #00:38:40-1#
Berat: //Genau// #00:38:40-1#
Mareike: //ja// #00:38:40-1#
Berat: Und trotzdem kriegt man dann, egal wieviele Fünfen man kriegt: am Ende hat man dann trotzdem ‘ne Drei auf’m Zeugnis . Immer . #00:38:46-6# (GER15, Hauptschule)
decision and the underlying motivation to make a certain decision is not understandable for the pupils and can be understood as being a kind of “black box” (Black & Wiliam, 1998) of teacher’s assessment practices. 

This ‘arithmetic logic’ and the scope of discretion that is perceived as being underdetermined and hardly accessible for pupils, applies also for the assessment of minor tasks or for tests during school year. The following sequence shows this and in addition, it also reveals that the decisions made within the scope of discretion need to follow the rule of moderateness that can be legitimised as a gesture of goodwill:

Manuel: There’s one thing I find. Well, I get upset about such small details but about the teachers that WANT us to get good exams and all that. But you perceive that they don’t do that. For example it’s always like/. Every student knows this and probably all parents. You’re half a point from the better grade. Then the teacher isn’t tolerant enough to really give you the better grade. Though you need it and they simply want us to do a better exam. I don’t understand it.

II: And you think: My god! Just turn a blind eye?

Manuel: Yes, I mean: Where is/. No one controls that! Well, there’s no one. There is no one sitting behind the teacher controlling that. Then they could really give this half point or this point. I mean when it would be two, three points it would be ok. But when it’s one point or a half, there they really could turn a blind eye. I don’t get it.

Simon: Well, it’s the same with the certificate: you’ll get a SUPER=SUPER=SUPER=SUPER good Three. But it’s not enough for a weak Two. Then rather a weak Two than a good Three. That’s much more important. (GER03, Realschule)

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190 Original sequence:

I 1: Du denkst so: mein Gott! Drückt doch mal ein Auge zu? #01:14:43-6#

Manuel: Ja, ich mein’: wo ist/. Das kontrolliert doch keiner. Also, da ist ja keiner. Da sitzt ja keiner hinter den Lehrern, die das kontrollieren. Dann können die doch wirklich mal diesen halben Punkt geben oder diesen Punkt. Ich mein’ bei zwei, drei Punkten ist’s ja noch ok. Aber bei einem Punkt oder ‘nem halben, da kann man doch wirklich mal ein Auge zudrücken. Versteh’ ich nicht. #01:15:00-2#
This sequence illustrates pupils’ incomprehension for teacher’s lack of goodwill to give a better grade, which means that pupils believe that there is a scope of discretion that can be used in an unproblematic way as “no one [is] sitting behind the teacher controlling that”. Especially, if the difference between two grades is only by “one point or a half, there they really could turn a blind eye”, which means that teachers here are nearly expected to be tolerant and use their scope of discretion for allocating the higher grade. This needs to be understood against the backdrop of the experience that teachers in other situations justify the allocation of a “Three” with the explanation that the Three is a “SUPER=SUPER=SUPER=SUPER good Three”. To pupils, it is not understandable what the concrete differences are between “a weak Two” and a “good Three”. They conclude that these differences need to be very small and that they missed the better grade with the smallest possible margin. Pupils find it hard to understand that the scope of discretion is on the one hand sometimes used as a justification to allocate the lower grade but on the other hand, it is not used to allocate the higher grade. Moreover, pupils are aware of the fact that the differences between the “SUPER=SUPER=SUPER=SUPER good Three” and the “weak Two”, which are communicated as being small differences, in practice turn out to be of greater relevance, since it is just written down a Three or a Two on the certificate. The “SUPER=SUPER=SUPER=SUPER” and the “weak” can thereby be understood as pedagogical prefixes used in communication between teachers and pupils. However, these pedagogical prefixes of grades are perceived as valueless when it comes to exams used for selection purposes. Thereby, teacher’s scope of discretion is also seen to be a scope of allocating chances by goodwill.

Overall, it becomes obvious in the German interviews that teacher’s scope of discretion regarding assessment is perceived as being hard to define and to understand. As already pointed out before, this implies that teachers’ basis for assessment is to some extent perceived as a kind of ‘black box’191, which pupils still try to understand by developing subjective theories regarding possible aspects that could be relevant for assessment:

\[\text{I1: Mmm, Actually, how does the teacher know, which grade he has to give you? How does he know?/}\]

\[\text{Ella: Well, I believe they also decide much according to favour. And which students they don’t like. You realise that when it comes to}\]

Simon: Ist ja auch so im Zeugnis: du kriegst ‘ne SUPER=SUPER=SUPER=SUPER gute Drei. Aber für ‘ne schlechte Zwei reicht’s dann doch nicht. Dann lieber doch die schlechte Zwei anstatt ‘ner Drei. Ist doch viel wichtiger. #01:15:14-2# (GER03, Realschule)

191 See Black & Wiliam (1998).
If the two sequences are taken together, they clearly highlight and summarise the double character of ‘teachers’ scope of discretion’ from a pupils’ perspective: on the one hand, it is seen as a risk since it opens up for arbitrary assessment and grades that can be based on e.g. antipathy. However, on the other hand, the scope of discretion also makes it possible for the teacher to model the grade for pedagogical reasons, such as rewards or motivation, and to include alternative criteria for assessment that pupils can benefit from. Furthermore, it also opens up a scope of possibilities for pupils to influence their grade in a positive way, at least if they can analyse and decode how the teacher grades.

The quote shows how the perceived scope of discretion in the teacher’s assessment leads to diverse subjective theories about that teachers allocate grades “according to favour” or according to their daily changing “mood”. Moreover, pupils believe that it is important to understand the single teacher’s assessment practice and to decode the ‘black box’ of assessment criteria to the greatest possible extent. When the same pupils who were quoted above, later on talk about the considerable differences in teachers’ assessment, they reason in the following way:

I 1: Well so it’s totally different how the teachers grade?

Robin: Yes, exactly.

Elias: Mhm.

Robin: Also in the same subjects.

[…] I 1: What do you think about that this is so different with the teachers?

Ella: Well, one already knows how to behave for each teacher in order to get good grades. If everything would be standardised, we could no longer do that. (GER07, Gymnasium)

Elias: Mhm. #00:23:47-9#

Robin: Auch in gleichen Fächern halt. #00:23:49-8#

[...] I 1: Mmm. Woher weiss denn eigentlich ein Lehrer, welche Note der euch geben muss? Woher weiss er denn/.? #00:14:15-3#

Ella: Also, ich glaube, die entscheiden einfach auch viel nach Gefallen. Und welche Schüler die eben nicht mögen. Merkt man schon wieder bei Marcel wie jetzt in Sowi. #00:14:22-6#

Robin: Ja und eigentlich ist es auch einfach nur ein bisschen so ein Bauchgefühl. Also, ich schätz’ mal, wenn der Lehrer jetzt mal ‘nen guten Tag hat, wenn er die Note gibt, dann gibt er die bessere Note als wenn er jetzt einen schlechten Tag hat. Also, das ist ja einfach so. Von der Laune hängt das ab. #00:14:37-4# (GER07, Gymnasium)

Robin: Ja genau. #00:23:47-1#
If the two sequences are taken together, they clearly highlight and summarise the double character of ‘teachers’ scope of discretion’ from a pupils’ perspective: on the one hand, it is seen as a risk since it opens up for arbitrary assessment and grades that can be based on e.g. antipathy. However, on the other hand, the scope of discretion also makes it possible for the teacher to model the grade for pedagogical reasons, such as rewards or motivation, and to include alternative criteria for assessment that pupils can benefit from. Furthermore, it also opens up a scope of possibilities for pupils to influence their grade in a positive way, at least if they can analyse and decode how the teacher grades.

This double character also applies for the pupils’ conceptions in the Swedish interviews: which is that teachers are perceived as having a scope of discretion at all, within which they can decide beyond the interpreted assessment criteria and, moreover, that this scope of discretion either can be a chance or a risk, fully depending on the individual teacher\textsuperscript{194}. However, the ‘scope of discretion’ still seems to be linked to the knowledge requirements in some way. These form the scope in different ways and are, to some extent, the always present background foil that pupils and teachers seem to need to relate to.

In contrast to the role of the knowledge requirements, it becomes obvious in the German interviews that the scope of discretion is mainly defined by an ‘arithmetic logic’: it is about points that are allocated in certain ways and about the calculation of allocated grades based on allocated points.

However, regardless it is the knowledge requirements or the ‘arithmetic logic’ that are seen to influence teacher’s scope of discretion; in both cases the point for pupils mainly is about how far the dimensions of the scope of discretion are perceived as legitimate and how exactly this is justified and motivated by the teachers. Here, certain aspects of interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986) seem to play a vital role for pupils’ justice conceptions. On the one side, these aspects are about interpersonal treatment (see Colquitt (2001) regarding interpersonal justice), when teachers for example are perceived to prefer or disadvantage certain pupils on the basis of personal criteria like e.g. antipathy or sympathy. On the other side, are the illustrated aspects of interactional justice.

\textsuperscript{194} See e.g. also Skolverket (1999).
justice also about information (see Colquitt (2001) regarding informational justice), which means how far teachers justifications of grade allocation are perceived as adequate. The therewith related experiences can contribute to a conception of being unjustly graded and, additionally, that their grade depends on how individual teachers concretely use their ‘scope of discretion’. Teachers’ decision to use their ‘scope of discretion’ to the disadvantage of pupils is hard to justify in an adequate and comprehensible way from a pupils’ perspective. This applies especially since ‘the scope of discretion’ is characterised by its underdetermination if compared to the level of regulation and standardisation of other parts of the assessment process.

### 7.2.4 Chances and ex-ante categorisations

In the interviews, it becomes visible that pupils’ experience to be ascribed certain attributes. These ascriptions include that it is defined from the outside how the pupil ‘is’, which not necessarily has to be conform to the pupil’s self-image. Overall, pupils perceive these ascriptions to be categorically, more or less implicit, relatively fixed and above all, that they are ex-ante. These ‘ex-ante categorisations’ matter in different ways for pupils’ learning as well as for the grades and certificates they can achieve. Most of all, these categorisations and ascriptions create a belief in what is possible to achieve. Thereby they also form the belief, to some extent, in how legitimate and possible it is to leave the ascribed tracks of differentiation.

In the following, it is further concretised and exemplified how pupils from the two socio-educational contexts relate to the analytical concept of ‘ex-ante categorisations’.

The pupils in the Swedish interviews can perceive that the grade, to some extent and among certain teachers, can already be fixed in advance by reason of teachers’ prejudices of a pupil’s general or subject specific performance level. The following sequence represents this issue exemplarily and is about the pupil Finja, who described during the interview her problematic learning situation. This applies particularly for the subject of mathematics. Finja believes that the considerable problems in mathematics as well as her attention disorder also have an impact on the beliefs that other teachers in other subjects hold about her and that this also has certain consequences for her grades:

*Finja: Uhu. Eh:h:hm (...) One assignment I had in Social, that I put a lot of work into and I was even ill going to class when they’d gone through it. And still I took responsibility for myself and went to school to get my own books and, ehm, asked a lot to others as well*
and, ehm (...). I wrote a really god paper actually and still got just an E. I think she sees me as like an F-kid.

[...]

Emelia: Mhm. I think she’s then expecting it.

Finja: What?

Emelia: I think, she expects you to not get higher.

Finja: Yes. Think she’s expecting it. (SWE04)¹⁹⁵

The sequence illustrates clearly the way in which Finja perceives to be unequally treated regarding her teacher’s assessment. The described ascription of being seen as an “F-kid” connotes prejudices, which she believes that the teacher holds about her. Moreover, Finja as well as her classmate Emelia believe that the teacher has already made a decision in advance regarding which grade she can reach at best: the lowest possible ‘passed’ grade, an E. Further, they believe that this has to do with the fact that the teacher sees Finja as an “F-kid” and later on in the interview, Finja for example also talks about that she is convinced of having an “F-kid stamp on the forehead”. Their recounts can be understood as they are convinced that the teacher interprets all of Finja's performances in relation to an (unconscious) inner image or implicit belief, which constantly leads to lower grades regardless of Finja’s performance level¹⁹⁶. This also implies, that Finja experiences that her effort does not play any role in regard to the outcome, since the outcome is always going to be the same. Hence, her chances to improve, which would also be visible in better grades, are seen to be dependent on how the teacher handles the ‘ex-ante categorisation’ of Finja as an “F-kid”.

¹⁹⁵ Original sequence:
Finja: Ah. Eh:h:h (...) En uppgift jag hade på SO, som jag la ner gansa så mycket tid på och jag var till och med sjuk på lektionerna när de hade gått igenom det. Och ändå så tog jag mitt eget ansvar och åkte till skolan och hämtade mina egna böcker och eh frågade massa andra också och eh (...). Jag skrev faktiskt en jätte bra text och sen fick jag bara E. Jag tror, hon ser mig som ett F-barn liksom.

¹⁹⁶ The described situation brings to mind the so-called "Halo-effect", a social psychological concept that was first introduced by Thorndike (1920). This effect describes in relation to assessment an assessment error, where the assessor more or less unconsciously extrapolates from distinct characteristics to other characteristics e.g. the teacher who grades a pupil with deviant behavior worse than the performance would justify.
Besides such attributions that pupils perceive to occur between the individual teacher and the individual pupil in certain situations, the pupils in the Swedish interviews also expressed their experiences with class internal categorisations. Here, pupils describe that they are categorised by teachers regarding their (assumed) performance level. That means that pupils experience that teachers divide pupils during lesson into different groups, based on their (assumed) learning capacity. The different groups then receive different tasks on different levels of difficulty to work with. This grouping of pupils can thereby be understood as a didactical differentiation. The pupil Emelia for example describes how she experiences this issue in the subject of mathematics:

*Emelia: Yeah, but like in Math, then we haven’t got those kinds of assignments. Then you’ve got a blue and a red line. And red is like the hard one and blue is the easy one. And from the start everyone does the same: green. And then, ehm, if you find it easy, you like do the red and if you find it hard then you do the blue [...] (SWE04)*

Here, Emelia describes how the mathematics teacher from the beginning groups the pupils according to their diagnosed performance level during the lesson. The grouping is a dualistic one – one group for those who “find it hard” and one for those who “find it easy”. The teacher then assigns each of the two groups a colour – red for “the hard one” and blue for “the easy one”. This classification is quickly adapted by the pupils and it becomes obvious during the interview that pupils perceive this dualistic categorisation within their class as quite fixed - in the end, one ‘is’ blue or red and one ‘is’ a good performer or a poor performer. Thereby, the dualistic categorisation influences pupils’ self-image beyond their concrete performance in a concrete subject.

197 This way of grouping pupils in Swedish schools is also described as internal differentiation or “level grouping” (Nivågruppering). In 2010, the Swedish school inspectorate published a quality report in which the inspectorate notes that such internal differentiations have increased in the Swedish grundskola since the 1990s, leading to “several negative consequences” for pupils (Skolinspektionen, 2010). Such negative consequences can be, according to the research overview of Giota (2013) regarding individualisation, the risk of stigmatisation, reduced motivation and self-confidence as well as lower expectations of teachers and pupils regarding pupils’ achievement (p.226). Additionally, Ramberg (2014) for example found that 43,6 % of all upper secondary pupils in Sweden experienced these ability groupings in school (p. 697). Furthermore, in an interview study from Bergström & Ekström (2016), Swedish school leaders explained their view regarding the trend to homogenous teaching groups. It is concluded that “the homogenisation can be perceived as practical from a school perspective” as it “can include good conditions for organising teaching in a good way”, though at the same time favouring the idea of compensatory equality (p.86)

198 See for example Giota (2013, p. 226), who highlights that “the idea with homogenously composed groups (levelgrouping)” is that teachers can adjust their teaching to “pupils needs and intellectual preconditions” (p.226).

199 Original quote:
*Emelia: Jo men typ i matte, då har vi inte sådana uppgifter. Utan då finns det blå och röd linje. Och röd är ju den svåra och blå är den lätta. Och från början så gör alla samma: grön. Och sen eh om man har lätt så gör man ju det röda och om man har svårt så gör man det blåa. [...] #00:51:20-1# (SWE04)*
especially since pupils also perceive that these categorisations are quite closed in regard to transition\textsuperscript{200}. That means that pupils perceive it as relatively difficult to change between the groups despite their learning progression.

This dualistic categorisation that is often perceived as being motivated by the possibility to support pupils more individually in their learning, is questioned by pupils. This applies also with regard to the fact that pupils can find it hard to clearly ‘fit’ into one or the other category, which pupils also find might have consequences for their learning and especially for their grades:

\textit{Amanda: Yes, but I’ve noticed it on the others too. Because there’s a group that finds it \textit{quite} difficult. And then it’s us in the classroom. And then it’s still/ for those who know/, for those who are/ like still really good \textit{at} math. And then it can get/ the middle ground can get a bit tricky. Because it gets too easy like you say, for those who have/, for those who are bad. Who find it hard. Because you want higher grades and then you don’t want to stay on the same level. And at the same time it’s hard to follow the ordinary classes. And then it gets tricky. (SWE01)}\textsuperscript{201}

Besides the fact that Amanda describes that the two groups are spatially separated - her group sitting “in the classroom” and another sitting outside - she is conscious about the fact that she belongs to the group, which is “still really good \textit{at} math”. She also realises that there are classmates who are placed in the group of those, who “find it \textit{quite} difficult” despite that they are too good for this group, but who are not good enough to change to the other group. This intermediate level then is in conflict with the personal aim to get a better grade, to progress and therefore to leave the weaker group since “you don’t want to stay on the same level”. Pupils also explain in the interviews that teachers also motivate the grouping in terms of individualised support\textsuperscript{202}. However, from a pupils’ point of view, this sequence exemplarily shows that the individualisation cannot automatically be understood as an

\textsuperscript{200} This finding is in line with what the Swedish school inspectorate presents in an quality report and calls for a “Lock-in-effect, which means that the placing [of pupils, B.V.] in particular groups becomes permanent” Skolinspektionen (2010, p. 12) “[…] though they could move up to another level” (Skolinspektionen, 2010, p. 23).


\textsuperscript{202} The Swedish school inspectorate notices an increase of internal differentiation practices in Swedish grundskola since the 1990s and relates this to increased individualised teaching practices (2010, p. 13).
adjustment of content, learning materials or tasks to each individual learner’s needs. At least on the level of how lessons are in practice organised, the individualisation here seems more to equate a “dualisation” – either one belongs to the “bad” ones or to the “good” ones. The practice of ‘dualisation’ then has particular consequences for pupils’ self-image, for the chances they can receive to develop their learning and in extension to this, for the grades they can achieve\textsuperscript{203}. Altogether, this promotes potential sources for feeling disadvantaged with regard to learning and assessment on the basis of a dualised differentiation practice that is based on more or less legitimate ascriptions ex-ante.

This is even more aggravated if pupils perceive that they are allocated to the two categories on the basis on quite questionable judgements:

\textit{Hannah: [...]When they’ve got a student list they might present it a bit like this: like, there, they’re like the best and then they place them, a bit like that. [forms two groups with the hands]}

\textit{Nelly: Yes, and he [N.teacher, B.V.], he kind of does like: you, you with THOSE requirements, you can work in ONE group. You with that grade. He kind of does like a paper that you fill in and then you score SO well on that paper and then you get to work in THAT group.}

\textit{Evelina: But it feels a bit like they (.) like, take it for granted. Or like this: THAT’S someone who gets an A. THAT’S someone who gets. So so, I feel.}

\textit{I: So, you mean it’s already decided a bit in beforehand?}

\textit{Nelly: // Uhuh.//}

\textit{Evelina: // Uhu uhu/. I mean, so I mean, it feels a bit like, a bit, yes. (SWE06)\textsuperscript{204}}

\textsuperscript{203} This result is also confirmed by numerous studies on this issue. For a research overview over the effects of ability grouping and especially over the effects for low-achieving pupils in terms of stigmatisation and learning outcome, see Ramberg (2014, pp. 689–692).

\textsuperscript{204} Original sequence:

Hannah: […] När de har en klasslista de kanske lägger upp det lite såhär: sådär, där, de liksom är de bästa och så lägger de, lite så. [ formar två olika grupper med händerna] #00:43:25-8#

Nelly: Ja och han [N.läraren, B.V.], han kan ju liksom göra så att: ni, ni som har DE kraven, ni kan jobba i EN grupp. Ni som har det betyget. Han kan göra lite såhär ett papper var man ska fylla i och då får man SÅ bra på det pappret då får man jobba i DEN gruppen. #00:43:41-3#

Evelina: Men det känns ju lite som att de (.) typ, tar det för givet. Eller typ såhär: DET är en person som får A. DET är en som får. Så så jag känner. #00:43:52-8#
In this sequence, Hannah and Nelly describe that they believe their teacher divides pupils into two groups by means of a class list and a summative diagnosis based on the result of a single written test. Here, the pupils make clear that they are convinced that teachers are grouping them in a quite unreflected way. By this, the internal differentiation that is made is seen to lack a legitimate basis. Moreover, they experience that each group is allocated already in advance to certain knowledge requirements and thereby also to certain grades that can be achieved within this group, since “you with THOSE requirements, you can work in ONE group. You with that grade”. Thereby, pupils also express their major concern – that the categorisation is fixed, that teachers in advance take pupils’ performance level “for granted” and that they thereby, to some extent, also decide in advance upon the chances to receive a certain grade.

Overall, the ex-ante categorisation on the class-level can on the one hand, from a pupils’ perspective be understood as an internal differentiation, characterised by duality in otherwise heterogeneous classes, and with relevant consequences for the possible grades to achieve. On the other hand, pupils experience that teachers can ascribe individual pupils attributes that are perceived to matter for their grades in terms of prejudices that are hard to change and influence pupils self-image. Both, ascriptions made in advance from individual teachers regarding individual pupils as well as ascriptions made on the class-level resulting in categorisations, are perceived as potential sources for disadvantageous and thereby unjust assessment.

Similar to the pupils in the Swedish interviews, pupils in the German interviews also experience that teachers ascribe them certain attributes or characteristics, which in turn matter for the grade they can achieve. These ascriptions play an important role in the German pupils’ descriptions about their everyday school life in relation to assessment. The interviewed pupils for example perceive:

- that their performance in one subject matters for the grade they can receive in another subject – if it is the same teacher, they believe that the teacher is ex-ante convinced about their capacity to reach a certain performance level.
- that certain personality traits and their own behaviour in class can be relevant for the grade the teacher allocates.

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I: Så att det redan är bestämd lite i förväg menar du? #00:43:53-9#
Nelly: //Mhm/. #00:43:53-9#
Evelina: //Ah Ah/. Alltså så alltså det känns så lite så typ eller, ja. #00:44:00-0# (SWE06)
that their gender in general can play a role for specific teachers’ grading, or that it matters in terms of a gender specific behaviour, which influences the chances for receiving a certain grade.

• that teachers ascribe pupils certain capacities on the basis of the teachers’ experience with an older sibling and thereby it is predetermined which grade the pupil can reach.

• that teachers’ assessment is influenced by how the pupils is perceived and assessed by other teachers.

Hence, pupils believe and experience that there are diverse reasons besides their performance that matter for teachers assessment, which to some extent, can analytically always be linked to different sorts of assessment errors like e.g. the halo-effect\textsuperscript{205}. However, the general pattern in these descriptions that makes these ascriptions to be potential sources for perceived injustice is the fact that the ascriptions are often seen as ‘ex-ante categorisations’. These ‘ex-ante categorisations’ are characterised by being quite fixed as well as they are hard to change. Overall, they are of high relevance for the grades that can be achieved and a typical sequence that can exemplify this pattern is the following:

\textit{Konrad: Ehm, well/. We also have some, who by default ALWAYS get a One. Well completely by default. Always in the written part a One. Actually, they don’t need to say anything orally, because they are already reserved as candidates for the One. Ehm (.). [...] And others, they are raising their hands more often and maybe also say good things. Then they’ll get just a Three or a Two. Because teachers haven’t earmarked them. Actually, there are people who are good, actually. But as a rowdy, they’ll have/ or in some way, or are in some ways earmarked and they’ll get two grades lower. By (...) principle.}

\textit{Laurenz: Often, that’s also my feeling: that you simply/. As soon as you leave the class, already after the first class, you are marked as a certain kind of student. And you can’t rid yourself that easily. Well/.}

\textit{Ronny: Sure! First impression and the like. \textit{(GER05, Gymnasium)}}\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{205} The described situation reminds on the so-called "Halo-effect", a social psychological concept that was first introduced by Thorndike (1920). With regard to assessment, this effect describes an assessment error, where the assessor more or less unconsciously extrapolates from distinct characteristics to other characteristics e.g. the teacher who grades a pupil with deviant behavior worse than the pupil’s performance actually would justify.

\textsuperscript{206} Original sequence:
This sequence shows that the perceived ascriptions are actually perceived as quite fixed predefinitions of grades and that they are seen, because of a certain behaviour, as for example a “rowdy” and thereby “get two grades lower. By (...) principle”. Hence, the range of grades that are possible to reach is perceived as already predetermined - before pupils have shown their performance at all, and sometimes “already after the first class, you are marked as a certain kind of student”. In addition, this predetermination is also quite hard to change for pupils and it leads to a micro differentiation within the classroom. This micro differentiation in the classroom is perceived as an illegitimate ‘ex-ante categorisation’ of pupils into two groups: pupils who “don’t need to say something orally, because they are already reserved as a candidate for the One”, and those who are in advance “earmarked” by the teacher for receiving “just a Three or a Two”, despite the fact that they “are good, actually”. It becomes clear that the micro differentiation is perceived as lacking a legitimate basis and that the teacher is held responsible for its consequences - the unequal allocation of grades regardless of pupils’ performance level.

Besides this inner differentiation of pupils due to ex-ante ascriptions based on e.g. pupils’ behaviour, which also is experienced to have direct consequences for the grades that can be achieved, another analytical pattern of differentiation emerged as being relevant. Interestingly, individualised teaching practices\textsuperscript{207} were not brought up as an issue in the German interviews, which otherwise could be supposed to lead to an experience of inner differentiation or didactical grouping similar to the Swedish patterns of analysis. Due to the fact that the data are based on interviews and not on e.g. ethnographic classroom observations, it cannot be concluded that this must have to do with an absence of such individualised teaching practices\textsuperscript{208}.

\begin{flushright}
Konrad: Àh, also/. Wir haben ja auch welche, die haben so ganz standardmäßig IMMER ‘ne Eins. Also ganz standardmäßig. Immer schriftlich ‘ne Eins. Die brauchen mündlich eigentlich gar nichts mehr zu sagen, weil die sind quasi als Einserkandidat schon vorgemerkt. Àh (.). […] Und andere, die melden sich dann halt vielleicht öfters und sagen dann vielleicht halt auch gute Sachen. Die kriegen dann halt nur ‘ne Drei oder ‘ne Zwei. Weil die Lehrer die halt quasi nicht so vorgemerkt haben. Da gibt es halt Leute, die sind eigentlich gut. Aber die haben halt als Kravalleute/ oder irgendwie oder sind halt sonst irgendwie vorgemerkt und die kriegen dann halt zwei Noten schlechter. Aus (...) Prinzip. #00:21:26-1#
Laurenz: Das hab’ ich auch oft so das Gefühl: dass man halt/. Sobald man halt aus dem Unterricht geht, schon in der ersten Stunde, da ist man halt in so ‘ner Schulade. Und da kommt man dann eben erst mal so einfach auch nicht mehr raus. Also/. #00:21:34-3#
Ronny: Na klar! Erster Eindruck und so. #00:21:34-9# (GER05, Gymnasium)
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{207} For an extended reading regarding individualised teaching practices and its relevance for constructing differences in German classrooms see e.g. Rabenstein and Wischer (2016); Idel, Rabenstein, and Ricken (2017); Rabenstein, Idel, and Ricken (2015); Rabenstein, Reh, Ricken, and Idel (2013); Schwarz (2016) for e.g. notes that “Individualised forms of teaching and learning are seen as an universal remedy in schools for handling the increasing challenges of differentiation” (p.33, Transl.B.V.).

\textsuperscript{208} See e.g. Reh, Rabenstein & Fritzsche (2011): “In Germany, individualised instruction has become quintessential to good instruction. Its foundations stem from various traditions: in conceptions of
Instead, it was seen as reasonable that the most relevant differentiation into different categories of pupils happens somewhere else. That means that if the pattern of differentiation is analytically moved – away from the classroom level and assessment, more towards the level of external differentiation; it is revealed that the principle of ‘ex-ante categorisations’ and its relevance for the allocation of chances is the same for pupils in the German interviews as for pupils in the Swedish interviews. Because of this, the focus in the following is on how the German pupils perceive the tracking they experience in the differentiated school system in Germany with regard to the here implied ‘ex-ante categorisations’, and how this is seen to form their self-image as a ‘performer’ as well as their factual possibility to achieve certain educational chances.

First, it is important to note that the differentiated character of the German educational system was not a relevant justice issue per se for the interviewed pupils. This means that in the interviews that were conducted with pupils from Hauptschule, Realschule or Gymnasium, the school type attended surprisingly seemed not to be an especially relevant matter for pupils’ reflections about justice. Rather, the pupils seemed to perceive the differentiation in a quite positive way, namely as a support of their diverging needs and justified through their diverging abilities. Overall, the interviewed pupils showed a school type related self-image: one is a Hauptschule pupil, one is a Realschule pupil, and one is a Gymnasium pupil209. The conceptual self-image of a typical pupil attending a Gymnasium can be illustrated with the following quote, which is taken from an interview sequence where Elisabeth explains why she thinks her classmate does actually not deserve to attend Gymnasium because of her performance that is perceived as low:

*Elisabeth: [...] And I find, well (...) if you’re attending a Gymnasium, of course then it needs to be justified a bit as well. And then you really need to make a bit of an effort. If you just don’t work and you’re nonetheless allowed to move up [to next year, B.V.]. Well (...) I’m really not a pedagogue, but anyway. I don’t know, I find that strange somehow. (GER08, Gymnasium)*210

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209 That does not mean that there are not any pupils in certain school types that can feel wrongly placed in this school type, but the interviews showed that pupils generally conceptualised themselves e.g. as Hauptschule pupil etc.

210 Original quote: Elisabeth: [...] Und ich find, also (...) wenn man so auf dem Gymnasium ist, dann muss das ja auch schon ein bisschen gerechtfertigt sein. Und dann muss man sich schon auch ein bisschen anstrengen.
In this quote, the overall pattern of the interviewed pupils at Gymnasium schools show that it in some way a pupil must deserve to attend a Gymnasium and that “it needs to be justified a bit as well” to attend this school type – this may be due to motivation, working ethos or ability. This does not mean that pupils always find that all pupils attending Gymnasium have these qualities, nor it means that pupils attending Gymnasium do not reflect upon the possibility that some pupils attending another school type actually would have the capacities to attend a Gymnasium; but on the level of their normative conceptions, they find that Gymnasium should mirror a pupil composition representing the highest level of ability and willingness to make an effort. This conception was expressed by pupils who attended a Gymnasium from the beginning as well as by pupils who made the transition from Realschule to Gymnasium after year 10.

When these findings from Gymnasium are contrasted with the views pupils attending Hauptschule expressed, it is surprising at first, that their conception regarding the deservedness of attending a certain school type is more similar than contrasting. The pupils attending Hauptschule in the interviews perceive that the external differentiation into different school types is justified by ability and effort and additionally, also by the level of what generally could be summarised as socially appropriate behaviour. With regard to their reasoning on this issue, the following sequence represents a typical example. Here, pupils talk about the formal possibility to change after year 10 to a Gymnasium and why most of them are not making use of this formally existing possibility:

II: Mmmh. Why does no one attend Gymnasium, what do you think?

Cedric: //Well//.

Melanie: //I believe//, the level there is simply too high.

Cedric: Yes. From Hauptschule to Gymnasium, there is actually a difference.

Soraya: And it depends on if they accept you.
Soraya: Because ehm, if you come/you come from another school and attend it and just have a better certificate and then you come from Hauptschule, then there's a bigger chance that those from the other school are accepted in.

II: You mean for example from Realschule and such?

Soraya: Exactly.

II: Okay (...) And why do you believe that, well because you say, that it's because of the level. That it's, that well/. What's the difference on the/.

Lilly: They expect much more.

Cedric: The expectations, the teachers are completely different. Well, they are/ Our teachers, they show interest in us, they don't just deal with us regarding teaching, I'd say. And on Gymnasium it's different. There they'll just do their classes (.) and then leave again.

II: Mmmmm. And you believe that you wouldn't be able to make it there?

Cedric: (...) there are c/ completely other expectations. So you/ I set, I would just say/. Like (.) normally/. Well not me, right? But usually you'd have been used to attending Hauptschule for five years and then suddenly attending a Gymnasium, then (.). That's completely different. (GER13, Hauptschule)212

212 Original sequence:

II: Mmmh. Warum geht denn keiner aufs Gymnasium, was glaubst du? #00:07:11-6#
Cedric://Ach/ #00:07:12-6#
Melanie://Ich glaube/, das Niveau ist einfach viel zu hoch dort.#00:07:14-2#
Cedric: Ja. Von der Hauptschule auf ein Gymnasium ist schon dann ein Unterschied. #00:07:18-1#
Soraya: Und es kommt drauf an, ob die einen annehmen. #00:07:20-3#
Cedric: Ja. #00:07:21-2#
II: Achso. #00:07:22-2#
Soraya: Weil äh, wenn jetzt einer kommt/ der kommt jetzt von einer anderen Schule da drauf und der hat einfach ein besseres Zeugnis und dann kommt jemand von der Hauptschule, dann ist die Chance größer, dass die von der anderen Schule dran kommen. #00:07:32-4#
II: Zum Beispiel von der Realschule oder so, meinst du? #00:07:35-0#
Soraya: Genau #00:07:34-2#
This sequence exemplarily reveals that the pupils believe that *Hauptschule* and *Gymnasium* are “completely different” and that these differences are wide reaching. These differences also imply “completely other expectations”, which aim at pupils’ performance level as well as the relationship between teachers and pupils. This relationship also is seen to imply assumed differences regarding the core task of teachers’ professional work. Later on in the interview, the pupil Cedric who was moved from *Gymnasium* to *Gesamtschule* and finally needed to attend *Hauptschule*, concretises this:

Cedric: Yes. At Hauptschule. But Hauptschule still is the best of all. Well, regarding the/ regarding the/ re/re/regarding teachers’ behaviour. Well, I mean, how they treat us, that they don’t just do their classes and then leave, in that sense, but also talk to students privately, what’s going on in our private lives and things like that. (. This is just completely/completely different in contrast to Gymnasium where [incompr., B.V.] I was. (GER13, Hauptschule)213

Cedric has experienced three different school types and compares those regarding teachers’ professional practices. He concludes from his comparison, that “Hauptschule still is the best of all” school types with regard to “teachers’ behaviour”. So for Cedric, one major advantage of *Hauptschule* is that his need of relations and personal interest are best met in this school type214.

Overall, the sequence shows that pupils have quite vague ideas about the differences between *Hauptschule* and *Gymnasium*, but they still highlight the

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11: Okay (...) Und warum glaubt ihr denn, dass, also weil ihr sagt so, dass das so von dem Niveau her ist. Dass das einem das, ne?! Was ist denn da anders aufm? #00:07:46-9#
Lilly: Die erwarten viel mehr. #00:07:48-2#
Cedric: Die Erwartungen, die Lehrer sind ganz anders. Also die sind/ Bei uns die Lehrer, die gehen auf uns ein, die haben auch so nicht nur unterrichtsmäßig was mit uns zu tun, sag ich mal. Und auf dem Gymnasium ist das halt anders. Da machen die ihren Unterricht eigentlich (.) und gehen dann wieder. #00:08:02-7#
I1: Mmmhh (.) Und da glaubt ihr das ihr das nicht schaffen würdet, also? #00:08:07-3#
Cedric: (...) das ist g/ ganz andere Erwartung. So man/ Ich setze so, sage ich mal/ (.) So normalerweise/ Also ich jetzt nicht, ne?! Aber normalerweise wäre man dann 5 Jahre auf Hauptschule gewöhnt und dann auf einmal aufs Gymnasium zu gehen, dann (.)/ Das ist ganz anders. #00:08:24-0# (GER13, Hauptschule)215

Original quote:
Cedric: Ja. Dann auf Hauptschule. Aber Hauptschule ist echt noch am besten von allen. Also von der/ von dem/ von den Verhalten von den Lehrern her/ Also ich meine, wie die mit einem umgehen, dass die auch nicht nur ihren Unterricht machen und dann gehen, so gesehen, sondern auch mit den Schülern sich so privat unterhalten, was im Privaten los ist und so was. (.) Ist halt ein ganz/ganz anders im Gegensatz zum Gymnasium so [unverständl. ich jetzt war. […] #00:54:12-2# (GER13, Hauptschule)

213 Regarding differences in teaching and assessment practices in relation to school type see Zaborowski, Breidenstein and Meier (2010).
relevance of these differences. However, this vagueness can also be understood as causing insecurity and a sense that they would not fit in. Both feelings are also intensified by their expectations that they would not get access if someone from Realschule would apply as well. So, even if they would fulfil the formal requirements to change to Gymnasium, their school type related self-image as well as their belief about Gymnasium might hold them back from making this transition\textsuperscript{215}.

However, differentiation along school types per se is not perceived as unjust but more accepted as a given fact that is legitimised by different levels of ability. This also applies to the interviewed pupils attending Gesamtschule, which is characterised through a relative heterogeneous pupil composition and aims at being “a school for longer joint learning” that “works with children and adolescents with all levels of performance and that keeps different school-career paths open as long as possible” (MSW, Transl.B.V.)\textsuperscript{216}. The differentiation that still takes place in Gesamtschule in different courses and classes according to pupils abilities is seen as something necessary and helpful and is justified through performance and ability, at least by the pupils attending the courses preparing for the Abitur and thereby qualifying pupils for higher education:

\textit{Marina: Yes exactly, and then in German or English they can get G or E, but these are then the weaker ones. From Eight Five, it’s the weaker ones so to speak. Then you stay until year ten and then leave.}

\textit{I2: But the differentiation, is it fair or?}

\textit{Nicky: Well, I actually find it a bit good, well/. Well, we also are a Gesamtschule and not all are equally good there. And then it’s good, if you’re working with those having the same/. Well, so that you have a bit such an equal/. Ehm, well having LEVEL OF LEARNING, so to speak. And some can’t learn that quickly, so to speak. Yes, and then for those who for example just have G courses, they can’t change to the upper secondary level.}

\textit{[…]}

\textsuperscript{215} During the school year 2012/13, 93% of the German pupils who entered upper secondary level at Gymnasium (Gymnasiale Oberstufe) attended also a Gymnasium before. Only 7% of the pupils who made the transition had a qualification from other school types such as Realschule, Gesamtschule, Hauptschule etc. (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014, p. 28).

\textsuperscript{216} see https://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/Schulsystem/Schulformen/Gesamtschule/, 2016-12-14
Marina: [...] Well, there are also always such cases, where high achievement and low achievement are mixed within one class. And then usually one from an E course is sitting next to one from a G course. But I think that can be a good model, but I don’t know. Well this is way I find it good as well, because then you’re (...), ehm, with the class on the same level and then it’s also easier for the teacher, when everyone keeps up during class. (GER11, Gesamtschule)217

Pupils believe that some pupils are “weaker” learners, characterised by “low achievement” while others are better learners, characterised by “high achievement”. Furthermore, this differentiation that divides the heterogeneous group of pupils into two groups and thereby, analogously to the Swedish interviews, can be understood as ‘dualisation’ on the basis of the allocated grades, is seen as advantageous since all pupils then “have a bit such an equal […] LEVEL OF LEARNING, so to speak”. In addition, this fact also makes it “easier for the teacher, when all keep up during lesson”. That means that besides the ‘dualisation’ practice of grouping pupils in different courses depending on their performance level, the principle of legitimisation is also characterised by ‘dualisation’. On the one hand, the differentiation is legitimised by pupils’ different needs, which would make individualised learning settings necessary; and on the other hand, the differentiation is also legitimised by teachers’ need for more homogenous groups to teach and instruct. This is assumed to lead to an increased quality of teaching and learning218. Since different levels of ability are seen as something naturally given and quite fixed219, this dualisation is legitimised as a natural consequence of diverging preconditions for learning and performance.

217 Original sequence:
Marina: Ja genau, und dann in Deutsch und Englisch können die dann G oder E, aber das sind ja dann die schwächeren. Und dann halt ab der Acht Fünf sind das dann halt die schwächeren sozusagen. Dann bleibt man bis zu der zehnten Klasse und geht dann ab. #00:17:02-1#
I 2: Aber die Einteilung so, ist die so fair oder? #00:17:07-4#
Nicky: Also, ich finde’s schon ein bisschen gut, also. Also wie wir sind ja auch eine Gesamtschule und da sind ja nicht alle gleich gut. Und dann ist es gut, wenn man mit denen arbeitet, die gleich. Also, damit man so ein bisschen so ein gleiches. Äh, also LERNNIVEAU hat, sag’ ich mal. Und manche können ja nicht so schnell lernen, sag’ ich mal. Ja und dann für Leute, die zum Beispiel nur G Kurse haben, die können nicht so leicht in die Oberstufe kommen. #00:17:34-2#
[...] 
Marina: […] Also, es gibt ja dann halt auch immer so die Fälle, wo dann halt leistungsstark und leistungsschwach so in einer Klasse gemischt sind. Und das meistens dann auch so ist, das halt einer vom E Kurs dann halt auch neben einem vom G Kurs sitzt. Aber ich glaube, dass das auch so ein gutes Modell sein kann, aber ich weiß es nicht. Also ich finde das sowieso jetzt eigentlich schon auch so gut, weil man dann halt auch (...), ahm, mit der Klasse halt so auf einem Niveau ist und das es dann halt auch für den Lehrer halt auch einfacher ist, wenn halt so alle mitkommen, mit dem Stoff. #00:19:31-1#
218 Compare with e.g. Giota (2013) concerning the positive effects of performance differentiation that teachers assume.
219 See also ch. 7.1.2.
As already indicated before, it is not the external differentiation into school types per se that is perceived as unjust, but rather the differentiations’ consequences and side effects that are linked to it on a general level. More concretely, for the pupils attending *Hauptschule* for example, it is the ‘ex-ante categorisations’ according to the school type they attend to, that are perceived as unjust. Those have wide-reaching consequences for their life chances, like e.g. the limited chances to choose from a range of vocational education opportunities. In the following sequence, the pupils attending *Hauptschule* described how they perceived the first practical training period they had in school in order to prepare them for a vocational training after school:

*Korbinian*: The first practical training we had, that was in Crafts/ in the Chamber of Crafts. And from the beginning I wanted to do something with hotels and not/.

*Sergej*: Isn’t it called Centre and not Chamber?

*Korbinian*: Centre, Chamber, whatever. Either way Crafts. And there, there was just Crafts.

*Michelle*: HAIR STYLIST!

*I1*: Well, for all?

*Korbinian*: //Yes.//

*Sergej*: //Yeah//.

*Tobias*: //Yes//.

*Sergej*: Yes, for all. And then there were two days like (.) we needed to go there (..) what’s it called?

*Korbinian*: //Idiot test//.

*Michelle*: //Idiot test//.

*Tobias*: //Idiot test//.

*Sergej*: Health test. Screening test. Ehm, there //we all had to do those tests// for skilfulness or not.

*Tobias*: //There they already knew if you’d work as a bricklayer or not/>. 
Sergej: For logical thinking and so on. And then we had two weeks, where you would categorise for different jobs.

Michelle: Hairstylist. Flower//arranger//.

Sergej: //Yes// Hairstylist, //crafts, metal work//

Korbinian: //Metal, electrics//.

[...]

Tobias: But it was/. Yes well, since then, I find it unfair. Because, because/ regulated. Well so/. That is is directly: if you, don’t know, want to start in the hotel or something even better or so. That you automatically need a Real/. Well not necessarily Realschule certificate, but Abitur. Fachabitur is needed. Well that they actually don’t look at the person, but/ Well, it really can be that the person is not made for this job though having a somehow () higher certificate. Therefore, I found it always unfair in some way. [...] (GER04, Hauptschule)

This sequence shows how the principle of ‘ex-ante categorisations’ forms pupils’ further educational chances via ascriptions: the sequence is about pupils’ first experiences with the organisation of the practical training period. According to what the headmaster explained during a conversation before the interview took place, this practical training period is aiming at providing pupils first experiences of potential working fields after they finished school. In addition, it is an important possibility for pupils to network and by this, to increase their chances for a vocational training place. However, the pupils themselves experienced this situation as an ‘ex-ante categorisation’, which made it clear for them that they, as pupils from Hauptschule, belong to the qualification-category “just crafts”. Furthermore, all pupils perceived the conducted ability test as an “idiot-test” and here the simultaneous emphasis of all pupils underlines the strong impact that test had on the pupils. For pupils, this confirms the assumed ascription of not being able to perform in other future working tasks than those related to the lower labour sector. It is the ascriptions from others that limit their future life chances since the others “already knew” (and thereby defined) in advance “if you will work as a bricklayer or not”. In Tobias’s quote it becomes clear that these ascriptions are

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220 Regarding the limited chances for pupils from Hauptschule to get a place for vocational training and the role of the companies’ logics of selection, see e.g. Imdorf (2010).
linked to the school type that pupils attend to\textsuperscript{221}, and that these ascriptions are not primarily linked to their grades. That means that the external differentiation is perceived as an ‘ex-ante categorisation’ by these pupils to which also certain ascriptions and prescriptions are attached in terms of assumed abilities. This has wide reaching consequences for the factual further educational chances of pupils. The injustice lies in the fact that the ascription regarding the assumed level of ability is related to the category ‘\textit{Hauptschule} pupil’, which in turn the individual is ascribed to. Therefore, the perceived injustice goes beyond stereotypes and lies in the stigmatisation. This stigmatisation is perceived as being difficult to escape from, since the opportunities to choose are limited from the beginning.

The comparison shows that pupils in both contexts have experiences of being ascribed certain characteristics with regard to their assumed ability to perform on a certain level. Additionally, pupils also perceive that these ascriptions can imply a categorisation as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ performers. These categorisations are thereby perceived as a differentiation that is characterised by a ‘dualisation’. The pedagogical construction of such differences and how such constructed differences in turn are used to legitimate differentiation practices is also highlighted in diverse praxeological studies such as the ones of Idel, Rabenstein, & Ricken (2017); Rabenstein, Reh, Ricken, & Idel (2013) or Rabenstein & Wischer (2016). From a historical perspective, Titze (2000) sees the categorisation of pupils as good and poor performers as one of the core tasks of modern educational systems, based on the socio-historical necessities that developed during the transition towards educational selection. However, from a present pupil perspective, the dualisation is often perceived to be based on teachers’ biased focus on only certain aspects and before pupils were given the chance to show a broader range of abilities and performance. Therefore, such ‘ex-ante categorisations’ are perceived as unjust ascriptions, which challenge their justice conceptions. However, the perceived injustice reaches beyond the mere labelling and is about the relevance of these labels for the achievement of grades and in addition, for educational chances.

In the Swedish interviews, this becomes obvious for example in relation to the ability grouping that pupils seem to experience in their everyday classroom life, which are in the presented ways linked to the pupils chances to receive a certain grade. By moving the analytical line from the internal differentiation on classroom level and grades in the Swedish context to the external differentiation on the structural level and certificates in the German context, the same principle becomes visible. That means that the principle of ‘ex-ante categorisations’ with its wide-reaching consequences is a category that is

\textsuperscript{221} For an extended reading on the societal stigmatisation of pupils attending \textit{Hauptschule}, Wellgraf’s (2012) ethnography is recommended.
examined in two functionally equivalent contexts. These functional equivalent contexts are pupils’ narrated experiences of the differentiation practices in the Swedish classroom on the one hand; and on the other hand, of the differentiation practices in the German school system to track pupils according to their assumed ability. By using this context sensible lens for comparative examination, the similarities become visible: that in both cases, regardless the system’s outer structure, heterogeneity is handled by pedagogical differentiation (it may be on classroom level or by an early tracking of the pupils into different school types). This differentiation is a main source for perceived injustice since it risks locking in pupils in certain types of ascribed performance-categories, which in turn are linked to limitations regarding the possibilities to achieve a certain grade or certificate.

Moreover, internal differentiation and external differentiation also imply different degrees of visibility. That means that in the German context, the external differentiation is not solely having effects on pupils learning, self-image as a performer and their beliefs regarding their future life chances inside the classroom. In addition to this, the fact that one ‘is’ a pupil attending Hauptschule and the related societal ascription that this is equivalent to ‘being’ a bad performer and therefore not ‘having’ other chances than “to work as a bricklayer”, highlights the double and mutually aggravative character of the ‘ex-ante categorisation’. In the Swedish case, the visibility of ‘being’ a bad performer is limited to the classroom level due to the absence of a tracking of pupils. That also implies that it is less visible on the societal level and therefore comparably less vulnerable for societal stigmatisation (see e.g. Wellgraf (2012) regarding the societal stigmatisation of pupils attending a Hauptschule). On the other hand, this also means that intern differentiation is a differentiation that is more hidden for the public eye and takes place behind closed doors. It can be assumed that the experience of being perceived as an “F-child” as well as the experience that one, for example, belongs to the poor-performer-group in mathematics, has certain effects on pupils’ self-image and self-efficacy beliefs, which more or less then can be relevant for the chances pupils believe to have and believe that they are able to take.

7.2.5 Interim résumé

Overall, the chapter shows another dimension of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment, which is about the chances that pupils perceive that they are ‘given’ within the classroom. These chances are from a pupils’ perspective the conditions, which in a broad meaning can be said to be related to learning and in consequence to this, which matter for assessment and the grade pupils
can achieve\textsuperscript{222}. Analysis revealed, that just assessment understood from a pupils’ perspective, can hardly be limited to the assessment process and procedures as such. Rather, assessment needs to be understood as embedded in a wider web of relational relevance structures and in relation to the broader background of learning and teaching, of its conditions, logics and organisation, which pupils experience on an everyday basis.

Moreover, the findings provide insight in how pupils experience the conditions that frame the generation of differences. This implies also pupils’ view on how the ‘good’ or the ‘poor’ achiever is ‘made’. Those conditions are related to four aspects: first, the chances to learn the things they later on are assessed for; second, the chances they receive or are denied to show their competences; third, chances provided or withhold due to the decisions teachers made on the basis of the scope of discretion; and fourth, the chances or disadvantages resulting from ‘ex-ante categorisations’, which are linked to the external or internal differentiation of pupils. Pupils perceive, that these (pre)conditions basically determine, in diverging ways, their chances to achieve a certain grade. At the same time, they also perceive, that they cannot influence or contribute to a change of these (pre)conditions, but have to bear the consequences and are ascribed the responsibility. Hence, the responsibility for certain grades is to some extent laid on teachers or on the system in general.

Besides these similarities and equivalences, the comparison also revealed the differences in Swedish and German pupils’ conceptions. These differences highlight the relevance of the assessment regulations’ logics, which underlie the assessment practices in the classroom, as well as the relevance of how the differentiation is organised and realised. Here, variations are not just only a matter in terms of variations across socio-educational contexts. It also implies variations on the very local level, grounded in pupils’ narrated experiences regarding the very concrete conditions of a very concrete teacher’s teaching and assessment practices in concrete situations.

\textsuperscript{222} See also Luhmann (2002) regarding the construction of ‘performance’, which in turn the assessment decisions are based upon (p.66).
7.3 Internalised responsibility – Effort as the chance one needs to take

Besides the aspects of just assessment from a pupils’ perspective presented above and where the responsibility for the grade is externalised, the analysis also showed that there are aspects regarding just assessment, in which pupils see themselves as being responsible for.

The analysis showed that for the interviewed pupils in the Swedish as well as in the German context, a just grade is a grade that is and needs to be deserved (see ch.6.2). When this deservedness is more closely examined, it becomes obvious that a deserved grade consists of two aspects: ability (see ch.7.1.2) and effort. While ability generally is perceived as a quite fixed component of the grade and includes chances that one either has by birth or is lacking; effort is conceptualised as the more flexible part of the grade. Pupils perceive that effort is the aspect that allows them to influence the grade beyond their relatively fixed abilities or the teacher related aspects. Thereby, effort is seen as that part of the just grade, which pupils themselves can influence, and on the other side, which they are also responsible for to use 223. This also implies, that besides the ‘externalised responsibility’ for grades a) through the chances that one either has or lacks, as well as b) through the chances for grades that are perceived as being allocated, pupils also perceive a responsibility to contribute to a just grade allocation, which is related to themselves and about c) the chances provided, which one as a pupil needs to take. These chances are characterised by effort. In the following, the characteristics of effort will be presented in more detail, focusing on why and how effort plays a role for just assessment for pupils as well as how effort is conceptualised and matters in different ways for pupils interviewed in both national contexts.

7.3.1 The relevance of effort for just assessment

As already indicated above, effort is an important aspect of a just grade for pupils in the Swedish interviews. A typical sequence that can exemplify this conception is the following, where pupils discuss the injustice in their physical

223 Husén (1974) noted for example regarding the role of effort for the meritocratic “philosophy” the following: "A key idea in this philosophy is that talent is mainly inborn, something that squares with the view of divine destiny. The active participation of the individual in molding his own fate squares with the Protestant work ethic. Those who succeed and those who fail get the praise and the blame for effort or lack of effort respectively” (p.125)
education teacher’s assessment, which is perceived as not including pupils’ effort:

Hannah: [...] And then maybe I try my HARDEST. Still a bit like Evelina, who’s like three metres tall and weighs like ten kilos. She just like flies over this like an eagle/, like three metres up. So then, she doesn’t have to like work for it. But like me weighing 200 kilos, I might have to like work for passing over 50 centimetres. And I think that matters some to what capacity you put in. Or how good it is from the start.

Nelly: Mhm. He judges on what you’ve got IN you.

Pauline: And THAT’S, I think, just what teachers should do. That you, I mean that you/ that the teacher should check how you DEVELOP. Check the development. And someone who’s best at math might like, might just do, like, I mean they might just stay on the same level all the time. As opposed to someone who is, is a bit weak at math might develop and develop each year and then they might like/. And that’s what, what I still think matters.

Hannah: Uhu. Here we might have two students [she points at two imaginary spots on the table]. Let’s call them [M.student] and [E.student]. [M.student] knows how to think/ or he like knows this much [shows a spacing on a drinking glass]. [E.student] he=he like knows NOTHING. And then over the years, he, he doesn’t have to work for it AT ALL. And he knows like everything. But then there’s [E.student] he fills up with like all he knows in the end. But he, he knows/ he’s had to like fill up his WHOLE glass. And then, then they get like/. He, he is still like too little, then he still just gets a C and he gets an A like. Without working at all. So then I recon the teachers should give’im too an A because he’s like filled up his glass.

I: So it should be included in grades that [E.student] has filled his glass?

Nelly: Yes, how=how much you put into it and then/. I mean some can, some don’t have to put in anything at all, like. (SWE 06)\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{224} Original sequence:

Hannah: [...] Och då jag kanske försöker mitt BÄSTA. Ändå som kanske Evelina, som är tre meter lång och väger liksom tio kilo. Hon bara liksom flyger ju över som en vante över den här/, på tre meters höjd, liksom. Men då, hon behöver ju inte kämpa. Men jag då som väger 200 kilo, jag kanske
In this sequence, some main aspects of effort are discussed. First, it shows the relation between ability and effort. As already discussed in chapter 7.1, ability is also here conceptualised as chances that one simply has by birth and which are allocated differently – which is in this sequence, about the different physical abilities regarding the athletics discipline high jump. In other parts of this interview it becomes especially obvious that this teacher is assessing pupils with regard to their achieved results – in relation to the high jump example above, it is how high pupils can jump. Solely assessing ability is seen as unjust since the teacher “judges on what you’ve got IN you” and thereby excludes pupils’ effort when allocating grades. Effort, in turn, is seen to be about the investment of labour, about the striving and the motivation that enables progression as well as development and thereby reaches beyond ability. Through Hannah’s allegory regarding the glass of water, it is illustrated that the mere measurement of ability (the amount of water in the glass) is unjust since it is not taken into account that pupils have to invest different amounts of effort in order to reach the same level of ability. A just grade would therefore be based on the achieved result in relation to the individual reference standard of the effort invested.

In the sequence presented above, pupils put a quite strong emphasis on effort regarding the just grade. But when the issue of effort is compared across all the interviews conducted with Swedish pupils, it becomes apparent that the relevance of effort needs to be more understood as a continuum. In order to make this continuum more transparent, the next quote will contrast the strong emphasis on effort and will show the other pole of the continuum. The context of the quote is pupils’ discussion about their experiences that teachers motivate grades by referring to pupils invested effort, whereupon pupils discussed the legitimacy of including pupils’ effort into assessment. The
pupils have different views on this issue but in the end, they agree upon that effort should matter when the performance is in between two grades and especially when the minimal grade for passed, the grade E, is at risk:

Linus: Uhu, exactly. And still try to go for an E, then (...) then I think to get an E like, if you really try. Because some blame it on having an F like but still don’t give a damn, like. Uhu, then they’ve got like themselves to blame. I recon. (SWE03)

Even if the importance of effort for a just grade can be perceived differently, together with ability, it still plays an important role for the just grade. Moreover, the discussion in which this quote is embedded also shows that pupils compare their individual invested amount of ability and effort and the thereof generated output in the form of a received grade to the input-output relation of their classmates. Hence, besides the individual reference standard applied to the evaluation of the individually invested amount of effort in relation to the received grade, a social reference standard also seems to be of relevance. Here, the experienced allocation of the grade and the classmates’ invested effort is the standard of comparison. However, the quote also reveals the initially addressed flexible character of effort: that ‘making an effort’ is the part of the grade, which pupils can decide upon themselves. Thereby, they are also responsible to some extent for the grade as an outcome of their decision: those pupils who “don’t give a damn […] they’ve got like themselves to blame” for the low grade received.

The above presented findings show that effort is a component, which pupils expect to matter for a just grade. Overall, pupils’ focus on effort needs to be understood as extrinsically motivated, which means that effort is in the Swedish interviews related to certain benefits pupils expect. The grade is on the one hand a) seen as a direct reward for the invested effort and on the other hand, b) as a necessary basis for the allocation of future educational opportunities. This rewarding character of receiving a certain grade in relation to the effort made becomes for example visible in the following quote:

225 Original quote:
Linus: Ah, precis. Och ändå försöker och gå till ett E, då (...) då tycker jag att få ett E liksom om man verkligen försöker. För en del skyller ju på att de har F men så ändå skiter de i det fullständigt liksom. Ah, då får de ju skylla sig själva. Tycker jag. #00:21:23-0# (SWE03)

226 That may for example explain the findings of Eklöf & Nyroos (2013), who could show that the reported effort Swedish pupils invested for a national test was positively and significantly related to their performance on the test as well as to the perceived importance of the test. That could indicate that pupils more generally experience that effort results in certain outcomes and thereby that effort is in the longer run expected to matter for the grade.

227 See also Öhrn and Holm (2014) who draw similar conclusions from their ethnographic study on assessment and gender: “Most boys and girls, unconsidered their level of performance, express that it is important to perform and to get grades in school, since it increases their possibilities to get access to
important to perform and to get grades in school, since it increases their possibilities to get access to
assessment and gender: “Most boys and girls, unconsidered their level of performance, express that it is
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Original quote:

I: What do you think, what’s good and what’s bad with grades? Can there also perhaps, can there also be good sides to it?

Emelia: Yeah, I mean it could like be/ be good in the way/. I mean if you’ve put a lot into it (.) and hard work. Then it can feel nice to get
proof that (.) uh, it’s GOOD. You’ve done well. [...] (SWE04)²²⁸

This quote is taken from an interview context, where the pupils have talked for
20 minutes about the negative consequences of grades for their learning and
their well-being as well as about teachers’ assessment practices. The first
answer on the question if there are any good points with grades is related to
effort and is a typical answer on this question across the Swedish interviews –
the grade is perceived as a “proof” for that “you’ve done well” with regard to
that “you’ve put a lot into it (.) and hard work”. Hence, it becomes obvious,
that this “done well” is tightly linked to the invested effort, which also applies
in relation to the exemplary quote below. If the invested amount of effort is
not mirrored in the grade, the grade is perceived as unjust:

Sara: Uhu, I mean sometimes you get really low grades (.) and then you
still think you did it okay and that you deserve a little bit higher
at least and (.) then there’s those who put/, and those who are worse
than you are, and then they’re on the same grade as you. And then you feel like: shouldn’t THEY stay there and you should be raised a little. Because you’re not like them anyway. Uh. Because those with the highest/, I recon, it’s like, when you’ve really done great work. Uh, when you’ve shown, that you’ve really worked hard with it. It doesn’t have to be perfect. Only that you’ve worked hard with it. Then I think you should get a high grade. (SWE02)²²⁹

²²⁸ See e.g. also Morton Deutsch(1979), who described grades as “the currency of the educational field” (p.391).
²²⁹ I: Vad tycker ni, vad som är dålig med betyg? Kan det även kanske kan det finnas även bra sidor? #00:20:43-8#
Emelia: Jo, alltså det kan ju va/ vara bra på det sätt/. Alltså om man har lagd ner mycket jobb (.) och slit. Då kan det ju vara skönt att få ett bevis på att (.) ah, det är BRA. Du har gjort bra ifrån dig. [...] (SWE04)
²²⁹ Original quote:
Sara: Ah, alltså ibland får man jätte låga betyg (.) och så tycker man ändå att man gjorde det hyfsat och man borde ha fått lite högre i alla fall och (.) sen finns det de som sätter/, och de som är lägre, som man själv är, och så ligger de på samma betyg som man själv. Och så känner man: är det inte DE som borde ha kvar det och att man själv borde gå upp lite. För man är ju ändå inte som de. Eh. För de som med de
This quote shows the relevance of effort in relation to the performance per se: the quality criteria of a “really [...] great work” are not solely based on the performance per se. For a high grade, the performance “doesn’t have to be perfect” but in addition, it is particularly necessary that “you have worked hard with it”. Hence, pupils expect to be rewarded with a high grade for the invested effort. Moreover, in this quote the practice of social comparison also becomes visible, namely in the form of classmates’ relation of invested effort and performance on the one hand and the grade as an outcome on the other. This suggests that pupils’ practice of social comparison in relation to effort can be understood as a social comparison of reward allocation. This social comparison of reward allocation is a potential source for feeling unjustly graded, since it also causes a strong feeling of being disadvantaged in comparison to others:

Carolin: When you actually WORK HARD like and then someone else gets almost the same when they haven’t done f* all. That upsets you a bit. Or me anyway.

I: Who do you get upset with?

Carolin: The teacher, I think.

Finja: I think, I get upset with the student mostly.

Carolin: Yeah, that too. Don’t know. BOTH.

Finja: No, I get upset with the student. Like HELL. Because I don’t think he deserves it, like. [...] (SWE04)²³⁰

The quote shows how the pupils evaluate the relation between invested effort and the received grade against the backdrop of a social comparison within the class. If the same grade is allocated though pupils have invested different amount of individual effort, the assessment is perceived as unjust and causes a feeling of enragement and anger. The anger is either directed against the other

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²³⁰ Original sequence:

Carolin: Nä, jag blir arg på eleven. Som FAN. För jag tycker att den inte förtjänar det typ. [...]

Carolin: Ah, det med. Jag vet inte. BÅDA. #00:58:38-9#

Finja: Jag tror, jag blir arg på eleven mest. #00:58:37-6#

Carolin: Åh, det med. Jag vet inte. BÅDA. #00:58:38-9#

Finja: Nå, jag blir arg på eleven. Som FAN. För jag tycker att den inte förtjänar det typ. [...]

pupil, who has received a grade that is seen as not deserved, or the teacher who allocated this undeserved grade.

Beyond the rewarding character of the grade in relation to the invested effort, the interviewed pupils also perceive effort as a basic principle for the allocation of and the access to further educational opportunities. From a temporal point of view, these include both, the educational opportunities that are linked to the transition to gymnasieskola as well as in a temporally broader perspective their future working life. The following quote illustrates this principle and is taken from a part of the interview where the pupils discuss the pros and cons of grades versus written feedback in the certificates allocated:

_Amanda: [...]_But anyway, the grades are, it’s quite important. Because if you’re gonna get a job, or university, or get in to upper secondary, then (...) uhm, then () it’s quite good if those, who choose who get in can tell that: “She’s really clever, like. And she puts a lot into it. While she doesn’t (...) do anything and doesn’t give a damn.” But if there weren’t grades, then she, who doesn’t do anything, who doesn’t give a damn, would get in. And then not take care of (.) the opportunity. While the one, who really wants to, won’t get in, because there isn’t a grade. (SWE01)²³¹

In this exemplary quote it becomes obvious that the pupils in the Swedish interviews have internalised the meritocratic norm of allocation and grades’ relevance within this meritocratic allocation that decides upon the access to further educational chances or professional opportunities. It further becomes clear that pupils perceive that there are persons “who choose who get in” on the basis of pupils’ grades. But the most important point here in relation to the effort issue is that pupils perceive that grades, besides competence, also contain information about their invested effort: the people, who “choose” can conclude from high grades that the pupil “puts a lot into it” and consistently, from a low grade, that the pupil is a person who “doesn’t (...) do anything and doesn’t give a damn”.

Similar to the Swedish interviews, the analysis of the German interviews also reveals the relevance of effort for a just grade. The following quote exemplarily represents this conception:

²³¹ Original quote:
_Amanda: [...]_ Men iällafall, betygen är, det är ganska viktigt. För om om man ska få ett jobb, eller högskola eller få komma in på gymnasiet, så (...) ehm, så (.) är det ju rätt så bra, om de som ska välja om vilka som kommer in, ser att: ”Men hon är riktigt duktig, liksom. Och hon ger mycket. Medan hon inte (.) gör någonting och skiter i allt.”. Men om man inte skulle ha betyg, sen så hon som inte gör någonting, som skiter i allt, skulle hon få komma in. Och sen inte ta tillvara på (.) chansen. Medan den som verkligen vill, inte kommer in, för det inte står någon betyg. #01:16:40-5# (SWE01)
Franziska: I think you should get a good grade if it’s obvious that you’re making an effort. Even if it’s not perceived as THAT fantastic. But=but you also notice after a while if a student is talented in the subject or not. Then the teacher sees: yes, he made an effort. Yes, then I think, then this should really be graded well. But some are even more(.) weak and don’t make an effort as well. They just think: yes, pfff, I don’t care! I’m not good in this subject anyway. Don’t need it later on. And then they don’t even make an effort. But some just think: yes, I’m no good at this. Then I’ll make an effort. And I try this/. Well, it’s already the attempts, the endeavours that count as well, to improve. (GER02, Realschule)\textsuperscript{232}

This quote shows how the relation of ability and effort is conceptualised. Likewise in the Swedish interviews, effort is seen as the pupils’ possibility to influence the grade beyond the inherent ability and talent that one either has or has not. ‘Making an effort’ means to care, to try, to make an attempt and it is expected to “count as well” for the grade. Pupils’ conceptualisation of effort can be understood as a chosen attitude towards the handling of challenging moments related to learning, which means that effort is a sort of pupils’ working ethos that pupils decide upon to invest. This ethos is the object of the social in-class comparison pupils use in order to identify how far pupils deserve a certain grade or not. The exclusion of effort from assessment, in favour of an assessment that is mainly based on ability, is therefore seen as unjust. This empirical pattern was found in data across all school-types, likewise the conceptualisation of effort as a working ethos and as an attitude that is expected to matter for the grade.

The pupil Ben is attending a Gymnasium and generally sees himself to perform in the higher-grade spectrum. On the question when one should get a poor grade, he answers:

Ben: If you’re just sitting there really doing nothing AT ALL. If you’re not even making an effort or even TRY, or even try to

\textsuperscript{232}Original quote:
Franziska: Ich denke, man sollte ‘ne gute Note kriegen, wenn man merkt, man gibt sich Mühe. Auch

Ben: Wenn man wirklich einfach nur rumsitzt und wirklich einfach GAR nichts macht. Wenn man sich


233 Original quote:
Ben: Wenn man wirklich einfach nur rumsitzt und wirklich einfach GAR nichts macht. Wenn man sich

234 Original quote:

Even in this quote the social comparison becomes visible and it is exemplified with a concrete experience. Likewise in the Swedish interview data, the social in-class comparison is also characterised by a comparison between the level of ability and the invested effort as an attitude that is transformed into an action on the one side, and on the other side the received outcome in the form of a grade. Hence, even here the pupil compares his input of ability and effort with the received outcome in form of a grade to the input-output relation of some class-mates. The teacher’s disregard of his invested effort and the allocation of a poorer grade than the ones the classmates received, leads to that he “really felt unfairly treated”. Since the effort is invested despite physical problems,
the value of effort for the grade gains in importance and makes the poorer grade being perceived as even more unjust one.

Analogously to the findings from the Swedish interviews, the pupils in the German interviews are as well mainly extrinsically motivated with regard to the investment of effort. For example, pupils experience that teachers motivate them to make an effort by promising a reward in terms of a better grade:

_Sina:_ Yes, Mrs. W. teacher also said this to me. Well, if she just personality cha/. What is it called? Personality change? Like that? 
_Franziska:_ Don’t know.

_Sina:_ Notices a personality change. If you’re not good at all in German and nevertheless make an effort and when she recognises during this term that you’re (.) just making an effort, in order to get a better grade, then she will include this in the grade somehow.

_I1:_ Mhm. Then it’s included.

_Sina:_ Yeah. Yes. If she notices a change. Like the personality in some way. If she notices/. She meant. (GER02, Realschule)

This sequence shows that the pupil Sina believes that effort matters for her teacher’s assessment since the teacher signalled that a “personality change” with regard to effort would be rewarded by an inclusion of this shown working ethos in the teacher’s assessment decision. On the other hand, the pupil is not completely sure about in which way the teacher concretely will “include this in the grade somehow”. However, she believes that the teacher expects a change in the “personality in some way”, which moreover needs to be visible for the teacher.

The extrinsically motivating character of grades lies from a pupils’ perspective not only in its rewarding purpose but also in its disciplining function. For example, the pupil Anton gives the following answer on the question why grades exist at all:

_Sina:_ Ja, das meinte ja Frau W. Lehrerin zu mir auch. Also, wenn sie halt Persönlichkeitswe/. Wie heisst das nochmal? Persönlichkeitswechselung? Oder so? #00:24:55-3# 
_Franziska:_ Ich weiss nicht. #00:24:54-8# 
_Sina:_ Persönlichkeitsänderungen sieht. Wenn man irgendwie Deutsch überhaupt nicht kann und sich trotzdem anstrengt und sie halt irgendwie in dem Halbjahr sieht, dass man (.) halt sich anstrengt, damit man die bessere Note bekommt, dann bezieht sie das irgendwie halt auch in die Note ein. #00:25:07-7# 
_I1:_ Mhm. Dann fliesst das mit ein. #00:25:08-6# 
_Sina:_ Japp. Ja. Wenn sie halt ‘ne Änderung sieht. So Persönlichkeit so irgendwie. Wenn sie sieht/. Meinte sie zu mir. #00:25:13-3# (GER02, Realschule)
August: Yes, well. Without grades teaching wouldn’t work. Because then no one would care if you’d do poor work. Then in this subject, then it’d just be that way. But then, if grades are received for it, then (.) you know: you simply need to make a bit of an effort so that you don’t need to repeat the year like. (GER07, Gymnasium)

The fact that grades in the German system determine if one is allowed to get promoted to the next year, motivates pupils to avoid the risk of staying back and repeating the school year. Even in this extended meaning of grades’ relevance for future educational chances, the belief in effort plays a vital role since “one knows: one simply needs to make a bit of effort” in order to prevent the repetition of the school year. Hence, the necessary grades that allow for the promotion to next year are then the expected reward for the invested effort. If this reward would be missing, he believes that there would be no reason for pupils to make an effort in school at all.

Before the Swedish and the German pupils’ conceptions regarding the relevance of effort for the just grade are compared, an additional and therewith related important analytical pattern shall be presented. This pattern can be said to highlights pupils’ conceptions about their options of action and influence.

7.3.2 Pupils’ modi operandi of effort

The so far presented findings about pupils’ conceptions regarding the relation of effort and just assessment also have another dimension, which is about the strategies related to effort pupils use in order to influence the grade they can achieve. These strategies can be understood as ‘pupils’ modi operandi of effort’. Overall, the strategies can be categorised as modi operandi of ‘making an effort’ and modi operandi of ‘showing effort’ and shall be more concretely presented in the following.

236 Original quote:
August: Ja also. Ohne Noten wird ja der Unterricht ja gar nicht so richtig funktionieren. Weil es da dann ja sonst keinen juckt, wenn man dann schlecht ist. Da dann halt in dem Unterricht, dann ist da eben halt so. Aber wenn es dann Noten dafür gibt, dann (.) weiss man halt: man muss sich halt ein bisschen anstrengen, damit man dann halt das Jahr nicht nochmal machen muss und so. #00:29:27-3# (GER07, Gymnasium)
7.3.2.1 Modus operandi of ‘making an effort’

The modi operandi of ‘making an effort’ implies that pupils really invest extra time and work since they believe and expect thereby to improve their chances for getting higher grades\textsuperscript{237}. This is for example the case when pupils do some extra work at home or ask the teacher for more difficult or for more tasks by choice. Partly, this pattern was already implicitly addressed in the chapter above, but shall even be more explicitly highlighted here, also in order to reveal this category’s relevance in relation to the category presented hereafter.

The quote below from a Swedish interview exemplarily represents how ‘making an effort’ is related to an as unjust perceived grade. In the beginning of the quote, the pupil Sara describes that she “wrote like A LOT” for a task in social science and got a much lower grade than she expected. She perceived this lower grade as very unjust in relation to the one her classmate received, who wrote much less than her. Then she continues to describe that this happened one more time with another task in social science:

*Sara: [*…*] So, I wrote like A LOT and I was REALLY pleased with that bit. And when I talked to others they said: Oooh, we probably won’t pass on that because we haven’t written/ we’ve just written like one sentence. And then when it was returned, I didn’t get kind of that good on the first one but then on the OTHER ONE, then I didn’t get that good EITHER. I=I got an E! An E for that. And the others also got an E for it. And then I just felt: but I wrote so much and=and really tried. It DIDN’T help. And I couldn’t have done any better on that assignment.*

I: But what did the teacher say then?

*Sara: I haven’t actually talked to her. But=but I suppose she recons that (.) I didn’t reach the goals. But (.) and that you write about the wrong stuff but (.) I think that she still should check that you write good stuff and that. So that felt really unfair. (SWE02)*\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{237}This finding is also in line with Stables, Murakami, McIntosh & Martin (2013, p. 634-635), who examined pupils’ conceptions of ‘effort as achievement’.

\textsuperscript{238}Original quote:
The quote illustrates the pupil’s expectations that the invested effort should be reflected in the grade – regardless the fact whether the submitted task met the assessment criteria or not. Furthermore the invested effort is materialised and represented through a certain amount of work, which was “A LOT” and “so much”. The pupil has invested this effort and produced this amount of written work in anticipation of a high grade as a reward. Since this reward is not allocated, the pupil is disappointed and feels unjustly graded, since the expectations are not met. It can be assumed that the degree of feeling unjustly graded is especially high since the pupil invested the most possible individual effort and “really couldn’t have done any better”.

The same applies also for pupils’ conceptions in the German interviews. Even here, pupils perceive it as unjust, if they really made an effort and then are not rewarded with an appropriate grade. This can be illustrated through the following quote of Michelle, who answers on the question when one should get a high grade, in the following way:

Michelle: I find, if you REALLY throw yourself into it. For example, doing extra work for the portfolio or the like. Then I find, it’s unfair, if you say afterwards: well that can’t be assessed. Although you’ve done everything. There I find, that you should look at the quality of the portfolio. Because we should have as much as we had in German and English. Because we had two portfolios and I was finished with the one in German and in English as well. Actually, I even did it at home. And then just not grading it is actually unfair, I think. There you really would’ve NEEDED to get ehm (.) a good grade. If you’re extra sitting at home and finishing it so she can grade it. (GER04, Hauptschule)

Even in the German example, the actual effort made becomes visible in a work the pupil has produced in her free time at home. Her expectation that this
extra work would improve her grade was not met by the teacher, who instead meant that the portfolio is not an object of assessment. So the extra-invested effort was not rewarded with the expected “good grade”. The difference between the pupil’s expectations on the one hand that the invested effort necessarily “NEEDED” to lead to a good grade; and on the other hand the unexpected decision by the teacher not to grade it, is perceived as unjust, especially since the pupil invested more than the teacher expected her to do. Hence, from a pupil’s perspective, she exceeded the teacher’s expectations and therefore deserves a reward.

7.3.2.2 Modus operandi of ‘showing effort’

Besides the modus operandi of really ‘making an effort’ that is mainly aiming at improving the work that the teacher in consequence is then expected to grade better than if one would have not invested effort; there is another clear pattern in data related to effort. This pattern is less about really ‘making an effort’. Instead, the pattern is focusing more on making the teacher believe that one is ‘making an effort’ - without necessarily really doing so. Since pupils believe and expect that effort matters for teachers and at the same time experience that teachers include different parameters in their assessment, like e.g. some teachers are perceived to use effort as an assessment criteria while others are not, pupils develop different strategies of ‘showing effort’. Some strategies are more general in character, and are on the one hand about actively ‘showing effort’. This can include the visualisation of an interested facial expression, looking at the teacher during lesson, putting up hands in order to signal that one knows the right answer et cetera. On the other hand, there are as well strategies that are about consciously and actively avoiding actions that risk to be perceived as disinterest by the teacher. This can include behaviour such as for example just looking covertly on the mobile phone, avoid chatting with classmates during lesson etc. Besides these general modi operandi, pupils also have specific strategies, which they try to adjust according to the individual teacher’s expected demands and priorities.

A typical quote from a Swedish pupil regarding this issue is for example the following:

*Carl: Nah I mean, I mean, if you’re really active, show that you care, and raise your hand and always try/. Because they say that like, even if you don’t know you can still raise your hand and (..) try and so on. And if you do that and all that stuff, then you show that*
Carl’s quote illustrates that he interprets the teacher’s request to put up hands during lesson as a way to show the teacher “that you care”. So he believes that through this behaviour, he has the chance to make the working attitude “that you care” visible to the teacher and that this, in some way, is important for the teacher. Furthermore, the quote also represents that pupils not just only show certain behaviour patterns, which they believe to be important for signalising effort, but also they actively avoid certain behaviour patterns, which they believe could signalise laziness or disinterest, like for example “staring at your mobile and stuff”\(^{241}\). However, showing effort through certain kinds of behaviour is a strategy that pupils use in order to improve the chances to get a better grade. These strategies are goal-oriented and can be multifaceted:

\[
\text{I: Uhm (5). How do you really show your teachers what you know? You said before that you raise your hand and that. Are there other ways as well to show what you know?}
\]

\[
\text{Sara: I mean I (...) I think that showing what you’ve done, for example. I, I finished all the questions in one subject. And then I approached him and said: I’ve done all of this now and am I getting more questions? I mean REALLY showing that (..)/ even when I know that you weren’t supposed to do more questions really. But still showing like this INTEREST that: are there any more questions? Like. Because then he still sees that you’ve done what you’re supposed to in quite a short time and that you want to do more. So it’s not just raising your hand and that. (SWE02)\(^{242}\)
\]

\(^{240}\) Original quote:
Carl: Nä alltså jag menar, alltså om man är mycket aktivt, visar att man bry sig, och räcker upp handen och alltid försöker ändå. För de säger ju att även om man inte kan så kan man ändå räcka upp handen och (...) testa och så hår. Och gör man det och allt sånt där, då visar man ju att man bryr sig. Om man sitter och kollar på sin mobil och sånt där då bryr man ju inte sig så där. #00:28:27-1# (SWE03)

\(^{241}\) Another example, pupils named regarding this issue is that they avoid to talk to their classmates when the teacher could notice it.

\(^{242}\) Original sequence:
I: Ahm (5). Hur visar ni egentligen era lärarna vad ni kan? Ni sa innan att ni räcker upp handen och så här. Finns det också andra sätt att visa vad man kan? #00:42:34-9#

This sequence illustrates the strategical character of ‘showing effort’. Though the pupil knows “that you weren’t supposed to do more questions really”, she asked the teacher for more work in order to signalise the high working ethos and the willingness to invest effort “that one wants to do more”. Moreover the sequence also shows that there are no clear distinctions between ability and effort for pupils. Ability as an object of assessment is from a pupil’s perspective dependent on visibility and becomes manifested through “what you’ve done”. In other words, ability is inseparable from effort, when it comes to pupils’ belief of what is assessed and graded. Against this background and in combination with the findings presented before, it becomes comprehensible why effort matters for a just grade from the Swedish pupils’ perspective.

Another dimension of ‘showing effort’ that was already addressed in the beginning of this chapter, is the avoidance of showing behaviour and characteristics that the pupils believe will risk influencing their grade in a negative way. The following sequence shows the complexity of the concept of effort from a pupils’ perspective in general and its relevance for just assessment in particular:

Louise: [...] It/ you/ it feels like you ALWAYS need to keep in the back of your mind that the teacher is like going to JUDGE you. Like. All the time just/ Uhu. Uhu. That you have to think all the time that: uhu, but I have to behave, do this and this to get an A. And that (.) that gets a bit like you/. I mean you could/ I mean. It. You get like/ You can’t always be yourself or how t, like, put it. I mean, like. Sometimes. Because/. You have to think all the time that he all the time/ or that the teacher checks you all the time and that. What you do.

I: Because everything matters, or?

Louise: Uhu exactly. You have to (4). Uhu, like in (..) in PE, like. I can take an example from PE. I’m really competitive or something like that. I don’t like losing. So that/. I can’t show those feelings at all. Because she (.) sees that and she doesn’t like it. And then she might give me a C, on that ability. If I/. I mean if/. And then it gets like. Then I can’t get an A. So I have to like (..) you have to really think about it all the time, what you’re doing. Because ehm (4). Because they, they judge you all the time. Because/

See for e.g. also the findings in the study from Blumenfeld, Pintrich & Hamilton (1986) on children attending grade two and six, also pointing out an cognitive developmental aspect regarding this conceptual differentiation.
I: Because there are certain criteria in PE that say that you //shouldn’t//.

Louise: //Exactly//. Uhu exactly. Uhu exactly, and adjust to the group and that, and for the group. So that can be hard too. (SWE05)

Besides the aspect described in the first part, that pupils feel constantly assessed and graded and thereby stressed, this quote shows how pupils’ effort conceptions are interwoven with their perceptions and experiences on assessment. Louise believes that her Physical Education teacher grades the characteristics of being a team player. She furthermore conceptualises being a team player as contrary to her characteristic of having a strong winning mentality, which can be understood as having a strong intrinsic motivation to really make an effort. Since her assumption is that the showing of this strong intrinsic motivation would lead to down-grading, she in turn needs to make an effort (which “can be hard too”), in order to hide her intrinsic motivation so that her chances for a good grade in Physical Education are not put at risk. Together with the conception of being constantly assessed and graded, pupils’ effort conceptions and the necessity to show the certain kind of effort in the certain way the teacher is supposed to grade, the ‘showing of effort’ needs to be understood as a chance for the pupils to influence their grade as well as it is also perceived as an inevitable necessity.

Also in the German interviews, the modus operandi of ‘showing effort’ is a clear analytical pattern and reveals pupils’ conceptions of the relevance of

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244 Original sequence:
I: För allt ingår, eller? #00:31:19-6#
I: För det finns då vissa kunskapskrav på idrott som säger att man //ska inte//. #00:32:03-6#
Louise: //Precis/. Ah precis. Ah precis och anpassa sig och så här och för gruppen. Så det kan ju vara jobbigt det också. #00:32:11-9# (SWE05)

245 See ch. 5.3.2.
246 When one is looking at the knowledge requirements for sports in grade 9, no requirements are named that would indicate such or any other related characteristics to be a relevant aspect in grade allocation, in terms of what the pupil experienced.
effort for the grade, as well as their manifold strategies in order to improve their chances to receive a good grade. A typical quote regarding this pattern from the German data is the following, where the pupil Franziska describes her strategy for showing the teacher her strong ethos of effort:

Franziska: Well, first, it’s about how often you raise your hand. You don’t NEED to get the question, but at least raising your hand. So that she sees that you know something. Or also when she’s moving through the classroom, or also showing: yes, look. My homework, I wrote a lot in particular. Would you be so kind and read it through? Like this. Because when it comes to homework, it’s a bit special, if this counts as oral or as written parts. She is just looking at them and grades them as she likes, generally. And what’s also important: if you say something that it’s of a good quality and good length as well. So, that it’s not mega long and just half as good. But also, that it’s not mega short and one half is missing.

This quote represents the strategic and conscious character of showing effort. Here, the pupil perceives that the ‘showing of effort’, the showing of that she cares about her schoolwork matters for the teacher’s assessment. Her strategies go from putting up hands during lesson, which is not necessarily aiming at really get the chance to make a contribution, until calling the teacher’s attention to her own homework even if the teacher has not asked for it. The conscious strategical character becomes especially clear in the pupil’s analysis of how the answering of a question would look like at best. The ‘showing of effort’ is thereby not left to chance by answering questions, but it is planned in relation to her own quality criteria, which are expected to be important for the grade.

The strategic use of effort implies also the dimension of extrinsic motivation and thereby that the aim not necessarily needs to be to really improve knowledge or skills, but to adjust to the assumed assessment criteria of effort:

247 Original quote:
Franziska: Also erstmal geht’s darum, wie oft man aufzeigt. Man MUSS jetzt nicht drankommen, aber zumindest aufzeigen. Damit die sieht, dass man= dass man was weiss. Oder halt auch wenn die rumgeht, oder auch mal so zeigen: ja, guck mal. Meine Hausaufgabe, hab‘ ich extra lang gemacht. Können Sie sich die bitte mal durchlesen? Oder so. Weil (.) bei den Hausaufgaben ist das immer so ‘ne Sache, ob die mündlich oder schriftlich zählen. Die guckt sich die dann halt so an und bewertet die dann so, wie sie möchte, im Prinzip. Und was auch wichtig ist, ist: wenn man was sagt, dass das QUALITATIV und von der Länge her auch passt. Dass das nicht mega lang ist und nur die Hälfte dabei rum kommt. Und auch nicht, dass das so mega kurz ist und die Hälfte fehlt. #00:22:29-9#
(GER02, Realschule)
Finn: And I also find that a lot depends on/. Well, you simply can PRETEND a lot, that you are skilled. Well, that’s really strange. Well, I had—I had in English, one term, a One. Just because I pretended to explain something and the like. Oh, shit, unfortunately, I couldn’t raise my hand. You can get a lot out of that. If the teacher has such a neutral attitude towards you and hasn’t heard anything negative about you and the like. Then it’s quite easy. If they don’t know you that well. Best if you’re new at school. Then you can do so quite easily. (GER06, Gymnasium)248

At the same time as Finn uses this strategy in order to receive a better grade, the quote also indicates an ambivalence that it is possible at all and moreover also “easy” that “you can simply PRETEND” to be “skilled” and to make an effort by explaining “something”. The experience that the ‘showing of effort’ provides chances to receive a better grade is not just a chance that pupils use and are positive towards. In some sense, pupils also are critical regarding this since a grade that would be based solely on the ‘showing of effort’ is perceived as being unjust. The following sequence from pupils attending Gymnasium will illustrate this ambivalent relation between the ‘showing of effort’ understood as a chance and ‘showing of effort’ as an unjust basis of assessment. On the question regarding how they show their abilities to the teacher, the pupils answer:

Elias: Well, I think you just need to have an interested attitude.

August: Mhm!

Elias: Well we had—we had/. Our English teacher, Fridolin has been there, too. Well he simply/. Well=well, he’s just fucking it up a lot. And then he sat somewhere alone and then, when she asked a question, he was like: mhm, mhm, mhm. Well, just totally interested. And he simply GOT A ONE. And all of us, we couldn’t believe it. But then just like, just such an interested att/. Just had such an interested attitude. Well, I think/.

[…]

248 Original quote:
Finn: Und ich finde auch, das hängt auch viel davon ab/. Also, man kann ja auch viel einfach nur so TUN, als wär’ man gut. Also das ist schon echt krass. Also ich hatte=ich hatte mal in Englisch ein Halbjahr ‘ne Eins. Weil ich einfach nur so getan hab’ als würde ich denen was erklären oder so. Ach, Mist, ich konnte leider gerade nicht aufzeigen. Und, ja. Da kann man schon halt auch extrem viel mit rausholen. Wenn der Lehrer halt so ‘ne neutrale Einstellung zu einem hat und auch nicht so, was Schlechtes über einen gehört hat oder so. Dann geht das so relativ einfach. Wenn die einen noch nicht so kennen. Am besten man kommt neu auf die Schule oder so. Dann kann man das relativ einfach machen. #00:24:24-0# (GER06, Gymnasium)
Even in this sequence, the relevance of the ‘showing of effort’ as a demonstration of a certain working ethos and as an attitude that serves the purpose of receiving a certain grade becomes clear. The allocation of the highest grade to a classmate, who only pretended to be interested, is seen as unjust. On the one hand, the ‘showing of effort’ is perceived and experienced as a necessary foundation of the grade: sitting up straight and nodding on teacher’s explanations is believed to have “an effect” on the grade. On the other hand, when other pupils are solely graded on the ‘showing of effort’, without really ‘making an effort’, the allocated grade is seen as unjust.

Overall, it could be shown that effort is a vital aspect of pupils’ conceptions concerning just assessment in school. Pupils perceive effort to be the influenceable part of their school performance and the allocated grade. Consequently, pupils in both contexts perceive effort as that part of the grade that they themselves are responsible for and it is the chance to improve the grade that pupils themselves need to take.

This indicates on the one hand again pupils’ internalisation of effort as a part of the meritocratic belief. As already pointed out earlier, for example Husén (1974) noted regarding effort’s role in the meritocratic philosophy:

> Elias: And well, if you’re just lying on the chair all the time and (...) yes. Then I believe you get a lower grade automatically than if you sit up straight and if you/. Even=even if you’re just nodding to the questions, I think that has an effect.

> Robin: That’s also exhausting over time [all laughing]. Therefore it’s a bit (...) legitimate, because that makes you a bit more attentive, so [all laughing]. But anyway, that’s unfair.

(GER07, Gymnasium)249

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249 Original sequence:

Elias: Also, ich glaube, man muss auch einfach ‘ne interessierte Haltung haben. #00:33:34-5#
August: Mhm! #00:33:34-5#
Elias: Also, wir hatten=wir hatten/. Unsere Englischlehrerin, da war Fridolin jetzt auch. Also der ist halt einfach/. Also=also, der macht halt viel Scheisse auch. Und dann sass der hält alleine irgendwo und dann hat der halt, wenn die ‘ne Frage gestellt hat, so voll: mhm, mhm, mhm. Halt so voll interessant halt. Und der hat halt ‘ne EINS GEKRIEGT. Und wir konnten es alle nicht fassen. Aber dann halt nur, so ‘ne interessante Halt/. So ‘ne interessierte Haltung hatte. Also ich glaub/. #00:33:55-7#
[...]
Elias: Und also, wenn man da jetzt die ganze Zeit nur auf’m Stuhl rumhängt und (...) ja. Dann kriegt man glaub ich, automatisch ‘ne schlechtere Note, als wenn man mal grade sitzt und wenn man/. Selbst=selbst wenn man nur nickt, bei den Fragen, glaub ich, dass das schon Einfluss hat. #00:34:18-0#
Robin: Das ist ja dann auch anstrengend auf Dauer [alle lachen]. Deshalb ist das ja schon ein bisschen (...) gerechtfertigt, weil dadurch passt man wenigstens ein bisschen auf, so [alle lachen]. Aber, das ist, schon unfair. #00:34:32-2# (GER07, Gymnasium)
"A key idea in this philosophy is that talent is mainly inborn, something that squares with the view of divine destiny. The active participation of the individual in moulding his own fate squares with the Protestant work ethic. Those who succeed and those who fail get the praise and the blame for effort or lack of effort respectively” (p.125)

Hence, the empirical findings of this study point towards pupils’ internalisation of the meritocratic societal norm. This may be seen as less surprising, when having in mind the main societal purpose of grades as operationalised measures of merit, working as a “quick language” in administrative matters (Lundahl & Waldow, 2009). Furthermore, the increasing focus on achievement and output (Lilliedahl, Sundberg, & Wahlström, 2016; Waldow, 2012; Bellmann & Waldow, 2012; Halbheer & Reusser, 2008) as also indicated by the growing interest and relevance of international large scale studies such as PISA or TIMMS, as well as national tests and comparisons and the implementation of standards which come along with an increased standardisation of assessment (Bellmann & Waldow, 2012); can also be understood as an expression of an increased focus on aspects built in the blueprint of the meritocratic philosophy (see Waldow, 2013), but appearing in a new guise. The presented findings suggest that the pupils’ strategies, their ‘modi operandi of effort’, which are about the importance to ‘make an effort’ as well as pupils’ belief that the ‘showing of effort’ is important for their grades, point towards that the ‘meritocracy norm in the new guise’ is a highly actual and relevant issue in classrooms experienced by pupils.

Besides this normative relevance of effort, one could also ask why effort matters for pupils in relation to their concrete classroom experiences of assessment. Overall, the literature research done on effort suggests that the concept of effort is comparably underdetermined academically in relation to its practical relevance in everyday school life (Stables, Murakami, McIntosh, & Martin, 2013). Likewise it is the case with the concept of beliefs, effort also can be said to be a kind of “messy construct” (Pajares, 1992) regarding the concept of ‘beliefs’). However, it is still mainly achievement motivation research that addresses questions to some extent related to the concept of effort (Covington, 1992; Dweck, 2015; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002; Sann & Preiser, 2008). The findings presented regarding effort in this study can be seen as an attempt to define the concept of effort from a pedagogical point of view, based on pupils’ experiences.

240 See ch. 2.1.
241 Regarding the internalisation of social norms see e.g. Coleman (1990)
It is in this context and based on these findings that the question named before emerges: why and how effort matters in relation to assessment and why it matters in the presented ways for the interviewed pupils. From the surface, it seems relatively clear that the stimulation of pupils’ effort as well as their will to make an effort is one of the core tasks of educational socialisation (Sacher, 2014). Therefore, the same applies for the pedagogical part of teacher’s work, as “it is widely believed that the students’ effort is modifiable through the action of teachers” (Covington, 1992, p. 16). Furthermore, formative assessment practices can also be seen as intending to stimulate pupils effort in terms of the

“belief [...] that you can always improve by your own efforts and so you have to take the risk of attempting, rather than avoiding, dauntingly challenging tasks” (Black, 2015, p. 169).

Given the fact that formative approaches to assessment have gained in popularity during the last two decades in educational practices, as well as on the policy level and within research, (Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015; Maier, 2010), it can be assumed that this also impacts on how pupils perceive the issue of effort and that effort has its specific place in the learning and assessment environment pupils experience in the classroom. Since pupils at the same time are also located in a learning and assessment context that is increasingly determined by a standardisation of summative assessment, pupils’ belief of effort can be said to be challenged and put in a field of tension that emerges between the pedagogical principles linked to requirements on the one hand and support on the other (Falkenberg et al., 2017). Consequently, pupils’ perception of effort in relation to just grading and assessment, on the one hand needs to be understood as framed by the normative conception of the ‘meritocracy in a new guise’. On the other hand, it needs to be understood as framed by the specific field of tension that develops through hybridised approaches to formative assessment under contextual conditions of simultaneously occurring standards for summative assessment. This field of tension creates very complex contradictions for pupils that are perceived as another source for injustice – especially in relation to pupils’ perceptions that they themselves are responsible for the invested amount of effort.

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252 Certainly with regard to the fact that the understanding of what formative assessment means can vary (Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015) and are in different ways put into practice (Jönsson, Lundahl & Holmgren, 2015). Moreover, there is a risk for a nearly mechanical adaptation of methods and the therewith-related reduction of the general idea of ‘Assessment for learning’ (AfL) as a certain way of teaching and learning (Black, 2015). With this regard, it is suggested to understand formative assessment as well as ‘AfL’ as a theory, a method and a pedagogical practice that hybridises in relation to its particular context.
Against this backdrop of complexity and contradictions, pupils perceive it as basically necessary to understand the basis for assessment. How this need for understanding is perceived by pupils within and across both contexts, will be presented in detail in the next main chapter, after a brief interim résumé.

### 7.3.3 Interim résumé

Until now, it could be shown that pupils’ conceptions are in diverse ways related to aspects of the socio-educational context on the general as well as on the very local, concrete and situationally bound level. This context provides the basis for pupils’ experiences and how they perceive and think about assessment in general and in particular with regard to justice. While pupils on the one hand perceive that there are contextually bound conditions, which determine assessment and their chances to achieve a certain grade and which they cannot influence and control; they are also convinced about having chances to influence the grade by effort.

From a pupils’ perspective, effort is their chance for achieving a certain grade, independent from the as static conceptualised aspects like ability, family background or conditions related to teaching and learning. Thus, pupils perceive this chance as a chance, that needs to be taken and which they themselves are responsible for. Consequently, besides the before presented dimensions that were characterised by pupils’ externalisation of responsibility, effort is the dimension of the internalised responsibility. Consequently, this finding shows the importance of effort for pupils with regard to assessment, which is particularly relevant in relation to increasing standardisation in assessment.

Besides this, it also could be shown that effort not just only refers to really ‘making an effort’. Analysis revealed as well, that pupils put emphasis on the ‘showing of effort’, which is about making their ‘modi operandi of effort’ visible for teachers, since pupils’ believe and expect that the demonstration of effort-related actions might play a role for teachers’ assessment. Depending on the contextual conditions and the logics and practices of formative assessment approaches, effort seems to be a critical point in the field of tensions, that spans between increasing formative approaches on the one hand, and increasing summative testing on the other and which, in addition, also operates under the conditions of increasing standardisation.
7.4 Interim résumé – pupils’ context-bound justice conceptions regarding the generation of grades

The findings in this chapter show the diverging aspects in pupils’ everyday experiences in school with assessment, and the specific challenges they are related with in regard to justice. Here, similarities and equivalences become obvious, which can be said to be the shared experienced dimensions of just assessment from a pupils’ perspective. Thereby, the chapter also shows that just assessment for pupils, is not just solely limited to assessment as such. Rather, just assessment needs to be understood as embedded in a wider and in a complex web of everyday assessment, teaching and learning. Hence, just assessment, and in extension to this the just grade, consists of and depends on diverse interrelated components of and conditions for teaching and learning, which altogether are of relevance for how just pupils perceive the experienced assessment and the allocated grades to be. Consequently, each of those components can be said to represent a part of the micro-(in) justice in everyday assessment, and thereby the assessment, which the generation of grades is based upon.

These parts of micro-(in) justice can differ in the presented ways, in regard to the educational contexts or the different groups of pupils. This means, that the conditions for and the consequences of an (un-)just grade allocation differ regarding how learning and teaching is organised and realised, what educational structure pupils experience, and how assessment, in relation to the contextual conditions and regulations, is enacted and communicated in the classroom.

However, despite these inter- and intra-contextual differences, pupils’ justice conceptions that are related to the everyday experiences of assessment, finally are about the question of who can be hold responsible for the allocation of diverging educational chances, that the grade is based upon. Overall, this responsibility seems to be perceived as a shared one, but with a clear emphasis of externalisation. These are perceived as being beyond pupils’ scope of influence and control, and the responsibility is laid on teachers or the system as a whole. Pupils feel that they themselves cannot influence these external conditions and that they, at the same time, are ascribed the responsibility, which pupils perceive as illegitimate and unjust.

Besides the conditions, which pupils perceive that they cannot influence and that they are held responsible for, pupils also have the conception that there is a component of assessment, which they can control: effort. Since effort is seen as the flexible component and influenceable part of the grade, pupils on the other hand perceive that it follows a responsibility from this opportunity. On
the basis of this conception, pupils believe and expect that effort shall be mirrored in a just grade, which, in turn, seems to lead to particular ‘modi operandi of effort’. Here, the simultaneity of formative assessment practices on the one hand, and summative assessment practices including grade allocation on the other, seems to lead to certain tensions for pupils in terms of justice.

7.4 Interim résumé – pupils' context-bound justice conceptions regarding the generation of grades

The findings in this chapter show the diverging aspects in pupils' everyday experiences in school with assessment, and the specific challenges they are related with in regard to justice. Here, similarities and equivalences become obvious, which can be said to be the shared experienced dimensions of just assessment from a pupils' perspective. Thereby, the chapter also shows that just assessment for pupils, is not just solely limited to assessment as such. Rather, just assessment needs to be understood as embedded in a wider and in a complex web of everyday assessment, teaching and learning. Hence, just assessment, and in extension to this the just grade, consists of and depends on diverse interrelated components of and conditions for teaching and learning, which altogether are of relevance for how just pupils perceive the experienced assessment and the allocated grades to be. Consequently, each of those components can be said to represent a part of the micro-(in) justice in everyday assessment, and thereby the assessment, which the generation of grades is based upon.

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Besides the conditions, which pupils perceive that they cannot influence and that they are held responsible for, pupils also have the conception that there is a component of assessment, which they can control: effort. Since effort is seen as the flexible component and influenceable part of the grade, pupils on the other hand perceive that it follows a responsibility from this opportunity.
VIII. UNDERSTANDING AS IMPERATIVE

In addition to the above presented conceptions, another analytical pattern has shown to be of relevance for pupils’ conceptions regarding just assessment in school. This aspect is about the understanding of assessment, which was explicitly discussed during the interviews as well as it was a latent pattern in the data.

The analytical concept of understanding reveals two analytical dimensions: on the one hand, understanding is about the understanding of the requirements and criteria assessment is based upon. This includes that pupils perceive a great imperative to understand what is graded, why they received a certain grade and how they can improve their grades. On the other hand, based on this pressure, understanding is also aiming at pupils’ attempt to understand assessment as a matter of arithmetic operations and at the same time as a matter of ‘qualitative complexity’. The way in which pupils perceive this understanding in both national contexts is illustrated in the following.

8.1 Understanding requirements

An important analytical pattern of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment is pupils’ perception of being under compulsion to understand
assessment criteria\textsuperscript{253}. That means that it is not just only important for pupils to understand the basis on which they are assessed and how they can improve, but pupils perceive this as a basic necessity. Assessment criteria are furthermore perceived as being the assessment criteria of the individual teacher, which means that assessment criteria are seen as more or less personalised criteria, and understood as the specific teacher’s expectations that the pupils believe they need to fulfil in order to receive a certain grade. In order to fulfil these expectations, pupils perceive that they necessarily need to understand:

a) What is graded (concrete information about teachers’ expectations and pre-transparency of criteria)

b) Why they got a certain grade (feedback regarding teachers’ evaluation and diagnosis, transparency on how criteria were applied)

c) How they can improve their grade (feed-forward regarding teachers’ expectations, pro-transparency of criteria).

Generally, pupils perceive a potential lack of the above named formative aspects of assessment\textsuperscript{254}, which contributes to an as unjust perceived summative assessment. From a pupils’ perspective, these formative aspects are about transparency\textsuperscript{255} – a transparency that is achieved through the very concretion within each of the three above named aspects. The pressure to really understand these aspects of the assessment process as well as its underlying logics, together with the perceived need of a transparency in the form of concretion, mainly lies in the extrinsic motivational character of grades. That means that the transparency, which allows pupils to control teachers’ assessment as well as their own improvement is not about the improvement of learning or the increase of knowledge per se. Rather, it is about the improvement of the grade and thereby outcome-oriented.

It is important to note that the above named categorisation is a theoretical one with regard to content and does not necessarily include a chronological dimension. In data, the three different aspects of information, feedback and feed-forward are often described as interdependent and overlapping. For example, the feed-forward can be dependent on the information and the feedback a pupil got, and at the same time it can be seen as information for the next task with regard to certain parts that the pupil needs to improve in order to reach a certain grade.

\textsuperscript{253} The compulsion to understand can be compared to what is called “Verstehensdruck” in language didactics (see e.g. Segermann, 2000), being about the perceived imperative to understand the intentions of written text or what another person says.

\textsuperscript{254} See for example also William and Black (1996).

\textsuperscript{255} See also Tierney (2013) who also highlights the relevance of transparency for pupils’ perceptions of being fairly assessed in classroom-assessment.
In the following, it will be illustrated how the pressure to understand is perceived by pupils in the two countries; how and why this issue is related to an (un-)just perceived assessment; and how the formative aspects of assessment are interwoven with the summative ones from a pupils’ perspective.

Basically, in the Swedish interviews, the understanding of the grading process seemed to be vitally important in regard to just assessment. This can be illustrated through the following quote that exemplarily represents a typical explanation of a pupil. The pupils in the interview discussed teachers’ diverging ways to explain their assessment to pupils and how the pupils’ Swedish teacher differs in a positive way from other teachers in this regard. In this sequential context the pupil Matiba says:

Matiba: She takes all of it and puts in a grade and she’s not unfair. [...] I mean, I you know, I mean. When you’ve finally had your grade then you know: I deserve this. (SWE01)

This quote illustrates the relevance of understanding for the perception of feeling justly graded. The teacher obviously succeeded in generating the perception of that one knows “I deserve this”, which also implies that the pupils ‘knows’ how the teacher grades.

Generally, the Swedish pupils perceived that there are great differences between teachers regarding the level of transparency. These differences became not just only obvious between the interviews made in different schools but also within interviews with pupils attending the same class. Teachers who were seen to make their assessment transparent do so for example, by explaining the central content (centralt innehållet) and the assessment criteria (kunskapskraven) in the beginning of the school year, as well as they concretise them for each individual working task throughout the school year. However, these transparent concretisations are perceived to be rare. The following sequence exemplarily represents this perception:

I: I mean, do you know what to do, I mean, to get an A? Or like you said, that you know how to explain but the other side. I mean, is it really understandable for you //that//.

Caroline: Nah, I mean you just write what you think and then you see what you get. You don't know what to write to get an A or to better your grades. You just keep writing and hope for the best.


This finding is also supported by the report “Evaluation of the new grading scale” (Skolverket 2016), according to which pupils’ perception of a lack of clarity and transparency has increased since the implementation of the new curriculum in 2011. The evaluation of a large-scale implementation of formative assessment approaches, for example shows the positive effect of AFL (assessment for learning) regarding the increase of transparency (Jönsson, Lundahl & Holmgren, 2015).

256 Original quote:
Matiba: Hon tar alltihopa och sätter till ett betyg och hon är inte orättvist. [...] Alltså. Och man förstår, alltså. När man väl har fått ett betyg så vet man: Jag förtjänar detta. #00:47:54-8# (SWE01)

257 For a more detailed presentation of the basic principle of deservedness see ch. 5.1.2.

258 The evaluation of a large-scale implementation of formative assessment approaches, for example shows the positive effect of AFL (assessment for learning) regarding the increase of transparency (Jönsson, Lundahl & Holmgren, 2015).

259 Pupils for example often name that teachers in these cases use the LPP (Abbrev. for ‘Lokal Pedagogisk Planering’ – Local Pedagogical Plan), which is a voluntary concretisation of the national central content and the knowledge requirements for each subject on school-level or grade-level intern on municipality-level. The same applies for certain assessment matrices certain teachers are perceived to use for concretising what the pupils have to do in order to get a certain grade. The emphasis is thereby always on a clear description of the expected ‘doing’, which furthermore is observable.

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year. However, these transparent concretisations are perceived to be rare. The normal case seems to be that pupils mostly do not know what and how they are expected to perform in order to get a certain grade. The following sequence exemplarily represents this perception:

\[ I: \text{I mean, do you know what to do, I mean, to get a A? Or like you said, that you know how to explain but the other side/. I mean, is it really understandable for you //that/>.} \]

\[ \text{Caroline: \text{Nah, I mean you just write what you think and then you see what you get. You don’t know what to write to get an A or to better your grades. You just keep writing and hope for the best.} (SWE04)} \]

But even if pupils experience that teachers inform them about the assessment criteria, it is not automatically helpful for pupils. That means that even if teachers make their assessment transparent, the transparency needs concretisation in order to turn to a real transparency that goes beyond mere information and that focuses on the enhancement of pupils’ real understanding of the criteria:

\[ \text{Algot: In math, there’s (.) you can’t complain about the first time because we had a really good presentation from him then. What you’re supposed to do to get a really good grade in math. But in all other/ I think all the other subjects, we haven’t had such presentations.} \]

\[ \text{Hannah: \text{Nah.}} \]

\[ \text{Algot: So, you have to like hope for the best.} \]

\[ \text{Hannah: Everyone’s done it sometime, to go through this matrix. SHOW this matrix sometime. And just: this //is what it looks// like.} \]

\[ \text{Pauline: \text{//But the, them// words, us students don’t get them.}} \]

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256 This finding is also supported by the report “Evaluation of the new grading scale” (Skolverket 2016e, Transl. B.V.), according to which pupils’ perception of a lack of clarity and transparency has increased since the implementation of the new curriculum in 2011 (p.59-63).

261Original sequence:

\[ I: \text{Alltså vet ni hur ni ska göra, alltså för att få ett A? Eller som du sa att du kan ju förklara men den andra sidan/. Alltså är det här verkligen förståeligt för er //att/. #00:16:53-4#}

\[ \text{Carolin: Nå, alltså man bara skriver vad man tycker och sen så får man se sen vad det blir. Man vet inte, vad man ska skriva för att få ett A eller för att få ett bättre betyg. Utan man bara skriver på och hoppas på det bästa. #00:17:03-0# (SWE04)} \]
I: Do you feel that it's hard to understand?

All: YES!

Pauline: Yes very, the words are REALLY weird.

Hannah: And there are like the same words. Just some words are like swapped. At least like A, C, E.

I: For example?

Hannah: Nah, I mean for E like: has PASSABLE knowledge about, and C it's like: has GOOD knowledge and for A it's like: A LOT. And how do you know where you are in it, like? How do you know where MY knowledge is?

Nelly: It really feels like you're doing your best and hope for the best.

Algot: Uhum. That's it. (SWE06)

This sequence reveals that transparency is from a pupils’ perspective not achieved through mere accessibility of information, i.e. just showing the national assessment criteria. The mere presentation of the knowledge requirements in the form of a matrix is not sufficient since the necessity of really understanding the concrete meaning is left upon the pupils themselves. Regarding the concretisation, pupils mainly address in this exemplary

262 Original sequence:
Algot: I matten så (.) första gången kan man ju inte klaga på för vi fick ju ett riktigt bra genomgång med honom där. Vad man ska göra för att få ett riktigt bra betyg i matte. Men i alla/ jag tror alla andra ämnena så har vi inte fått sådana genomgångar. #00:23:15-8#
Hannah: nå. #00:23:18-0#
Algot: Så det är ju typ att hoppas på det bästa. #00:23:20-8#
Hannah: Alla har ju gjort det nån gång att gå genom den här mallen. VISA den här mallen någon gång. Och bara: så här //ser det ut// liksom. #00:23:28-9#
Pauline: //Men de de här// orden de förstår ju inte vi elever. #00:23:30-0#
I: Har ni den känslan att det är svårt att förstå? #00:23:32-4#
Alla: JA! #00:23:32-8#
Pauline: Ja verkligen, det är JÅTTE konstiga ord. #00:23:35-9#
Hannah: Och det står ju typ så här samma ord. Det är ju bara vissa ord som är utbytt liksom. I varje så här A, C, E. #00:23:43-5#
I: Till exempel? #00:23:43-5#
Nelly: Det känns egentligen som att man gör sitt bästa och så hoppas man på det bästa. #00:24:00-9#
Algot: Mmm. Det är så. #00:24:02-0# (SWE06)
sequence the so-called value words (värdeord), which mean the words within the knowledge requirements that describe the quality indicators for different grade levels. This implies that pupils understand the importance of the words “PASSABLE” and “GOOD” for the grade they can achieve. However, since the language is quite abstract, administrative and official, pupils perceive the words to be “REALLY weird”. Furthermore, they find it hard to concretise these “REALLY weird” words in relation to their concrete working tasks. Hence, it could be said that the pupils lack the teacher’s ‘pedagogical translation’\textsuperscript{263}. Overall, due to the lack of concrete information, pupils believe that they cannot do more than do their “best and hope for the best”. Thereby, they give up their control over the process\textsuperscript{264}.

The concretion of criteria, which is perceived as teachers’ expectations, becomes apparent in the following quote:

\begin{quote}
Algton: Something I’ve been thinking about like with [N.teacher]/. Let’s say you’ve written something. Let’s say, facts. One thing (.) anyway, he ALWAYS says (.) I’ve copied from Wikipedia. Still I have/ I’ve rephrased the whole damn thing REALLY REALLY REALLY MUCH. But he just like: uhu, but it’s from Wikipedia. So: no. Or: YES. The FACTS are from Wikipedia but (.) I’ve rewritten it. So, I mean it’s not like EASY to just: read through facts and then write it down as something completely yours. That’s really difficult.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Nelly: Uhu, and then like he doesn’t like EXPLAIN how you SHOULD do it. They ask you to do something but (.) they don’t even know themselves how it SHOULD be done. They don’t KNOW it themselves, like. They tell us to do something they don’t know. That’s, that’s really hard. Because they say kind of this like: (.) uhu/. Uhu, but then they say things they don’t like know themselves. (SWE06)\textsuperscript{265}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{263} These findings are supported by the report "Evaluation of the new grading scale" (Skolverket 2016e, Transl. B.V.), according to which 42\% of the teachers working at a grundskola perceived the knowledge requirements as unclear. Furthermore, the value words are perceived as difficult to interpret and concretise (p.42-48).

\textsuperscript{264} Regarding the relation between feed-back that is rich in information and motivation see e.g. Black (2015).

\textsuperscript{265} Original sequence:
Nelly: Ah och då typ FÖRKLARAR han ju inte hur man SKA göra. De ber en ju göra något men (.) de vet inte själva hur man SKA göra. För de KAN ju inte själva. De säger något vi ska göra som inte de
Besides the fact that pupils find it hard to differentiate and concretise the different forms of knowledge, this sequence also represents the difficulty that pupils face when they are expected to work with a certain content, to find relevant information and to present their factual knowledge in a reflective way on their own, without plagiarising. The relevance for the grade lies for the pupils in the fact that they in some way might lack the methodical understanding of how to transform relevant information into an own text. This lack of understanding is then perceived to have consequences for the way in which they can present their knowledge. For pupils, it is “really difficult” to “read through facts and then write it down as something completely yours”. The injustice here is based on pupils’ experience that they need to understand the teacher’s expectations about how they are supposed to fulfil the task on the one hand and that the teacher “doesn’t like EXPLAIN how you SHOULD do it” on the other hand. That means that the teacher is perceived as expecting something from pupils without giving them the necessary information about how the work concretely shall be done. Hence, the whole situation is characterised by vagueness. The perceived injustice is intensified even more as it is concluded that teachers can’t explain because “they don’t KNOW it themselves”. Thereby, pupils think their teachers expect something that is seemly impossible for the pupils to achieve. The lack of concrete information causes a perceived vagueness and is conceptualised as an unrealisable expectation and therefore unjust.

For pupils, the just assessment procedure foregoing the just grade is based on a just possibility to understand the teacher’s expectations at all regarding the requirements for the different grade levels. The concrete information about what one has to do in order to receive a certain grade is perceived as being vitally important in order to adjust the own performance. The following quote will illustrate this aspect, where pupils talked about the absence of adequate information about the expectations:

*Emelia: Uhum. Because that’s what it’s been like all secondary school. Because not until now in ninth grade we’ve seen (...) ONCE the National Test. Old National Tests that others have written. We get to see what a C level text looks like or like an A level text or what a B level text looks like. But that’s not happened until now. And I think that’s a bit bad. Because that was like needed BEFORE.*

(SWE04)267

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266 This becomes also apparent in relation to teachers’ as well as pupils’ perception of the knowledge requirements as being difficult to interpret (Skolverket, 2016e).

267 Original quote:
Therefore, pupils perceive it as necessary to get as concrete information as possible about how they are expected to perform in relation to different grades “BEFORE” they begin with their task, which the grade is later on based upon. Furthermore, pupils perceive that there are certain characteristics for a text graded with an A, B or C. The text itself thereby gets an “A level text”, a “B level text” or a “C level text”. Through concrete information, pupils believe that they could identify these particular characteristics, comply with them and thereby receive a certain grade. Pupils’ conceptualisation of the concrete information can thereby be seen as the idea of a detailed guiding description received from the teacher on how certain grades can be achieved.

The perceived need for concretion becomes also obvious with regard to pupils perceived need to know why they got a certain grade. Pupils also assume that these explanations tell them something about the criteria for assessment, which the teacher focuses on. Therefore, the explanations can be seen as a sort of ‘assessment relevant information carrier’ in regard to the necessary prospective focus on future performance. The way in which the feedback is given however, matters a lot for pupils in terms of a just or unjust perceived assessment. Overall, summative feedback that subsumes pupils’ achievements is perceived to inform them about the status quo of their actual performance level. That means, even though summative feedback is perceived as having a low information density regarding further improvement, it allows pupils at least to locate themselves on the grading scale. This implies for example grades given on individual tasks during the school year:

Carolin: It’s like good to see what level you’re on so you can maybe better yourself if you want. I mean, to see how good you are, like.

[...] (SWE04)

Consequently, if summative feedback is only given as a final grade and thereby merely focusing on the single outcome, the lack of formative feedback, understood as process-related information and support along the way, deprives pupils from the possibility to adjust their performance during the school year and in extension to this, it deprives them from the possibility to reach a higher final grade:


268 Original quote:
Carolin: Det är ju bra för att se, vilken nivå man ligger på så kanske man kan förbättra sig om man vill det. Alltså se, hur duktig man är, liksom. [...] #00:21:45-9# (SWE04)
Elin: I mean. It would’ve been good if you’d had like ha/. At half term that you’d had a talk and: look, now we’ve seen half of the term. This is what you can develop and think about. I do think that many would’ve raised themselves more if you’d known a bit more (...) what/. Yeah.

Louise: Yeah, I mean, doing more kind of subject evaluations.

Elin: Yeah, and that the teacher would’ve helped.

Josefin: Now there’s like many comments.

Louise: Now there’s a lot of: describe on your own what YOU think that YOU need to develop. You don’t get like a lot. I mean, before the end of term then you might perhaps get to know from the teacher what you could’ve developed.

I: Mhm. So really when the grades are already decided, or?

Louise: Uhu, exactly. (SWE05)269

By the basis of this sequence, two aspects shall be especially highlighted: first, this sequence represents the low degree of information density of summative assessments that are given as final grades and in the case that these assessments are the only feedback pupils receive. Hence, pupils lack the information that otherwise would have been included in “talks” during a processual feedback and which would have allowed to adjust the performance. The same applies for the teacher’s help regarding pupils’ improvement. In this sequence, the second pattern of relevance is about pupil’s self-evaluation, which is perceived as not helpful as long as it is not followed up by and linked to the teacher’s evaluation and final grading. Thereby, “what YOU think that YOU need to develop” is not relevant to pupils as long as it is in the end not in line with the aspects that the teacher finally decides upon “what you could’ve

269 Original sequence:
Elin: Alltså. Det hade ju varit bra om man hade typ he/. Vid halvårsterminen hade haft ett samtal och: kolla, nu har vi sett halva terminen. Det här kan du utveckla och tänka på. Jag tror nog, att många hade kunnat höja sig mer om man lite mer hade fått veta (..) vad /. ja. #00:19:14-1#
Louise: Ja alltså göra typ utvärderingar i ämnet mer. #00:19:16-7#
Elin: Ah och att läraren hade hjälp till. #00:19:18-7#
Josefin: Nu är det mycket kommentarer. #00:19:23-9#
Louise: Nu är det mycket: beskriv själv vad DU tycker DU behöver utveckla. Man får inte sähär jätte mycket. Alltså förrän i slutet av terminen då får man kanske veta från läraren vad man hade kunnat utveckla. #00:19:33-6#
I: Mhm. Så alltså när betygen redan är satta, eller? #00:19:36-1#
Louise: Ah precis. #00:19:42-5# (SWE05)
developed” and on the basis on this decision, grades the pupil for. Hence, the alternatives to traditional teacher-centred and mostly summative assessment, which are in this example represented and replaced with pupils’ self-evaluation during the school-year, is from a pupil’s perspective not helpful in terms of grade improvement since the most important evaluation, the grading, is nevertheless at the end made by the teacher. The replacement of teachers’ evaluation and feedback through self-evaluation during the school year is therefore seen as leading to unjust conditions for assessment as long as pupils’ performances in the end are subsumed in a grade anyhow.

Similar to the Swedish interviews, also pupils in the German interviews perceive that the information regarding the teachers’ expectations for the achievement of certain grades is insufficient. However, the transparency that pupils claim has mainly to do with the calculation of scores in written tests and the calculation of the achieved grades in relation to the ones allocated for oral participation, which is about the generative composition of the final grade. The following quote represents the lack of the transparency’s characteristics and its relevance regarding a just final grade. It is embedded in a discussion about the absence of transparent assessment criteria in the physics teacher’s assessment:

Karl: //But// but we also haven’t seen, how he’ll grade at all. But he hasn’t told us either. That means that it actually wasn’t for us at all, what we should do to get a good grade. Or what we’re doing to get a low grade. And (...) then you just don’t know. And for example, if we would’ve had a contract or something like that. You can. Then you know: every teacher is the same. Everyone’s assessing like this and that. [...] But I think, if everything would be that STANDARDISED. Not=not every teacher assesses differently or so. Then you wouldn’t need to adjust. (GER01, Realschule)

In this quote, the pupil describes the total absence of transparency since the pupils do not know what they are expected to “do in order to get a good grade” and what they have done for receiving “a low grade” respectively. This lack of information makes it difficult for pupils to “know” how they can meet the teacher’s expectations and how they can “adjust” their performance
according to the teacher’s expectations. Besides this lack of transparency from a single teacher, the lack of transparency increases since the grading of all teachers is perceived to differ. In this interview context, this becomes obvious in relation to the different grading criteria that teachers apply regarding the composition of the final grade. Since “every teacher assesses differently”, pupils cannot draw any transferable conclusions from one teacher’s assessment to one another. This transparency is expressed in the desire of a “STANDARDISED” assessment in the form of a “contract” that would prevent pupils from the “need to adjust”.

Regarding the lack of transparency in terms of assessment criteria applied on single tests, pupils perceive that the score allocation in the test provides them information about the emphasis of each test question in relation to the test grade. That means that if the score that can be achieved for each single question is made transparent, pupils perceive that they could adjust the testing time and their working focus respectively. Thus, the injustice mainly lies in the lack of transparent information that would allow pupils to adjust their performance to the teacher’s expectations and in relation to the score allocated:

Joris: [...] in German (..) you haven’t fully hit the topic that the teacher wanted from you. Because you haven’t been told CLEARLY enough what you should achieve (...) then it’s not that clear. Then you’re sitting there, thinking about what to focus on. And then it’s WRONG. In this/. The analytical part in the German test for example. In my case/. That was (..)/. Well, there, it is written: examine the relation. Gave ten points. But like examine, which, ehm (..) formal aspects there are. How, ehm (..) the/ the point of view or how the time is considered there, this will give 25 points. And I find, when it says in the question: examine with regard to the relation. Then I find, the whole has been a bit (..) UNFAIRLY allocated. Rather, he should have said: before the test, he’s more focusing on that. That’ll generate more points. Then you could’ve been better prepared and that. Then you would’ve gotten something better and that. (GER08, Gymnasium)

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271 This aspect was already highlighted by Ingenkamp (1977), who showed that teachers use different reference standards in different ways when assessing and allocating grades.

272 Original quote:
Joris: [...] In Deutsch (..) hat man dann das Thema nicht ganz so erwischt, was der Lehrer so von einem haben wollte. Weil man nicht DEUTLICH genug gesagt bekommen hat, was man erreichen soll (...) dann ist das nicht ganz so deutlich. Dann sitzt man da, überlegt sich, worauf man jetzt sich jetzt fixiert. Und dann ist das FALSCH. In dieser/. Dieser Analyseteil in der Deutscharbeit beispielsweise. Bei mir/. Das war (..)/. Also, da steht: untersuche auf die Beziehung. Hat zehn Punkte gebracht. Aber so untersuchen, welche äh (..) formalen Aspekte da so sind. Wie, äh (..) den/ die Erzählperspektive oder wie die Zeit da beachtet wird, das gibt dann 25 Punkte. Und ich finde, wenn dann in der
It becomes clear that the issue of transparency also applies for the single test level, where the lack of “CLEARLY” transferred information about what “the teacher wanted from you” causes a feeling of not being adequately “prepared” and of being allocated a test grade that could have been better. In this example, it is the unclear formulation of the test question, where a clear presentation of the score allocation would have served as a source of information in regard to the performance expectations. The clear point allocation would have made it transparent and more concrete for the pupil to know which parts of the test will “generate more points” and thereby to clarify what the pupil shall focus on in order to receive a good grade.

Besides the until now shown relevance of a transparent allocation and calculation of points, scores and single grades for pupils justice conceptions, there are also other assessment criteria that are perceived to play a role after the pupils finished a task. These criteria obviously differ in different school types. Here, pupils attending a Hauptschule often named social behaviour or the quality about their hand style and the cleanliness of their Notebooks as examples for such assessment criteria. However, even here the injustice lies in the fact that pupils were not informed in advance about the criteria. The following sequence is an excerpt from an interview with pupils attending a Hauptschule and is embedded in a discussion regarding the lack of information:

Michelle: And even though I had finished all the assignments she gave me. And then she [the teacher, B.V.] meant: yes, I can’t grade that. Just because I’ve written it with a ball pen in German, because I don’t have a fountain pen. Eh, she has given me a Two Minus, because I wrote it with a ball pen.

Sergej: Has been the same. I had Notebook, I did everything properly: Headlines double underlined, date double underlined. Everything perfect. She gives me a Two. I ask: why do you give me a Two? Notebook is completely proper. – You’ve written with a ball pen and pencil [copying the teacher, B.V.] (GER04, Hauptschule)273
The feedback pupils got from the teacher can be understood as a justification for down-grading them. However, for the pupils, the feedback also includes information regarding the expectations, which are the criteria for the allocation of certain grades and that were given afterwards and thereby too late. Both pupils’ quotes reveal that the pupils believed that the teacher expected the completion of “all assignments” as well as to carry out them in a proper way. From the perspective of both pupils, the choice of the writing utensil was an assessment criterion that they were not informed about a priori. Thus, the down-grading from the expected One to the received Two is perceived as unjust.

Generally, the lack of feedback is perceived as a lack of transparency on why the teacher allocated a certain grade. The lack of transparency thereby also implies the lack of understanding. This lack is perceived as unjust since it supports a feeling of arbitrariness. A typical sequence from the German interviews that exemplarily represents this conceptualisation is the following:

Ronny: Well, for me, the feedback is lacking a bit. That one knows, why this was bad or good or something.

Laurenz: Yes, yes well, I also find that: the teachers don’t even have any IDEA about why it is like that. Well, some (..)/.

Ronny: That=that sometimes it feels like that, right? //As if they//.

Laurenz: //Seems like//.

Ronny: As if they would throw a dice.

Laurenz: Really. As if they throw a dice. So. Then they don’t have documentations over WHY the grades are as they are. On single classes and so on. And then you also think: fine! There we have a despot standing in front of us, like. Great! (GER05, Gymnasium)
The lack of concrete and detailed feedback about the criteria for grade allocation in relation to one’s own performance causes a feeling of arbitrariness, “as if they would throw a dice”. This arbitrariness also includes the perceived image of the teacher as the one whose decision on grades goes beyond certain assessment criteria. The teacher is perceived to be free to allocate grades ad libitum due to the existing power imbalance. This relation is then compared to despotism. Consequently, transparency through feedback needs also to be understood as a possibility for pupils to get involved in the assessment procedure and to be able to act as a controlling authority. This also applies for example in relation to the final exams, in which the pupils experience that they are not given the right to control for assessment mistakes.

In the following sequence, pupils discussed the fact that they are not allowed to look at their final exams after the assessment and they are solely informed about the grades they received. In this case, the pupil Tobias got a Four in the final exams for English:

*Tobias: […] Because I can neither comprehend it and could just say in ten years, that it hasn’t been in this way or so.

II: Does this cause a feeling: man, I couldn’t defend myself?

*Tobias: //Yes that simply is, yes//

Michelle: //Yes, that’s what the problem is/, that you/. They are/. If you can’t see the papers. First after ten years and if you then notice, if you’re looking at them after ten years and see: so, there you did something better and she has graded this lower, then it’s somehow unfair/. Because. For example, I will get a bad 10B certification with a Five in English or in German. If I see then, that I have done it in the final exams in THE WAY she defined in advance and she still gave me fewer points, then I could go to the headmaster at least. But after ten year’s this doesn’t help either. (GER04, Hauptschule)\(^{275}\)
In this sequence, the transparency of feedback for control purposes becomes obvious. It is perceived as “unfair” that the pupils are not given the possibility to control the allocated grades with regard to their legitimacy. That means that even if the grade allocation not necessarily has to be unjust per se, the refusal of control causes a feeling of being unjustly treated. This feeling seems then to be solely based on suspicion and the fact that pupils perceive that they are not given the opportunity at all to take part of the assessment that underlies the grade.

The general lack of adequate and transparent feedback besides the numerical grades and point allocation becomes in the German interviews also visible through the fact that formative assessment practices, if at all, are addressed or named very sparsely. This applies particularly for feedforward practices, including practices and strategies that aim at further improvement. That means that the so-called “new forms of pupil assessment” do not seem to play a major role in how the pupils in the German interviews perceive and experience assessment. When pupils talked about assessment approaches that remind of formative assessment, they solely talked about peer- or self-assessment, which moreover seems to be perceived in a more or less ‘instrumentalised’ way:

_Franziska: yes, we simply should/, we give ourselves an oral grade, how we assess ourselves. The teacher then Notes those and also takes into account how we assess ourselves, how they assess us and then they’ll look. And then we have like/ or then Selina said/. It’s always her turn before me. She said like: yes, I assess myself as a Three. And then she [the teacher, B.V.]: NOOO! Dude, think CLOSELY, one more time, if you are really sure about your choice. And. And then Selina said: yes, then I’ll grade me with a Four. And then she like: YES! THAT sounds better. And she also tries to influence that way. And then I just said/. Then she asked me. And then I said: if I say Three now, you will just run me down anyway. Therefore, I’ll take the Four as well. (GER02, Realschule)_278

276 However, the regulations on this issue give a contrasting picture: pupils have the right, after a written claim, to inspect the exams and teachers’ evaluations. The documents are archived for ten years. (https://www.standardsicherung.schulministerium.nrw.de/cms/zentrale-pruefungen-10/fragen-und-antworten/)

277 „Neue Formen der Leistungsbearteilung“ (e.g. Maier, 2010).

278 Original quote:
Franziska: Ja, wir sollten halt/ wir geben uns so ’ne mündliche Note, wie wir uns einschätzen. Die notiert sich dann der Lehrer und beachtet das dann auch, wie wir uns einschätzen, wie die uns
The form of self-assessment that the pupils experienced in this example represents the reduction of formative assessment to the mere use of tools that are more or less formative in character: the pupils are asked about how they assess themselves regarding the final grade without any contextual links to their learning or performance. The pupil’s answers are then in turn perceived to be assessed by the teacher, who states that the self-assessment answer of the pupil is wrong: “NOOO! Dude, think CLOSELY, one more time, if you are really sure about your choice”. That means, that the pupils perceive that the teacher has already the right answer and has already decided a priori about the ‘right’ grade to be allocated. Therefore, self-assessment is just seen as a kind of ‘play’, where the classroom is the scene and where the dialogues are already predetermined. The paradox of being asked even though the answer seems not to be relevant in any way, in combination with the risk of in addition being judged for giving the wrong answer and become “run down anyway”, leads to a self-assessment, where pupils adjust their answers to the teachers expectations. Therefore, the self-assessment is perceived to be solely done for the sake of the teacher. The initially indicated purpose of the self-assessment, namely that the teacher “also takes into account how we assess ourselves” is through the teacher’s correction perceived as manipulation. Consequently, the self-assessment becomes an instrumentalised question-answer play in which pupils experience pseudo-voice while the teacher’s power to decide about the grade is maintained without giving any adequate and understandable explanation. Thereby, the injustice in this and other comparable situations that pupils discuss in the interviews derives from the fact that pupils perceive to be promised something that is not kept, in the example above that their self-assessment will have some influence on the teacher’s assessment.

Taken together, these findings suggest that pupils in the Swedish as well as in the German interviews perceive an (external) imperative to really understand the basis of teacher’s assessment. Furthermore, this imperative of understanding seems to be vitally important for pupils when it comes to just assessment. Though this imperative matters for pupils in both countries, it could be shown that the object of what pupils mainly perceive as important to understand is different. While the Swedish pupils mainly point out the value words in the knowledge requirements as challenging in terms of understanding, the German pupils’ perception of a lack of understanding

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279 Regarding this reduction of formative approaches of assessment, see e.g. Black (2015) or Birenbaum, Kimron & Shilton (2011).
focuses mostly on scores. That means that there are context-related differences with regard to the focus of understanding. In other words, the focus of pupils’ effort to understand the assessment is telling us something about what pupils in a particular context perceive as important to understand. Hence, pupils’ focus on the understanding of the knowledge requirements (and more concretely the value words) or scores respectively indicates that pupils try to understand and to identify those aspects which are seen to be important for achieving a certain grade. Through their everyday experiences with assessment in the classroom, pupils get an idea of what matters for teacher’s assessment. It could be said that pupils feel the imperative need to decode teachers’ assessment, which in turn was previously based on a coding of pupils’ performances in relation to a certain reference standard like e.g. knowledge requirements or a calculation of points and scores. The aim of this ‘imperative of understanding’ and of pupils’ need of decoding is to be able to adjust the own performance in order to achieve certain grades. Thus, in both contexts, the ‘imperative of understanding’ is an imperative in relation to the grade as a reward and thereby it is outcome oriented as well.

However, regardless the fact whether it is knowledge requirements or scores that are perceived as necessary to understand, the findings suggest that the understanding is mainly about a transparency through concretion. This transparency is by no means just about simple feedback in the form of information regarding the reasons for allocating a certain grade. Rather, this transparency concerns the whole learning process, including clarifications in terms of what is expected in order to get a certain grade, why a certain grade get allocated as well as how one can improve in order to improve the grade. With this regard, the understanding that pupils perceive as imperative is pointing towards a process-related information along the way, consisting of an evaluation of their performance in relation to the criteria needed to be achieved. Here, conceptual parallels to formative assessment become obvious, which “key processes of instruction” are

“basically, to establish: (1) where the learners are going, (2) where they are in their learning and (3) what needs to be done to help them get there” (Jönsson, Lundahl, & Holmgren, 2015, pp. 105 referring to Wiliam & Thompson, 2007; Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015, p. 52; Wiliam, 2010).

280 C.f. Lissmann & Jürgens (2015) regarding the three components of expedient feed-back: „(1) What are the aims? Am I on the right track? (2) What improvement in learning did I made regarding the aim(s)? How successful am I? (3) What do I have to do in order to improve my learning? What is the next step, are the next steps?” (p.52, Transl. B.V.)
In this respect, the findings suggest that formative assessment practices ‘along the way’ are vitally important aspects from a pupils perspective, which contribute to an as just perceived assessment. However, these formative assessment practices that pupils give expression for and that also are implied in the quote above, go beyond the application of mere strategies or methods. That means that the simple and selective use of e.g. peer assessment, self-assessment or any other form of involving pupils in the assessment process at only certain points of time and which are perceived as mere pedagogical demonstration of new methods, risks in the end to increase pupils feeling of being unjustly graded. That means that the simultaneity of assessment practices, that are mainly summative in character on the one side and the inclusion of a formative assessment ‘tool-kit’ more or less reduced to methods on the other side, is sending contradictory signals to pupils, which enhance the feeling of injustice in pupils. It can be assumed that this is particularly true in relation to an increasing output orientation and standardisation in education (Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012), having certain consequences for teaching and learning and thereby also changing the requirements and contextual conditions for assessment in the classroom (Bohl, 2003; Forsberg, 2014; Höstfält, 2015; Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015). The before named contradiction pupils perceive, is for example also addressed by Black (2015), who highlights that one of the major problems of teachers linked to the implementation of ‘Assessment for Learning (AfL)’ centres across different national contexts around

“the tension between the investment in formative teaching and the pressures of the testing instruments used to satisfy demands for accountability.” (Black, 2015, p.163)\(^{281}\)

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that formative assessment practices\(^{282}\), solely understood as a use of certain tools, are not sufficient for really enhancing pupils understanding. Instead, ‘assessment for learning’ as “a teaching and learning process” (Jonsson et al., 2015, pp. 106, original italics), corresponds to what the pupils in both countries expressed as a characterisation of transparent and supportive assessment. Jönsson, Lundahl & Holmgren (2015) describe the difference between formative assessment and ‘assessment for learning (AfL)’ in the following way:

“Teachers assessing student achievement and giving feedback to – more or less passive – students may also be categorised as

\(^{281}\) See also Falkenberg, Vogt and Waldow (2017) on this issue from a teachers’ perspective as well as from a pupils’ perspective.

\(^{282}\) Or the practices of ‘the new forms of assessment’, ‘the reformed forms of assessment’ or ‘alternative forms of assessment’ as they are called in the German-speaking context (Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015; Bohl, 2003; Winter, 2011; see Maier, 2010 regarding the absence of the concept ‘formative assessment’ in the German-speaking context)
Regarding pupils' reasoning in the Swedish interviews on how grades are made, the theme that is most in the foreground and which the pupils obviously experience and try to handle, is complexity. If Swedish pupils get asked about what is included in a grade, a typical answer is the following:

I: What's really included in a grade? What's included in a grade? Tell me a little bit.

Josefin: Mmm.

Elin: I mean. Hmm. There's like different subjects too, like.

Tobby: Mhm.

Elin: There're often the tests that take a major part of what grade you get. How you perform on the test.

Louise: Uhu, that's how it is mostly.

Elin: But then like, also like. English class. I mean, she doesn't only use the tests. She uses homework and/.

Josefin: How you work in class as well.


Tobby: Like discussions as well. Like group discussions like also.

Louise: And for example, Swedish class. Then we also do a lot of small assignments and then, then we get graded on each small assignment. And she adds it as, as one grade. And then you need an A on all of them to like get an A. And that's what you have to have. And then you might like feel like always stressed to get an A on everything. Each class. (SWE05) 284

With regard to the empirical findings presented, it is especially the lack of involvement that characterises the imperative of understanding. Pupils want to get involved through real understanding of the basis on which the grade is allocated. This can also be related to the dimension of informational justice, which “reflects the degree of justification and truthfulness offered during procedures” (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011, p. 1183; Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt, Zapata-Phelan, & Roberson, 2005). Through this, the justice dimension in pupils’ experiences of an insufficient perceived procedural practice regarding transparency and concretion becomes understandable: firstly, the lack of real understanding is thereby also a lack of a sufficient justification regarding the three key processes of assessment for learning and finally the allocation of a certain grade. Secondly, this lack of sufficient justification is related to a lack of truthfulness, which pupils expressed through being concerned about the therewith associated lack of control. Overall, the perceived ‘imperative of understanding’ on the one side and the experienced lack of real involvement in the assessment process on the other side, create another source for perceived injustice, based on a lack of orientation and supposed arbitrariness.

The above outlined contradictions and the imperative of understanding then creates a field of tensions that the pupils need to handle – in certain ways depending on the contextual conditions. This will be further clarified in the following chapter.

8.2 Understanding between an ‘arithmetic logic’ and a ‘qualitative complexity’

In addition, pupils’ diverse sources of injustice and the pressure to understand the grade are related to certain meaning making patterns that can be said to be about an ‘arithmetic logic’ on the one side and a ‘qualitative complexity’ on the other. Both of these dimensions form pupils’ perception about assessment in general and just assessment in particular and in certain ways.

283 For a more detailed discussion on this differentiation between formative assessment and AfL, see also Wiliam (2011).
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Tobby: Like discussions as well. Like group discussions like also.

Louise: And for example, Swedish class. Then we also do a lot of small assignments and then, then we get graded on each small assignment. And she adds it as, as one grade. And then you need an A on all of them to like get an A. And that’s what you have to have. And then you might like feel like always stressed to get an A on everything. Each class. (SWE05) 284

284 Original sequence: 
I: Vad ingår egentligen allt i ett betyg? Vad är det som ingår i ett betyg? Berätta lite för mig. #00:46:29-8#
Josefin: Mmm. #00:46:34-7#
Elin: Alltså. Mmm. Det är ju också olika ämnen typ. #00:46:38-5#
Tobby: Mhm. #00:46:39-4#
Elin: Ofta är det ju proven, som upptar en stor del av vilken betyg man får. Hur man presterar på just provet. #00:46:49-1#
Louise: Ah, det är det ju för det mesta. #00:46:50-4#

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The two main patterns that shall be highlighted here are first, that pupils experience getting graded for single tasks, which “you need an A on all of them to like get an A” as a final grade. Second, this sequence exemplarily shows the polymorphism of assessment objects that the Swedish pupils experience matters for their final grade. That means that pupils perceive that there are notably differences regarding what matters for the final grade in different subjects: while the final grade is in one subject “mostly” consisting of the grades one receives on written test, in others it can include a notable variety of assessment objects like for instance homework, class participation, assignments, discussions or some undefined “smaller assignments”. That means on the one hand that pupils perceive that assessment is basically different in different subjects, and on the other that they experience a lot of diverse assessment forms. The point here seems to be, that this diversity of assessment forms is perceived to be relevant for grading, since, like already intended in the quote above, the pupils experience that they receive grades for each task. The following sequence illustrates this aspect:

I: Can you explain to me, I mean, how does it work to get a grade where you are? What are your experiences?

Linus: Well. I mean WE know it/. I mean, the teachers use this matrix or what it’s called, like, check everything you’ve done during the year, like. Then they’ve got a list there. So let’s say you’ve got a C in most of it, so, so the stuff like homework and hand-ins and all of it. Then you get like a C in the subject. Or that’s what we’ve heard. (SWE03) 286

In this typical sequence it becomes clear that a grade is perceived to be composed of “homework and hand-ins and all of it”. The teacher’s assessment practice is supposed to be a sort of a ‘tick-box approach’, where “teachers use...
this matrix” and simply “check everything you’ve done during the year”. The grade allocated for the single tasks is then supposed to determine the final grade – one receives a “C in the subject”, if one has received “C in most of” the single assignments. Even if this quote is also framed by an indicated insecurity whether the final grade is composed in that way or not, the dominating perception is, that “everything” counts for the final grade – and here, “everything” indicates limitlessness. The next sequence shows, how this aspect can inform pupils’ everyday experiences:

Louise: [...] It/ you/ it feels like you ALWAYS have to keep in the back of your mind that the teacher will JUDGE you. Like. All the time like that/. Uhu. Uhu. That you think about it all the time: uhu, but I’ve got to behave, do this and this to get an A. And then (. ) it gets a bit like you/. I mean you could/. I mean. It. You get like/. You can’t always be yourself or what to call it like. I mean so. Sometimes. Because/. You have to all the time think about that he/ or that the teacher checks you all the time and that. What you do.

I: Because everything matters, or?

Louise: Uhu, exactly [...] (SWE05)287

Besides the perception that everything counts for the final grade, the Swedish pupils clearly expressed in the interviews that they, in addition, also feel to be constantly assessed - in a grading relevant form288. Through this, the teacher’s...
assessment practice is perceived as a constant gathering of evidence relevant for grading and in relation to the knowledge requirements as formulated in the matrixes and previously shown to the pupils. Therefore, it is seen as important to “ALWAYS have to keep in the back of your mind that the teacher will JUDGE you” and “checks you all the time”. This comes along with the belief that it is therefore important to adapt “what you do” to teachers’ diverging criteria.

On the one side, that means that there is a complexity embedded in the experienced assessment that has to do with the difficulties to really understand the knowledge requirements as well as it has to do with the complexity that derives from the perception of being constantly assessed on everything one does with direct relevance for the grade one can achieve. On the other side, pupils experience a simplification of this complexity expressed through matrixes which are perceived as being used in a form of “tick-box approach”. Here, the knowledge requirements’ complexity is reduced through a calculation of quality levels in quantitative terms, where the aim is to get as much requirements ticked off as possible. The complexity that arises from the simultaneity of quality and quantity becomes also obvious in relation to concrete assessment situations, when pupils for example are told to participate more during lesson in order to improve their grade:

Marina: So, then it was the same with me as well. That you have to be more active. During my whole school time. And ehm (...) like, year before last I got a tip: you’ve got to raise your hand at least five times. But it looks a bit stupid, like: now I’m raising my hand five times and like counting the times. That the teachers would like count how many times I raise my hand. That was a bit stupid I think. (SWE02)

Hence, the general need for an increased participation is concretised in quantitative terms, even this reminding on the principle of “ticking off” in terms of “how many times I raise my hand”. However, the simultaneity of complexity on the one side and the simplification in quantitative terms on the other, are also contributing aspects that make it difficult for pupils to

pupils show in relation to the content taught in order to make a holistic assessment of the knowledge and compare those with the knowledge requirements” (Skolverket, 2012c, p. 22).

289 See ch. 8.1.

290 Original quote:
understand how the grade is composed and what the expectations are supposed to be. The following quote exemplarily reveals the relevance of this aspect for pupils’ justice conception:

Carolin: Last time in Chemistry, then we like found out a grade. Then I had (...) there were three abilities. I had two in A and one in B. And uhm, I had one ability in B. Because half of it was, it was facts. And half of the facts I had on C level and half of it on A and then I think it would’ve been fairer to get an A. Because I had shown I knew more on an A level than on C level. (5) So, it’s a bit unfair I think (SWE04)291

On the one hand, this quote illustrates how quality and quantity are intertwined in a complex way since “half of the facts I had on C level and half of it on A”. On the other hand, it also shows how pupils handle this complexity – namely by means of the reduction of the same. This reduction implies an arithmetic simplification, where the injustice lies in the fact that the pupil was not allocated a grade that was in line with her calculation based on an idea of majority since “I knew more on an A level than on C level”.

In contrast to the complexity that initially becomes visible in the Swedish interviews, the composition of the grade per se seems for the pupils in the German interviews initially not complex at all. Rather, the composition of the grade is perceived to be completely based on an ‘arithmetic logic’, which is moreover also easy to comprehend.

If the German pupils are for example asked about what their final grade is based on, their typical answer across all school types is the following:

Sina: One part consists of written and one part of oral.
Franziska: Yes, in the main subjects it’s assessed fifty=fifty. The grades. And in the minors it is seventy percent oral and thirty percent written. (GER02, Realschule)292

291 Original quote:

292 Original sequence:
Sina: ’n Teil ist aus schriftlichen und ’n Teil aus mündlichen. #00:06:21-8#
Franziska: Ja, in den Hauptfächern ist das fünfzig, fünfzig angesetzt. Die Noten. Und in den Nebenfächern ist siebzig Prozent mündlich und dreissig Prozent schriftlich. #00:06:32-2#
Here, the first part of the quote is about the assessment objects, the “what” that is assessed and graded. The second part is about how the named assessment objects are transferred into a final grade. This pattern is typical for the German interviews regarding the question how a grade is ‘made’ and comparable across the interviews in regard to content as well as to its typical briefness. The briefness regarding how the pupils in the German interviews present the forms of performance that are included in assessment are characterised by a sort of unquestionable self-evidence. The categorisation into a simple dualism of what the pupils call “written” and “oral” seems almost to be the natural condition of what is graded and of what matters for the final grade. Thereby, the “written” and the “oral” can be understood as the two formal components, which the grade is finally ‘made’ of.

Similar to the simplistic dualism regarding the objects of assessment, pupils describe the making of the final grade as being framed by clear rules, since the grade in the major subjects consists of 50 % oral and 50% written performance and within the minor subjects of 70% oral and 30% written performance. So for pupils, the process of turning the objects of assessment into a final grade seems also to be something that is characterised by rules of calculation – in this case formalised through a proportional basis expressed in percentage.

This ‘arithmetic logic’ of assessment, which intends that the grade is something that is made by diverging ways of calculation, cannot only be found in the data when it comes to final grades but it applies also for the assessment of tests that are written during the school year, since these tests are usually evaluated in form of a score. This can be exemplarily illustrated through the following sequence from an interview conducted at a Hauptschule:

**12: How does it work with the grades and that?**

*Hanoik:* Yes, one writes tests and ehm those tests, they’ll get ehm (.) multiplied, I believe, or added (.) //and then ehm (.)//

*Cedric:* //Added//.

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293 This dualism can also be found in regulations such as the Education Act (*Schulgesetz*) and the Core Curricula (*Kernlehrpläne*). However, what pupils here call for „Oral“ is called for ‘Other Performances’ („Sonstige Leistungen“), which includes beside other objects of assessment (such as portfolio work, minor written tests, presentations, working ethos etc.) also oral assessment forms (e.g. active participation in lessons, discussions etc.). Kirk (2004) for example provides an overview over empirical research concerning “Assessment of oral performance” in the German speaking context and concludes that the category “oral participation” is characterised by a rather undefined content, where teachers subsume all other assessment objects, which are not explicitly written tests (Kirk 2004, p.27-29).
Hanoik: And then ehm one more time divided and then also the oral grade (.). All of this will get added and then ehm () divided, and after that, it will result in a grade.

Cedric: Then you’ll have like approximately and then simply (). That’s how it is from year one to nine but no longer in ten.

I: Mmmh (.). And how does a teacher know what grade to give you on a test?

Cedric: Because of the point system, of course.

II: How?

Soraya: Well, there is such a score (.). It simply gets counted, if you have a full score, you have so and so //many points//.

Cedric: //Then you simply have a One//.

Soraya: Exactly, then you have a One and then it goes down more and more. For example 50/55 you have a One, 45 to 50 you have a Two or whatever and if you then for example just have 30 points, then you maybe get a Four or something like that () and ehm then you get a Four. (GER13, Hauptschule) 294

294 Original sequence:
I2: Wie funktioniert das mit den Noten und so? #00:09:14-4#
Hanoik: Ja, man schreibt Arbeiten und ähm diese Arbeiten werden dann ähm () multipliziert, glaub ich, oder plus genommen () //und dann ähm () // #00:09:24-6#
Cedric: //Plus// #00:09:24-8#
Hanoik: Und dann ähm nochmal geteilt genommen und dann noch die Note mit der mündlichen ().
Das wird dann alles zusammen genommen, danach ähm geteilt genommen, danach ergibt das eine Note. #00:09:36-8#
Cedric: () Dann steht man so ungefähr und dann halb (.). So ist das von der ersten bis zur neunten Klasse aber zehnte nicht mehr. #00:09:44-5#
II: Mmmh.() Und woher weiß denn so ein Lehrer, welche Note der euch in einer Arbeit geben soll? #00:09:50-4#
Cedric: Ja vom Punktesystem her. #00:09:51-9#
II: Wie? #00:09:53-1#
Soraya: Also es gibt halt so einen Punktestand (.). Wird der halt äh gezählt, wenn man volle Punktzahl hat, hat man halt so und so //viele Punkte// #00:10:03-2#
Cedric: //Dann hat man eine Eins.// #00:10:03-7#
Soraya: Genau, dann hat man eine Eins und dann geht es halt immer weiter runter. Zum Beispiel 50/55 hat man eine Eins 45 bis 50 hat man eine Zwei und was weiß ich nicht was und wenn man dann zum Beispiel nur 30 Punkte hat, dann halt man vielleicht eine Vier oder so was (.). und äh dann kriegt man eine Vier (...) #00:10:19-3# (GER13, Hauptschule)
In this sequence, the ‘arithmetic logic’ underlying the making of the grade is directly eye-catching, since the final grade is made of grades received for “written tests” and “oral grades”. The calculative character here is represented through nearly all possible basic arithmetic operations: grades get “added”, “divided” and “multiplied” and finally they “result in the grade”. The teacher is in this grade operation completely invisible as it is the arithmetic rules that determine the final grade. The same also applies for the assessment of the written tests. These written tests are graded on the basis of points, which result in a score and which in turn are ascribed a certain grade according to an arithmetic table.

This ‘arithmetic logic’ apparently offers a quite minor scope for interpretation and for questioning. Moreover, based on the detailed calculation, the ‘arithmetic logic’ seems to provide a plausible answer on the question of how grades are made. Just and unjust assessment could in this regard be more seen as a matter of correct calculation\(^{295}\). If there is for example a deviation between the pupils’ calculation of the final grade and the final grade received by teachers, pupils can perceive this as unjust:

*Sina: But I found in the new one, he’s graded us totally unfair. Selina and I, we reached full scores two times. Well, lesson two times plus raising our hands and then he only gave us a Two on the certificate.*

*I: Why?*

*Sina: We didn’t know either, because we had two times tests with full scores, portfolio One and oral One. And he just gave us a Two. We have not understood this either. (GER02, Realschule)\(^{296}\)*

Here, the deviation gets pupils confused, since they cannot understand why they got a lower grade than what they have calculated according to their

\(^{295}\) Sacher (2014) for example point out the „pseudo objectivity“ and the „pseudo accuracy“ in relation to the exact calculation of grades. They further note that “Critical questions of parents and pupils are usually scotched […] when a teacher can demonstrate through the calculation of the arithmetic means of single grades – preferably including several decimal places- that a controversial final grade is correctly allocated” (p.25, Transl. B.V.).

\(^{296}\) Original sequence:
Sina: Aber ich fand’ im neuen, da hat der voll unfair bewertet. Selina und ich, wir haben volle Punktzahl geschrieben zwei Mal. Halt Unterrichtsstunde doppelt plus beim Aufzeigen und dann hat er uns nur ‘ne Zwei gegeben auf’ m Zeugnis. #00:18:27-3#
I 1: Warum denn? #00:18:29-1#
Sina: Wussten wir auch nicht, weil wir standen ja Test mit voller Punktzahl zweimal, Mappe Eins und mündlich Eins. Und der hat uns nur ‘ne Zwei gegeben. Haben wir auch nicht verstanden. #00:18:38-7#
‘arithmetic logic’. That means that the deviation from the easy accessible ‘arithmetic logic’ implies a perception of a ‘calculated injustice’.

This applies also for the oral part of assessment, which is in relation to the written part relatively under-determined in terms of arithmetic and thereby more complex with regard to its composition as well as with regard to its assessment. When the ‘arithmetic logic’ cannot be applied, pupils question the ‘making’ of the grade in a way that can be summarised as the questioning of the grade’s validity and reliability. The next quote is taken from an interview with pupils attending a Gymnasium, who discuss the advantage of the arithmetic transparency in written tests in contrast to the assessment of the oral part, which is seen to be much more complex. The pupil Laurenz says:

Laurenz: The thing is also/ ehm (.) regarding the (.) oral grades, I find/. Teachers always say: you shouldn’t compare yourself with others. But (.) HOW can they then see the grades? HOW do they grade you, if they don’t compare you with other people? Because you can’t do a scientific analysis: if he was raising his hand ten times during class and of these, two things are well said, then it’s a One. And then such a tabular system, how to allocate grades. Well, that doesn’t exist. That’s absolutely uhm (.) SUBJECTIVE! (GER05, Gymnasium)

Besides the fact that this quote once again highlights the importance of the social reference norm for pupils, it is also representative for the insufficient explanatory power of the ‘arithmetic logic’ when it comes to the complexity of assessment, based on a widened scope of what is graded and of how it is graded. Laurenz emphasises here that the quality of oral performance is hard to measure in a simplified quantitative way. Furthermore, he is convinced that a “scientific analysis” in the form of a table, where teachers could check and document pupils’ performance like in a tick-box, “does not exist”. Here, it also becomes clear that he is questioning if this at all would be possible. Hence, an operationalisation of the assessment object that would be able to capture the

297 see e.g. Kirk (2004)
298 What the pupils call for “oral” part of assessment, actually is related to all conceivable other ways of testing pupils performance and provides teachers a relatively free scope for a broader assessment, necessary to cover the widened concept of pupil performance in terms of holistic pupil assessment, including also formative traits (see e.g. Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015; Maier, 2010).
complexity in this “oral” part of assessment is hardly compatible with an ‘arithmetic logic’. Moreover, this quote once again also shows pupils’ imperative to understand teachers assessment practices. Pupils perceive the need to understand how the grade is made: as an alternative to the ‘arithmetic logic’, Laurenz emphasises the social-related norm of assessment, by critically questioning “HOW do they grade you, if they don’t compare you with other people?” But since he perceives the teachers neither to use the social-related norm nor could an ‘arithmetic logic’ be applied from his perspective, he finally comes to the conclusion that the assessment is “absolutely uhm (..) SUBJECTIVE!”. Thereby, the ‘arithmetic logic’ can be seen on the one hand as associated with objectivity, which from a pupils’ perspective also stands for transparency to some extent as well as it stands for a possible way to understand the making of the grade. On the other hand, the ‘arithmetic logic’ is seen as insufficient when it comes to the more complex issues of assessment, like it is for example the case with regard to the assessment of the oral part.

Taking together, the findings show that the ‘imperative to understand’ is also related to a field of tensions, which evolves between the ‘arithmetic logic’ on the one side and the ‘qualitative complexity’ on the other side. Seen from the surface, those two analytical patterns seem to be almost diametrically opposed:

The Swedish pupils have to deal with an enormous perceived complexity, which stems from the complexity of the knowledge requirements as well as from the perceived “limitlessness” of being constantly assessed on everything. That means that the continuous and holistic evaluation of pupils’ learning, thought to inform, to improve and to guide teaching as well as to promote equivalence and legal certainty in assessment (Skolverket, 2011, rev. 2015, 2012c, 2014, 2016b), additionally seems to have other effects than the intended ones (Falkenberg et al., 2017). Parallel to this complexity, there seems to be another assessment logic that can be understood as an arithmetic one. This becomes obvious through assessment approaches like e.g. ticking-off knowledge requirements in matrices, comparing the amount of single grades allocated on different grade levels or reasoning in terms of the majority of single grades allocated in relation to the final grade received. These practices can be understood as an attempt to reduce the complexity that is related to the simultaneity of formative assessment practices perceived as relevant for summative assessment, with regard to the imperative to understand.

On the contrary, the German pupils gave expression of an ‘arithmetic logic’ that seems to be traditionally imprinted in the assessment system. In contrast to the assessment system the Swedish pupils face, the German system is
characterised through the lack of concrete assessment criteria. Instead, the German assessment system is in a very detailed way framed by regulations regarding for example the allocation of scores (see e.g. tables for score allocation on school-level), the calculation of single grades in relation to the final grade (APO-S I, 2012), the amount of written tests as well as the time allocated for these tests\textsuperscript{300} et cetera. Consequently, it seems not surprising that this ‘arithmetic logic’ becomes also manifested in pupils’ reasoning regarding the just allocation of grades, especially when the meaning of the ‘arithmetic logic’ for teachers’ justification of grade allocation is considered. Sacher (2014) for example note that

\begin{quote}
“Critical questions of parents and pupils are usually scotched [...] when a teacher can demonstrate through the calculation of the arithmetic means of single grades – preferably including several decimal places- that a controversial final grade is correctly allocated” (p.25, Transl. B.V.)
\end{quote}

That implies, that the ‘arithmetic logic’ in assessment to some extent seem to serve the need for objectification, when the teacher being the grade allocator becomes invisible behind the numbers that prove the correct allocation of the grade through arithmetic operations that are hard to question or to appeal against. The demonstration of arithmetic operations thereby legitimates grade allocation.

However, the ‘arithmetic logic’ understood as a simplification, seems to reach its limits when applied to the grading of the oral part. This also implies that part of the grade, which is seen as quite undetermined arithmetically (Kirk, 2004) and therefore also more dependent on interpretation and explanation. Hence, with regard to this comparably undetermined part of the final grade, the complexity of the logics and practices of assessment becomes visible. The same applies as well when pupils deconstruct the grade as an objective result of arithmetic operations by questioning the making of the grade and the therewith related contextual conditions, like shown in the chapters before.

As initially indicated, ‘arithmetic logic’ and ‘qualitative complexity’ could be assumed to be diametrically opposed conceptions pupils have, also with regard to the system-intern logics in the two different countries. However, the analytical comparison based on an explorative approach reveals that the ‘arithmetic logic’ and the ‘qualitative complexity’ are not diametrically opposed but instead, they need to be understood as two sides of the same coin, namely as ‘calculative justice’. That means that the ‘arithmetic logic’ as well

\textsuperscript{300}See fig. 8 in ch. 4.2.3.
as the ‘qualitative complexity’ expressed through a high degree of concretion and detail, intending to explicate the process of decision, is part of the necessary condition imprinted in the assessment systems with the endeavour to guarantee objectivity. Objectivity in turn can be seen as the profound basis for the legitimacy of grades used for societal allocation purposes and selection (Ingenkamp, 1977; Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015; Klapp Lekholm, 2008; Korp, 2006). Pupils’ conceptions regarding the ‘arithmetic logic’ on the one side and the ‘qualitative complexity’ on the other are not opposed, but instead they mirror the simultaneity and interrelatedness of both concepts in the very basic function of assessment systems in general. Pupils’ conception of ‘calculative justice’ then can be seen as an attempt to understand the construction of the grade and to evaluate the process and the conditions of grade generation in terms of justice.

8.3 Interim Résumé – the need to handle the ‘Verstehensdruck’

In this chapter, it was shown that the understanding regarding how grades are ‘made’, is of vital importance for pupils’ justice conceptions. Pupils perceive a need to decode assessment and want to know what the grade is based upon, why they got a certain grade and how they can improve it. From a pupils’ perspective, this understanding goes beyond the mere information at only certain points of time. Understanding implies for pupils a general transparency and an explicit concretion throughout the whole process of assessment. The absence of this is perceived as a lack of sufficient justification, which also has consequences for the perceived truthfulness of grade allocation.

In addition hereto, pupils themselves try to make meaning and try to understand how grades are ‘made’. This becomes apparent in relation to how pupils try to make meaning in the field of tensions emerging between the interrelated holistic aspects of assessment on the one hand, and the ‘arithmetic logic’ underlying assessment on the other. The context-specific interrelatedness of these both aspects and the tension that evolves from the complexity on the one side, and from the simplification on the other, seem to urge pupils to question, to critically examine and to evaluate how far grades really are that objective measure that they normatively seen ought to be. Together with the conceptions regarding the context-bound generation of grades on the one hand, as well as the normative conceptions regarding the ‘deservedness of grades’ on the other, pupils’ challenge just assessment in
school as a self-evident fact, on the basis of their experiences and conceptualisations.

This overlying and guiding pattern, which is about pupils’ critical evaluation and examination of the assessment they experience, can best be captured with the concept of ‘meta-assessment’. The presentation of this analytical core-category is the final analytical component of the study’s empirical findings and is presented in the next chapter.
IX. PUPILS’ CONCEPTIONS OF JUST ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOL AS ‘META-ASSESSMENT’

This chapter seeks to present the final theoretical conceptualisation of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment. The theoretical conceptualisation is based on the “core category” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a; Corbin & Strauss, 1990b) ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’. This “core category”, which is grounded in the conceptual categories of the analytically reconstructed empirical indicators, “represents the central phenomenon of the study” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990b, p.14).

During the process of selective coding, the before presented main categories ‘Believing in meritocracy’, ‘Ascribing responsibility’ and ‘Understanding as imperative’ were through “theoretical integration” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, pp. 263) related to each other. The aim was to develop a core-category, including a theoretical conceptualisation that is able to explain these relations (Corbin & Strauss, 1990b, p. 14). Through constant comparison and verification against categories on different levels but also against empirical indicators, ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ showed to be the most stable analytical category for describing and explaining what the interviewed pupils’ justice conceptions are about. Hence, theoretical saturation was reached in terms of

301 In education research, the term ”meta-assessment” is for example also used within the field of Higher Education Research and mainly related to questions of quality improvement regarding assessment programs in the tertiary sector (Ory, 1992; Schoepp & Benson, 2016).
“The point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and variations. Further data gathering and analysis add little new to the conceptualization, though variations can always be discovered” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/1990a, p. 263)

The concept of ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ characterises this point of analysis. Consequently, this chapter will conclusively present the character of ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ as well as its explanatory interrelations with the before presented main categories

9.1 ’Meta-assessment’ - just assessment in school from a pupils’ perspective

Overall, the way in which pupils conceptualise just assessment in school can be described as ‘meta-assessment’. The theoretical concept of ‘pupils’ meta-assessment’ means that pupils assess assessment in school in terms of justice. The results of ‘pupils meta-assessment’, that is what is perceived as just, could be shown to be everything else than self-evident or universal and thus, indeed, needs to be more understood as lying “in the eye of the beholder” (Walster & Walster, 1975, p. 22). Thereby, this study could illustrate the variations and different logics of what just assessment can mean if one asks those actors that are mainly affected by its experienced practices and consequences – pupils. ‘Pupils meta-assessment’ is the unifying theoretical conceptualisation that can explain these variations on an empirically based theoretical level. It represents how pupils as a concrete group of actors and “productive processors” (Hurrelmann, 1988), who are part of a socio-educational context, experience and think about the character of just assessment, its conditions, perceived consequences and, based on this, thereof informed strategies of action. Hence, ‘pupils’ meta assessment’ can be said to be located at the interface of school’s double task of bildning/Bildung and fostran/Erziehung and thereby it focuses on the educational as well as on the pedagogical and social dimensions of assessment.

As a logical consequence of the findings, it can be said that the findings, which are based on a consequently applied pupils’ perspective are thus

302 Corbin and Strauss (1990a) define theory (what is called for theoretical conceptualisation in this study) in the following way: “For us, theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationships to form a theoretical framework that explains some phenomenon” (p.55).
On the other hand, findings show that pupils' concrete and situationally embedded experiences are highly relevant for pupils' justice conceptions. These experiences and the conceptions based on these experiences are per se contextually bound, and here a broad definition of 'context' is important. That means that pupils as actors, assessment as an institutionalised practice and school as a societal institution, together with their underlying logics (also in terms of an institution for primary socialisation), are the socio-educational context, which pupils' conceptions are embedded within, are (inter-)related to and are a part of. The context-sensitive comparative approach in this study revealed clear variations, which suggest the context dependency of pupils' justice conceptions regarding assessment. However, it became also obvious that the boundaries of a context cannot automatically be drawn along geographical borders. Rather, pupils' context can be understood as a continuum between the very global, the trans- and cross-contextual as well as the most thinkable local. Besides these variations, pupils' experience-based and contextually bound conceptions are about the question of responsibility. This implies the responsibility regarding the (pre-) conditions and logics for assessment and grade allocation, which the allocation of grades is finally based upon.

Hence, 'pupils' meta-assessment' is about the interplay of pupils' normative conceptions on the one hand and their experience-based and socio-contextually bound conceptions on the other, and how pupils try to make meaning and sense through assessing and evaluating these complex relationships. This implies that conceptions, which are more normative in character, and conceptions that are based on concrete experiences, do not necessarily have to be congruent or consistent, yet they are interrelated.

Besides these components and relationships, 'pupils' meta-assessment' illuminates its imperative from a pupils' perspective, which is the perceived necessity to understand, to critically examine, and to evaluate the underlying logics, norms and practices of societal, educational and pedagogical allocations, which are interrelated with assessment and grading. As it was shown, the character, purpose, intentions and organisation of the same contributes in the presented ways to young peoples' conceptions about what is societally valued, how far they can correspond to it and where the neuralgic points are from their point of view with regards to justice.

What 'pupils’ meta-assessment’ consists of more concretely and how these components are interrelated is presented below.

9.2 Components of 'meta-assessment’ and their relationships

One can say that pupils’ justice conceptions can be roughly outlined as consisting of two dimensions: on the one hand normative conceptions, which are quite theoretical and can be understood as a sort of ethico-moral cornerstones of pupils’ conceptions. On the other hand, pupils’ conceptions also consist of conceptions, which are based on and linked to pupils’ very concrete experiences. More concretely, this means the following:

Besides the finding that pupils as “productive processors” (Hurrelmann, 1988) in both socio-educational contexts have to some extent internalised meritocratic norms and how these are characterised, pupils’ normative conceptions also stand for the basic belief that grades need to be deserved. Pupils’ conception regarding the ‘deservedness of grades’ is thus the central overlying normative principle, which seems to be related to the socially deeply rooted principle of “poetic justice” (see Nussbaum, 1997). In the end, when pupils assess assessment, they basically assess it in normative-theoretical terms in relation to the principle of ‘deservedness’.

303 Regarding this term, ee Hurrelmann (1988)
304 See e.g. also Wegener’s (1992) differentiation of “macro justice” and “micro justice”.
On the other hand, findings show that pupils’ concrete and situationally embedded experiences are highly relevant for pupils’ justice conceptions. These experiences and the conceptions based on these experiences are per se contextually bound, and here a broad definition of ‘context’ is important. That means that pupils as actors, assessment as an institutionalised practice and school as a societal institution, together with their underlying logics (also in terms of an institution for primary socialisation), are the socio-educational context, which pupils’ conceptions are embedded within, are (inter-)related to and are a part of. The context-sensitive comparative approach in this study revealed clear variations, which suggest the context dependency of pupils’ justice conceptions regarding assessment. However, it became also obvious that the boundaries of a context cannot automatically be drawn along geographical borders. Rather, pupils’ context can be understood as a continuum between the very global, the trans- and cross-contextual as well as the most thinkable local. Besides these variations, pupils’ experience-based and contextually bound conceptions are about the question of responsibility. This implies the responsibility regarding the (pre-) conditions and logics for assessment and grade allocation, which the allocation of grades is finally based upon.

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305 See also Wegener (1992; 1995)
9.3 Implications for further research

The implications of this study for further research are of course determined by its findings but also by its character.

Since the study with its explorative and explanatory character provided diverse suggestions for empirically derived theoretical conceptualisations, the follow-up opportunities for further research are numerous. In the sense of what Glaser and Strauss (1967) express, namely that “the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory” (p. 40), further research may include different thematic and theoretical foci. Those foci may contest or verify this study’s findings or help to deepen and broaden some particular aspects.

However, during the research process, some interesting side aspects emerged regarding assessment and the related thematic issues, which could not be examined in depth and which are assumed to provide necessary and valuable insights. Here, context-sensitive comparative approaches have the potential to examine educational phenomena in consideration of their contextual embedment, across time and space. Furthermore, an increased consideration of pupils’ perspectives is advocated in order to shed light on the perceived conditions and consequences that educational change and increasing standardisation imply and generate for those, who on an everyday basis and in their very concrete local and situational contexts have to deal with it. Here, both approaches, the context sensitive comparative one as well as a focus on pupils’ perspective, can help to challenge and to critically examine the taken-by-granted assumptions and an almost self-evident naturalisation of what a pupil, a teacher, knowledge, learning, assessment, the curriculum or for example education ‘is’ and ‘should be’. In addition, this would also facilitate a broader and deeper understanding of educational processes and educational change; it could help to reduce the one-sided emphasis of a macro-level and few-variable perspective and would provide a possibility of contextualising transnational phenomena (e.g. Sundberg & Wahlström, 2017). By this, such studies could contribute to a more multifaceted picture of educational realities in local contexts paying attention to their complex interrelationships and characteristics. Besides the identified need of context-sensitive studies as well as studies emphasising a pupils’ perspective in general, there are also some certain thematic aspects identified, which are in the need of more research.

306 For the Swedish context, Landahl and Lundahl (2017) for example, have highlighted the need for those kinds of comparative studies.
First, it should be given special attention to the preconditions of assessment, which pupils’ in this study emphasised as particularly neuralgic points for grade allocation. Hence, the concrete pedagogical dimensions of assessment should be given more attention, including also the therewith related wider contexts. Here, comparative classroom studies could illuminate the practices and logics of the micro-allocation of knowledge, of pupils’ chances to learn and of pupils’ chances to make their knowledge and their competences visible.

Second, the conditions and consequences of the relationship between summative and formative purposes and practices of assessment seem to be especially important to be examined in more detail. This applies especially for assessment systems, where assessment and grade allocation traditionally lies in the hand of teachers and are located in classroom practices. Against the background of the field of tension that expands between the simultaneously increase of standardisation on the one hand, and a strong emphasis of individualised teaching and assessment practices and self-regulated learning on the other; qualitative studies that use an actors’ perspective, as well as classroom studies, are inevitable for examining how these tensions affect the (pre-)conditions for and the character of learning and teaching as well as the wider consequences for pupils and teachers. This examination should also pay special attention to aspects regarding justice and equality and critically examine how standardisations as well as individualisation affect these basic aspects of education and in particular with regard to assessment and grade allocation (see e.g. Höstfält, 2015; Rabenstein et al., 2015, 2013).

Third, in relation to the complexes for further research that were mentioned above, the meaning, characteristics and practices of the global concepts ‘formative assessment’ and ‘assessment for learning’ need to be examined in depth through context-sensitive comparisons. Such studies would provide valuable insights in the logics and intentions of individualised assessment on a policy-level, in the concepts’ curricular meaning and how this is translated into pedagogical practices in the classroom. This would help to identify the diversity of the underlying logics and practices and by this, it would contribute to the further conceptual development of the ‘global’ concept of ‘formative assessment’ or ‘assessment for learning’ respectively. Here, comparative approaches could provide valuable knowledge, not just only with regard to different interpretations and connotations, but mainly also with explanations regarding the particular conditions that lead to context specific hybridisations.
SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

Nedanstående sammanfattningens syfte är att kortfattat skissera avhandlingens huvudsakliga komponenter där rubrikerna motsvarar huvudtextens övriga rubriker. För en utförlig och nyanserad presentation av kapitlens innehåll hänvisas till avhandlingens huvudtext på engelska.

1. Problematiserande inramning

Nedanstående sammanfattningens syfte är att kortfattat skissera avhandlingens huvudsakliga komponenter där rubrikerna motsvarar huvudtextens övergripande rubriker. För en utförlig och nyanserad presentation av kapitlenas innehåll hänvisas till avhandlingens huvudtext på engelska.

1. Problematiserande inramning


Sammanfattningsvis ska denna studie därför förstås som en komparativ studie, som explicit inte tillämpar en förenklad jämförelse av svenska och tyska elever per se. En sådan förenklad syn på vad ’en svensk elev’ respektive vad ’en tysk elev’ är, skulle inte minst med hänsyn till den mångfacetterade samhälleliga sammansättningen och de ovan anförda teoretiska och metodologiska reflektioner, anses vara problematisk. Istället kan studiens övergripande jämförelseobjekt, dess grundläggande ’tertium comparationis’, sägas vara, att utifrån ett konsekvent elevperspektiv jämföra elevers koncepter om rättvis bedömning och betygssättning i olika ’socio-
2. Metodologiskt ramverk och tillämpade metoder

Som redan beskrivits ovan, karakteriseras studiens metodologiska ramverk av en kombination av två olika ansatser: Å ena sida den pragmatistiska ansatsen inom Grounded Theory Methodologin, och å andra sida en kontext-sensitiv komparativ ansats, som kännetecknas av mångvariabilitet i syfte ”att förstå - snarare än att abstrahera från kontexten” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, s. 326, övers. B.V.). Användningen av den pragmatistiska Grounded Theory Methodology som teorigenerande ansats, innebär givetvis en abstrahering från denna kontext, dock med skillnaden att abstraheringen är i den här studien baserad på en förgående rik empirisk kontexualisering, och inte på en reducering av kontextuella variabler i förväg. Därmed bidrar studien också till metodologiuutvecklingen i det komparativa fältet, då den exemplifierar hur en

307 I avhandlingen används begreppet ”socio-educational context” för att understryka en bredare förståelse av vad en skola, en elev och bedömning ’är’ samt dennes interdependenta samhälleliga inbäddning. För den svenska översättningen behölls detta bredare begrepp som hänvisar till skolans dubbla uppdrag och funktion, nämligen till bildningsuppdraget såväl som till förstasuppdraget (för en diskussion av begreppet ’edukation’ se tex. Lindberg & Olofsson, 2005), vilket likväl gäller skolans Bildungsauftrag och Erziehungsauftrag i den tyska skolan.

308 På grund av den federala organiseringen av det tyska utbildningsväsendet, fokuserar studien på delstaten Nordrhein-Westfalen.
teorigenererande ansats, som fokuserar på ett aktörsperspektiv, kan användas i en komparativ studie.


Datamaterialet representerar sammanlagt 95 elever, 24 i den svenska kontexten och 71 elever i den tyska kontexten, som besöker årskurs 9 (eller 10, beroende på skoltypus i Tyskland). På grund av det tyska utbildningsväsendets federala organisering, koncentrerar sig studien på den federala delstaten Nordrhein-Westfalen. Eleverna intervjuades i sammanlagt 21 fokusgruppsintervjuer, varav 6 genomfördes i den svenska och 15 i den tyska kontexten. Sammantaget är 11 offentliga skolor representerade i det
empiriska materialet, 5 i den svenska kontexten och 6 i den tyska. Utöver denna datakorpus baserar sig studien också på andra datakällor, som kompletterar intervjumaterialet, och som stödjer en kontext-sensitiv analys och validering av preliminära resultat (Corbin & Strauss, 1990/2008). Dessa inbegriper exempelvis forsknings- och evaluationsstudier, statliga och federala styrdokument, kommentarmaterial och handledningar av offentliga myndigheter, offentlig statistik, tidningsartiklar m.m.


3. 'Bedömning' och 'rättvisa' som heuristiska begrepp

Med ett konsekvent elevperspektiv samt en teorigenererande och därutöver kontext-sensitiv ansats, bör förståelsen, i termerna av teoretiska begrepp, hanteras varsamt. Baserad på studiens abduktiva forskningslogik (Reichertz, 2008), tillsätter de teoretiska begreppen 'bedömning' och 'rättvisa', samt de teoretiska utgångspunkterna, som ligger i skärningspunkten däremellan, mer funktionen av heuristiska begrepp (Kelle & Kluge, 2010), än av omfattande och i förväg fastställda teoretiska utgångspunkter. Som heuristiska begrepp är de behjälpliga med att identifiera relevanta perspektiv och att sensibilisera forskaren för vissa initiala föki (Strauss & Corbin, 1990/2008) utan att fylla
dessa initialt empirisk förhållandevis 'tomma' koncepter i förväg med empirisk och analytisk mening (Kelle & Kruse, 2010).


4. Kontextuell inbäddning


Först jämförs den strukturella och systemimmanenta arkitekturen med avseende på de ”växlar i utbildningsbanorna” (Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, & Baumert, 2006, s. 300, övers.B.V.), som elever möter i båda kontexter utbildningssystemets övergångar. Dessa ”växlar i utbildningsbanorna” (ibid.) utgör här de funktionell ekvivalenta tertia comparationis, vilka fokuserar på a) en identifiering, av var de ’växlarna’ i elevernas utbildningsbanor ligger och b) på vilket sätt bedömning och betyg blir relevanta för övergången.

Komparationen visar, att elever i båda kontexter erfar differentieringar, ändock vid olika tidpunkter. Medan den första differentieringserfarenheten, i och med övergången till gymnasieskolan, ligger för svenska elever som besöker årskurs 9 inom en snar framtid; så har tyska elever, som besöker årskurs 9, redan gjort sina första differentieringserfarenheter i årskurs 4, på grund av den tidiga differentieringen i olika skoltyper som kännetecknar den tyska kontextens systemarkitektur. Detta inbegripa därmed också, att elever har olika erfarenheter med avseende på mer heterogena respektive mer homogena klass- och skolsammansättningar, med hänseende till den sociokulturella och socioekonomiska bakgrunden samt den (tillskrivna) prestationoförmågan.
Medan elever i den svenska kontexten upplever betygens centrala och avgörande funktion som selektions- och allokeringsverktyg, just under den period som intervjuerna genomförs; har de tyska elever som intervjuas redan tillgodogjort sig den erfarenheten, då betyg i den tyska kontexten både sker i tidigare årskurser och mer frekvent, än i den svenska kontexten. Detta har att göra med regleringarna angående den obligatoriska repetitionen av ett skolår, baserad på för låga betyg, och med den tidiga differentieringen av elever, där betygen är avgörande för allokeringen av elever till vissa skoltyper. Dessutom är betygen mer av ’high stakes’ karaktär, dvs. av avgörande karaktär, i Sverige än i Tyskland, då övergången till gymnasieskolan enbart styrs av elevers slutbetyg (och här ska det också tilläggas att det gäller särskilt för betyget E som minikrav, för att eleven ska kunna söka till ett studie- respektive ett yrkesförberedande program). I Tyskland relativeras betygens relevans för övergången något på grund av att betyget, som allokeras och som grundar sig på undervisningen, enbart utgör hälften av det betyget som eleverna får i sitt slutbetyg. Andra hälften utgörs av det betyget eleverna får i de centrala sluttentamina (Zentrale Abschlussprüfungen).

Om man sedan utvidgar betraktelsen till en jämförande exkurs, om vad som egentligen står på spel för elever i den svenska och i den tyska kontexten, så visar det sig, att betygen som allokeras i årskurs 9, är i båda kontexter avgörande för elevers senare chanser att kunna uppnå högskolebehörighet. Även om det finns i båda kontexter - åtminstone på en strukturer-formal nivå – möjligheten, att via vissa omvägar som exempelvis vuxenutbildning (eller, som det är möjligt i Sverige, genom att tillägga kurser och läsa ett s.k. ’utökat program’), att uppnå den grundläggande högskolebehörigheten, så är dock vägen dit, för de eleverna som på grund av betygen i årskurs 9 inte direkt fick den möjligheten, en väg som kräver mer ansträngning, en högre grad av investerad tid och som innebär fler risker.

Det andra huvudområde, kapitlet ägnar sig åt, är att komparativt bestämma hur dessa betyg som ”kulturella artefakter” (Lundahl, 2017) ’blir till’. För det endamålet används en teoretisk kategorisering av bedömningsprocessen, som innebär följande tre dimensioner, vilka i sin tur fungerar som funktionell ekvivalenta (Schriever, 2006) tertia comparationis: Löpande pedagogisk bedömning, betygsrelevant diagnostik samt evaluering och betygssättning (se Jürgens & Lissmann, 2015, s. 69).

I den svenska kontexten är den löpande pedagogiska bedömningen tydligt präglad av den anglosaxiska idén om ’formativ bedömning’ och ’bedömning för lärande’ (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Lundahl, 2011; Wiliam, 2010; Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015309). Därutöver är omfattningen

av stöd- och kommentarmaterial, i syfte att vägleda och underlätta lärares bedömningspraktik i klassrummet och som tillhandahålls av myndigheter som t.ex. Skolverket, betydligt större i den svenska kontexten än vad, jämförelsevis, är fallet i den tyska kontexten. Liknande material är i den tyska kontexten begränsat på ett förhållandevis kort avsnitt i de ämnesspecifika läroplanerna (Kernlehrpläne), och överläts därmed störstadelser till lärarnas professionella bedömningspraktik. Därutöver verkar den anglosaxiska idén om formativ bedömning inte fått fotfäste i den tyska kontexten – varken i lärarnas praktik eller i någon större omfattning inom forskningssammanhang. De ansatser till en förändrad bedömningskultur som finns har tydliga reformpedagogiska rötter och anses som ett alternativ komplement till summativa bedömningspraktiken.


Elever i båda kontexter är således en del av ett system för bedömning och betygssättning, som innefattar alltså både, komponenter som kännetecknas av hög standardisering och reglering, och komponenter med förhållandevis låg standardisering och reglering. Dock kan det sägas, att de komponenter som står för den kvalitativa bedömnlingen, vilken handlar om att bestämma värdet av en elevs uppvisade kunskap och förmågor, samt den därtill relaterade tillskrivningen av en betygsnivå i relation till en viss referensram, är i den svenska kontexten, i jämförelse till den tyska kontexten, högt standardiserad, styrs med olika instrument och motiveras utifrån det normativa målet om en likvärdig bedömning och betygssättning.

Huruvida elever, som befinner sig i den presenterade socio-edukationella kontexten, konceptualiserar rättvis bedömning och betygssättning, presenteras i en översiktlig sammanfattning här nedan.

5. Elevernas rättviseuppfattningar om bedömning som ’meta-bedömning’

Baserad på den iterativa forskningsprocessen, har det successivt utvecklats en teoretisk konceptualisering (se Corbin & Strauss, 1990/2008) av elevers uppfattningar, med hänsyn till rättvis bedömning och betygssättning i

310 Se t.ex. beskrivningen av det nationella Institut för Kvalitetsutvecklingen i utbildningsväsendet (IQB) i denna fråga: https://www.iqb.hu-berlin.de/vera [2017-02-28]
skolan. Den teoretiska konceptualiseringen, som bäst beskriver vad rättvis bedömning och betygssättning innebär utifrån ett elevperspektiv, är 'meta-bedömning'. Den teoretiska konceptualiseringen 'meta-bedömning', tillåter att teoretisk kunna förklara bedömningens rättvisekaraktär, dess villkor, konsekvenser samt de därtill relaterade strategier och handlingsmöjligheter.

Med hjälp av det explorativa, successivt teorigenrerande och konsekvent aktörsorienterade tillvägagångssättet, möjliggjordes en contextualiserad förståelse av elevernas egna relevansområden och därtill relaterade relevansstrukturer, som kan sägas ligga i skärningspunkten mellan skolans bildnings- och fostransuppdrag (se t.ex. Fend, 1980), och därmed mellan bedömningens pedagogiska och sociala dimensioner. 'Meta-bedömning' erbjuder en teoretisk konceptualisering, som plattform för ett fördjupat förståelse av denna skärningspunkt, utifrån ett elevperspektiv.

5.1 'Meta-bedömningens’ karaktär och komponenter

Elevers 'meta-bedömning’ kan översiktlig karaktäriseras som elevernas bedömning av den bedömningen de erfar, i termer av rättvisa och i relation till olika relevansområden. Dessa relevansområden kan sägas bestå, utifrån ett elevperspektiv, å ena sida utav normativa konceptioner och å andra sidan av konceptioner, som är kopplade till elevernas upplevda och konkreta erfarenheter. I båda fallen visar analysen på övergripande likheter, som verkar vara knutna till erfarenheten av att överhuvudtaget vara en elev, som på obligatoriska grunder befinner sig i en viss socio-edukationell kontext, och sist men inte minst, av att överhuvudtaget bli bedömd.

Därutöver visar analysen dock också på skillnader, som i viss utsträckning kan sägas vara relaterade till elevers kontextbundna erfarenheter och här i kontextbegreppets breda och mångfacetterade bemärkelse. De analytiska huvudkategorierna, och därmed de analytisk vunna tertia comparationis, som teoretisk kan ringa in jämförelsen av dessa konceptioner, som är grundbultarna i elevers ’meta-bedömning’, är: 'Att tro på meritokrati’, ’Att tillskriva ansvar’ och ’Att förstå som imperativ’.

5.2 ’Att tro på meritokrati’

Den analytiska kategorin ’Att tro på meritokrati’ innebär att elever, oavsett socio-edukationell kontext verka ha internaliserat meritokrati som norm: Betyg anses först och främst tjäna ett selektions- och allokeringssyfte. Denna
normativa konception, kan dock ingalunda sägas vara en okritisk sådan, utan bör förstås mer som en acceptans i brist på andra tänkbara alternativ och som utmanas i relation till den erfarna bedömningen. Meritokrati går därmed utifrån ett elevperspektiv inte per automatik att likställa med ett rättvist urval utan är en normativ-teoretisk präglad konception. Medan elevers konceptioner i de svenska intervjuerna verkar befinna sig mer på ett övergripande normativ plan, förefaller elevers konceptioner i de tyska intervjuerna därutöver också vara kännetecknade av en sorts erfarenhetsbaserat synsätt, som har att göra med elevers olika erfarenheter av differentiering och stigmatisering vid den tidpunkt i sin utbildningskarriär, då de intervjuades.

När man tittar närmare på vad som främst kännetecknar ett rättvist betyg för elever, så kan elevers övergripande normativa konceptioner bäst förstås i termer av 'förjänapande'. 'Förjänapande' implicerar, att på ett rättvist sätt allokera höga såväl som låga betyg, behöver 'förjänapas', vilket gäller för en själv såväl som för andra. 'Förjänapandet' av ett betyg har därmed karaktären som ett konceptionell kontinuum, i termer av en 'ethico-moralisk' norm, som starkt liknar vad som kallas inom litteraturvetenskapen för 'poetisk rättvisa' (se t.ex. också Nussbaum, 1997), vilket innebär en kulturellt djup rotad rättvisekonception, enligt vilken goda insatser i slutändan alltid blir belönade, och otillräckliga eller moralisk problematiska insatser blir straffade311.

5.3 ’Att tillskriva ansvar’

När det gäller elevers erfarenhets- och kontextrelaterade rättvisekonceptioner, så kan dessa övergripande beskrivas att handla om ’Att tillskriva ansvar’. ’Att tillskriva ansvar’ innebär, att elevers erfarenhets- och kontextrelaterade rättvisekonceptioner utgår främst på att det utvärderas och bedöms, vem som ska kunna hållas ansvarig för ett allokera betyg, samt varför och på vilket sätt det ansvaret tillskrivs. Detta ansvar kan indelas i ansvar som elever externaliserar och tillskriver andra, och i ansvar som elever upplever att de själva har. Medan det externaliserade ansvaret inbegriper skolans och lärarens ansvar för en rättvis hantering av 'medfödda chanser’ (till det räknas utifrån ett elevperspektiv exempelvis elevers 'familjebakgrund’ och 'förmågor’) och 'givna chanser’ (som framförallt kan sägas vara relaterade till de villkor och de konsekvenser under vilka de prestationer, som senare betygssätts, konstrueras i klassrummet), fokuserar det ’internaliserade ansvaret’ på

‘chanser som behöver tas’ av eleverna själva (här utgör ansträngning ett centralt tema).

Sammanfattningsvis visar det sig, att elever i de svenska intervjuer konceptualiserar rättvis bedömning och betygssättning, med hänseende på de medfödda chanserna, med i termer av jämlighet och att läraren tillskrivs ansvaret för att kompensera och ta hänsyn till medfödda skillnader. Detta i förhållande till den starka standardiseringen, kan här sägas kunna vara problematisk utifrån ett elevperspektiv. För eleverna är en stark standardisering inte per automatik likbetydande med vad som uppfattas som en rättvis allokering av betyg. De elevers konceptioner som intervjuades i tyska skolor, kan sammanfattningsvis sägas mer vara av relativ karaktär, vilket innebär att skilda medfödda chanser i form av olika förmågor och olika möjligheter utifrån familjebakgrund, anses vara naturliga och huvudsakligen statisk, samt att de bör ’objektivt’ återspeglas i det allokerade betyget. Här visar sig också en tydlig skoltyp-relaterad relation, en form av intern logik om vem och hur man ’är’, om man besöker en viss skoltyp och framförallt också om vad man har och ges rätt till. Dessa skillnader i elevers rättvisekonceptioner mellan de olika socio-edukationella kontexterna, verkar också ha att göra med eleverna olika erfarenheter av differentiering, och den därmed relaterade erfarenheten, av att vara en del av i mer eller mindre grad homogena och heterogena grupper.


’Chanser att lära sig’ representerar elevernas rättvisekonceptioner i förhållande till ’undervisningskvalitet’, ’lärare ledarförmåga’ och ’lärandets organisering’. Även om det finns vissa kontextuella skillnader i vad elever i de svenska och i de tyska intervjuerna lyfter fram som problematiska aspekter, är
elevernas konceptier om att bristande undervisningskvalitet, otillräckligt ledarskap i klassrummet och en problematisk organisering av undervisningen, som avgörande aspekter för det betyget de överhuvudtaget får chansen till att kunna få, jämförelsevis lika. Orättvisan består för eleverna i faktumet, att de upplever att de får bära på konsekvenser i form av betyg, vilka ’blir till’ under vissa villkor, som de själva inte kan bestämma över eller inte bli delaktiga i för att förbättra. Därutöver upplever eleverna att de samtidigt tillskrivs ansvaret för betyget, vilken legitimeras med en tillskriven brist på ansträngning eller otillräcklig kunnande och prestationsförmåga.


En annan dimension av chanser, som elever upplever att vara av betydelse i förhållande till rättvis bedömning och betygssättning och som lärarna åläggs ansvaret för, har att göra med lärarens användning och hantering gällande bedömningens tolkningsutrymme. Utifrån ett elevperspektiv, räcker detta
tolkningsutrymme bortom lärarens nödvändiga interpretation, av hur en viss prestation ska värderas i förhållande till en viss referensram för bedömning. Detta är av särskilt vikt i relation till de betygen som kan sägas ligga på gränsen mellan två betygsnivåer, och som upplevs att hanteras med hjälp av ”pedagogiska prefix”, vilket innebär en allokering av imaginära ’minus’ och ’plus’. Elever i de svenska intervjuerna upplever att detta tolkningsutrymme är på gott och ont så stort, att lärarna, till och med inom ramen för en stark standardiserad process, har ett visst spelutrymme som används i motiverande men också i disciplinerande och uppostrande syfte. Orättvisan består utifrån ett elevperspektiv i faktumet, att elever kan uppleva att vara utelämnad till lärarens subjektiva beslut i dessa frågor. Detsamma, om än i ännu större utstreckning, verkar också gälla elever som intervjuades i de tyska skolorna, där avsaknaden av bindande kriterier också anses kunna öppna upp för lärarens godtyckliga bedömning och därmed orättvisa betyg.


Samma interna differentiering blir inte synlig i de tyska intervjuerna. Om jämförelselinjen dock förskjuts från klassrummet, till en mer strukturell nivå, så blir det tydligt att samma problematik uppstår också utifrån elevers perspektiv i den tyska kontexten, fast i termer av en extern-strukturell differentiering. Denna extern-strukturella differentiering innebär också att den skoltyp relaterade kategoriseringen blir mer synlig i det offentliga, vilket därför också lättare leder till en stigmatisering, som ytterligare cementerar om man uppfattar sig själv och blir uppfattat av andra som ’prestationstark’ eller ’prestationssvag’, med samtliga tillhörande tillskrivningar och konsekvenser det innebär (se t.ex. Wellgraf, 2012; Imdorf, 2010). Det förhållandevis
onsynliga interna differentieringen i de svenska klassrummen verkar dock också innebära att den är i mindre omfattning tillgänglig och kontrollerbar och därmed mindre nåbar för kritik utifrån. Risken blir därmed ännu större för elever att det uppstår en så kallad ”inläsningseffekt” (t.ex. Skolinspektionen, 2010), där eleverna exempelvis förblir i den ’svaga’ gruppen som i sin tur har konsekvenser för deras fortsatta lärande och de betygen som kan uppnås.


Vikten av ansträngningen för det förtjänade betyget verkar dock utifrån ett elevperspektiv behöver förstås som ett kontinuum. Detta kontinuum räcker från att ansträngningen ska ha en avgörande roll för betyget, till att ansträngning ska enbart spela roll ifall betyget ligger på gränsen mellan två betygssteg. Elevernas rättvisekonceptoner är därmed också knutna till en utvärdering av elevernas input, gällande ansträngning plus förmåga i förhållande till det allokerade betyget, och i jämförelse av denna relation i jämförelse till en social referensstandard.

Därtöver upplever och utgår eleverna också från att ansträngning spelar roll för lärarens betygssättning. Baserad på den erfarenheten och uppfattningen, utvecklar elever två strategier för att förbättra sina chanser till att få ett bättre betyg: antingen anstränger de sig mer (i termer av att de studerar mer och investerar mer tid i sitt skolarbete), eller så koncentrera sig eleverna på att demonstrera ett ansträngningsrelaterad beteende för läraren. I båda fallen är ansträngningen dock resultatorienterad och därmed extrinsiskt motiverad (se t.ex. Stables, Murakami, McIntosh & Martin, 2013), vilket då utifrån ett elevperspektiv också utgör grunden till en orättvis betygssättning ifall dessa förväntningar inte uppfylls312. Denna analytiska kategori visar därmed på bedömningens pedagogiska sida, som ligger bortom skolans uppdrag i termer av en ren kunskapsförmedlande institution. Även om denna dimension av elevers rättviseuppfattningar, trots vissa kontextuella skillnader, bör förstås

312 Angående relationen mellan det förväntade och det allokerade betyget och dess betydelse för rättviseuppfattningar, se t.ex. Jasso and Resh (2002).

5.4 ’Att förstå som imperativ’

Utöver elevers normativa rättvisekoncepter och deras rättvisekoncepter som är bundna till frågan om vem som kan hållas ansvarig för ett visst betyg, framträder det i materialet också ett empiriskt mönster, som har att göra med att förstå bedömningens och betygssättningens grunder och dess inre logik.

Elever kan sägas uppleva något, som också kallas för ”Verstehensdruck” i språkdidaktisk forskning (Segermann, 2000), och vilket handlar om att det verkar vara viktigt, att förstå vad som blir betygssatt, varför man fick ett visst betyg och vad man kan göra för att förbättra betyget. Denna förståelse, som i princip handlar om den formativa bedömningsteorins grundläggande dimensioner (t.ex. Wiliam, 2010), handlar om mer än bara information och transparens (jfr. Tierney, 2013): Den handlar om en mycket utvecklat konkretisering och att lärraren ska i detalj kunna förklara varför ett visst betyg allokerades. En bristande eller otillräcklig konkretisering verkar riskera, att betyget uppfattas som orättvis och baserad på en godtycklig bedömning. Här verkar de elever, som intervjuades i svenska skolor, lägga mycket vikt vid att förstå kunskapskravens värdeord (se Skolverket, 2016e), medan eleverna i den tyska kontexten kan sägas framförallt försöker dechiffrera, avkoda och dra slutsatser angående hur vissa provpoäng blir fördelade, och hur ett betyg blir kalkylerat utifrån de betygen som allokeras under årets gång. Det förhållandet belyser därmed också något om vad elever i båda kontexter upplever som viktigt att förstå, vilket sedan i sin tur också bildar en viktig del i elevernas referensram med hänsyns till rättvis bedömning och betygssättning. I båda fall är elevens utvärderingsbehov resultatorienterat, vilket betyder, att förbättringen inte avser en förbättring i termer av ökat kunnande, utan i termer av en chans till att få ett högre betyg.

Den av eleverna upplevda ’förståelsens imperativ’, kan också sägas röra sig mellan en aritmetisk logik å ena sida, och en holistisk komplexitet å andra

1. Konturierung des Problems

Die Bewertung und das Beurteilen von Schulleistungen sowie das Erhalten von Zensuren gehören zu den grundlegenden Erfahrungen des Schulerlebens von Schülerinnen und Schülern (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Luhmann, 2002; Zaborowski, Breidenstein & Meier, 2010). Die Schule als eine der zentralen Sozialisationsinstanzen (Fend, 1980; Parsons, 1959; Ulich, 2001) vermittelt somit neben gesellschaftlichen Normen verschiedener Art, auch bestimmte Ideen darüber, was Zensuren sind, was sie sein sollten und vor allem wozu sie benötigt werden. Eines der am deutlichsten hervortretenden normativen Ideale in Gesellschaften, die dem Anspruch nach einer meritokratischen Organisierung folgen, ist die Auffassung, dass Zensuren eine gerechte Selektion an unterschiedlichen Übergängen im Bildungs- und Berufswesen ermöglichen (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970/2008; vgl. auch Allen, 2011; Hadjar, 2008; Waldow, 2016; Solga, 2005a). Dass der Bildungserfolg jedoch zu einem großen Teil weiterhin von askriptiven Merkmalen, wie beispielsweise der


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313 Fouché (2013) pratar i detta sammanhang till exempel också om värdet av ’productive failure’ för elevers lärande.
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG AUF DEUTSCH


1. Konturierung des Problems

Die Bewertung und das Beurteilen von Schulleistungen sowie das Erhalten von Zensuren gehören zu den grundlegenden Erfahrungen des Schülerlebens von Schülerinnen und Schülern (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Luhmann, 2002; Zaborowski, Breidenstein & Meier, 2010). Die Schule als eine der zentralen Sozialisationsinstanzen (Fend, 1980; Parsons, 1959; Ulich, 2001) vermittelt somit neben gesellschaftlichen Normen verschiedenster Art, auch bestimmte Ideen darüber, was Zensuren sind, was sie sein sollten und vor allem wozu sie benötigt werden. Eines der am deutlichsten hervortretenden normativen Ideale in Gesellschaften, die dem Anspruch nach einer meritokratischen Organisierung folgen, ist die Auffassung, dass Zensuren eine gerechte Selektion an unterschiedlichen Übergängen im Bildungs- und Berufswesen ermöglichen (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970/2008; vgl. auch Allen, 2011; Hadjar, 2008; Waldow, 2016; Solga, 2005a). Dass der Bildungserfolg jedoch zu einem grossen Teil weiterhin von askriptiven Merkmalen, wie beispielsweise der...
Herkunft der Schülerinnen und Schüler bestimmt wird, haben sowohl unterschiedliche wissenschaftliche Studien als auch grosse Evaluationsstudien wiederholt gezeigt (bspw. Skolverket 2016c,d; Klieme et al., 2010; Solga & Dombrowski, 2009; Andersson, Östh & Malmberg, 2010). Darüber hinaus scheinen Zensuren auch weit davon entfernt zu sein, in dem Umfang als objektives Maß für Schüler_innenleistungen und Kompetenzen zu fungieren, als sie dies entsprechend der meritokratischen Norm zufolge eigentlich müssten (Ingkamp, 1977; Kalthoff, 1996; Wikström & Wikström, 2005; Lindahl, 2007).

Vor diesem Hintergrund und besonders im Hinblick auf die Bedeutung von Zensuren und Bildungszertifikaten für die Lebensgestaltungsmöglichkeiten junger Menschen, ist es von grosser Bedeutung, die zentrale Akteursgruppe, welche schliessendlich am meisten von den Praktiken und Konsequenzen der Leistungsbeurteilung in Schulen betroffen ist, zu Wort kommen zu lassen und damit zu einer Vermindehung eines oftmals betonten Forschungsdesiderats beizutragen – nämlich wie Schülerinnen und Schüler Leistungsbeurteilung in der Schule erleben, was sie darüber denken und welche Strategien sie hieraus und hierzu entwickeln (bspw. Brown, 2008; Forsberg & Lindberg, 2010; Hirsh & Lindberg, 2015; Lundahl, Klapp, Hultén, & Mickwitz, 2015). Präziser formuliert untersucht die vorliegende Studie die Gerechtigkeitskonzeptionen von Schülerinnen und Schülern zum Thema schulische Leistungsbeurteilung aus einer konsequenten Schüler_innenperspektive heraus. Damit verortet sich die Studie an der Schnittstelle der obengenannten Aspekte und verlegt die Schülerinnen und Schüler als Akteure ganz bewusst von der Peripherie in das Zentrum der Beurteilungsforschung. Was Gerechtigkeit innerhalb und in Relation zu der thematischen Schnittstelle zwischen Leistungsbeurteilung und Zensurengebung bedeutet, was sie bedeuten kann und was sie bedeuten sollte (s. Akteursperspektive des ‚Thomas Theorems‘, Thomas & Thomas, 1928), wird damit in der vorliegenden Studie konsequent als „im Auge des Betrachters“ (Walster & Walster, 1975, p. 22) liegend verstanden.

Mit diesen inhaltlichen Ausgangspunkten geht verständlicherweise die Notwendigkeit eines speziellen methodologischen Rahmens einher, welcher einerseits eine explorative Herangehensweise ermöglicht und damit den eigenen Relevanzsetzungen der Schülerinnen und Schüler Raum gibt; und es andererseits erlaubt, über ein deskriptives Niveau hinauszugehen, und zwar in Richtung einer theoretisch robusten Konzeptbildung. Diesbezüglich basiert


\(^{315}\) In dieser Studie wird der Begriff ‚sozio-edukationaler Kontext‘ angewendet, um das der Studie unterliegende und breitere Begriffsverständnis zu unterstreichen im Hinblick darauf, was Schule, Schüler_innen und Leistungsbeurteilung ‚ist/sind‘ und ‚sein kann/sein können‘, wenn diese in ihrer gesellschaftlichen Einbettung aus Schüler_innensicht zu verstehen versucht wird. Dies bedeutet, dass es sich hierbei auch um eine Begriffsäquivalenz auf epistemologischer Basis handelt, welche auf sukzessiv empirisch-analytisch gewonnenen Einsichten basiert. Der Begriff ‚sozio-edukationaler Kontext‘ verweist hierbei besonders auf die doppelten Auftrag und die doppelte Funktion der Schule, nämlich sowohl bilden als auch erziehen zu müssen (für eine Diskussion des Begriffs ‚edukation‘, vgl. auch Lindberg & Olofsson, 2005).

\(^{316}\) Aufgrund der föderalen Organisation und Struktur des deutschen Bildungswesens konzentriert sich die Studie auf das Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen.

2. Methodologische Rahmung und methodisches Vorgehen

Generalisierungsreichweite zu gelangen. Durch die Kombination beider Verfahren ist es so möglich trotz dieser auf den ersten Blick als gegenläufig erscheinende Schlussfolgerungsverläufe zu theoretischen Konzeptualisierungen zu gelangen, die zwar vom Kontext abstrahlen, dies jedoch auf der Basis einer zuvor empirisch reichhaltigen und gesättigten Kontextualisierung. Somit versucht die Studie auch zur methodologischen Diskussion beizutragen.


Die Datenerhebung, oder präziser ausgedrückt, die ‘Co-Konstruktion’ (z.B. Flick, 2009) des empirischen Datenkorpus erfolgte hauptsächlich Mithilfe von

3. 'Schulische Leistungsbeurteilung‘ und 'Gerechtigkeit‘ als heuristische Konzepte

Mit einer konsequenten Schüler_innenperspektive und einem theoriegenerierenden sowie kontextsensitiven Vergleichsansatz ist es notwendig, theoretisch begrifflichem Vorwissen mit reflexiver Umsicht zu begegnen. Basierend auf der abduktiven Forschungslogik (Reichertz, 2008), die der vorliegenden Studie zu eigen ist, fiel den Begriffen 'schulische Leistungsbeurteilung' und 'Gerechtigkeit' eher die Rolle von heuristischen Konzepten zu, denn von begrifflich-determinierenden theoretischen und zur Analyse herangezogenen Ausgangspunkten (Kelle & Kluge, 2010). Als heuristische Konzepte waren diese dabei behilflich, relevante Aufmerksamkeitsrichtungen zu identifizieren und die Forschende hierfür zu sensibilisieren (Strauss & Corbin, 1990/2008), allerdings ohne die empirisch wenig gehaltvollen Begriffe bereits im voraus mit angenommenem, empirischen Bedeutungsinhalt zu 'füllen' (Kelle & Kluge, 2010).


4. Kontextuelle Einbettung


Zuerst werden die systemimmanenten Strukturen verglichen, durch welche die „Gelenkstellen“ (Maaz, Hausen, McElvany, & Baumert, 2006, S. 300) als neuralgische Punkte der Bildungsverläufe der befragten Schülerinnen und Schüler identifiziert werden. Hier wird einerseits vergleichend analysiert, wo sich diese Gelenkstellen befinden und andererseits nachvollzogen, welche Rolle Zensuren und Bildungszertifikate hierbei spielen. Der Vergleich zeigt, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler in beiden Kontexten strukturelle Differenzierungserfahrungen machen, wenn auch zu unterschiedlichen

Darüber hinaus wird auch ersichtlich, dass sich der Relevanzgrad der auf dem Unterricht basierenden Zensuren unterscheidet: während diese Zensuren für Schülerinnen und Schüler im schwedischen Kontext alleinig als Selektionsgrundlage in die gymnasieskola herangezogen werden, bestimmen diese Zensuren für Schülerinnen und Schüler im deutschen Kontext nur zur Hälfte über die Übergangsmöglichkeiten in das duale System oder die Sekundarstufe II, da sich die zweite Hälfte der Abschlussnote aus den Zensuren der Abschlussprüfungen ergibt.

Im vergleichenden Exkurs bezüglich dessen, was darüber hinaus für Schülerinnen und Schüler auf Basis der Zensuren auf dem Spiel steht, zeigt sich, dass für die Chancen auf das Erreichen einer Hochschulzugangsberechtigung in beiden Kontexten letztendlich entscheidend ist, welche Zensuren die Schülerinnen und Schüler am Ende der Sekundarstufe I erhalten. Auch wenn auf formal-struktureller Ebene in beiden Kontexten die Möglichkeit besteht über mehr oder weniger grosse Umwege, wie beispielsweise dem sogenannten Zweiten Bildungsweg im deutschen Kontext oder wie im schwedischen Falle dem Belegen von Zusatzkursen in der gymnasieskola, die Hochschulzugangsberechtigung zu erwerben, ist der Weg

317 Im Rahmen der breitangelegten Schulreform im Jahr 2011 wurde die erste Notengebung von Klasse 8 auf Klasse 6 herabgesetzt. Je nach Zeitpunkt der Interviewdurchführung hatten die schwedischen Schülerinnen und Schüler also mehr oder weniger Erfahrung mit der früher einsetzenden Notengebung.
dorthin trotz allem ein beschwerlicherer, zeitintensiverer und eher risikobehafteter.


Im Hinblick auf die Rahmung der zensurenrelevanten Leistungsdagnostik und hier vor allen Dingen bezüglich des Beurteilungsgegenstands, scheint sich dieses Bild im Vergleich jedoch umzudrehen. Hier betonen die schwedischen Regularien die für die Validitätsfrage notwendige Vielgestaltigkeit der


Die Beurteilungssysteme beider Kontexte beinhalten damit Komponenten, die sich sowohl durch einen vergleichsweise hohen, als auch durch einen vergleichsweise niedrigen Grad an Regulierung und Standardisierung auszeichnen, womit wiederum auch unterschiedliche Logiken zutage treten, wie gerechte Leistungsbeurteilung und gerechte Zensuren, zumindest auf Regelarienebene, hergestellt werden sollen.

5. Gerechte Leistungsbeurteilung aus Sicht von Schülerinnen und Schülern als 'Meta-Beurteilung'


5.1 Komponenten und Charakteristika der 'Meta-Beurteilung'

Die 'Meta-Beurteilung‘ der Schülerinnen und Schülern kann zusammenfassend als ein Beurteilen der von den Schülerinnen und Schülern erfahrenen und erlebten Beurteilung beschrieben werden und zwar im Hinblick auf die Gerechtigkeit dieser erfahrenen Beurteilung und in Relation zu unterschiedlichen Relevanzbereichen. Diese Relevanzbereiche sind einerseits durch grundlegende, normativ-theoretische Gerechtigkeitskonzeptionen und andererseits durch kontextgebundene, konkret-situative und erfahrungsbasierte Konzeptionen schulischer Leistungsbeurteilung geprägt. Hier zeigen sich kontextübergreifende Gemeinsamkeiten, welche dem grundlegenden Umstand geschuldet zu sein scheinen, was es einerseits überhaupt bedeutet eine Schülerin oder ein Schüler zu sein, die zum Besuch der Institution Schule verpflichtet sind und sich damit auch automatisch in einem sozio-edukationalen Kontext befinden; und was es damit andererseits bedeutet, überhaupt bewertet und beurteilt zu werden. Neben diesen Gemeinsamkeiten zeigen sich jedoch auch kontextgebundene und auf den damit unterschiedlich gearteten Erfahrungen basierende Unterschiede, wobei hier von einem breiteren, nicht lediglich auf geographische Ländergrenzen reduzierten Kontextbegriff ausgegangen werden muss. Die analytischen Hauptkategorien, die die empirisch gewonnenen tertia comparationis und damit die theoretisch-konzeptionalen Eckpfeiler der ‚Meta-Beurteilung‘ darstellen, sind: ‚Glauben an die Meritokratie‘, ‚Zuschreiben von Verantwortung‘ und ‚Verstehen als Imperativ‘.

5.2 Glauben an die Meritokratie

Die Kategorie ‚Glauben an die Meritokratie‘ beinhaltet, dass die Schülerinnen und Schüler, ungeachtet kontextueller Unterschiede, die meritokratische Norm

5.3 Zuschreiben von Verantwortung

Im Hinblick auf die erfahrungsbasierten und situativ-gebundenen Konzeptionen der Schülerinnen und Schüler so können diese als generell verbunden mit dem ‚Zuschreiben von Verantwortung‘ verstanden werden. Dies impliziert in Relation zur ‚Meta-Beurteilung‘, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler die von ihnen erfahrene Leistungsbeurteilung dahingehend auswerten und beurteilen, wer warum und in welcher Weise für eine erteilte Zensur verantwortlich gemacht ‚wird‘ und aus ihrer Sicht verantwortlich ‚ist‘. Diese Verantwortung lässt sich in weitere Dimensionen unterteilen, nämlich einer ausgelagerten Verantwortungsdimension und einer Verantwortungsdimension der Selbstzuschreibung. Die ausgelagerte Verantwortungszuschreibung

umfasst die Verantwortung der Schule und der Lehrkräfte dafür, wie mit ‚Chancen, die man einfach hat‘ (Begabungen und familiäres Herkunftsmilieu) und ‚Chancen, die einem gegeben werden‘ (die einem im Unterricht geboten werden, ‚um zu lernen‘, ‚um zu zeigen was man kann‘, ‚um den Beurteilungsspielraum nutzen zu können‘ und um ‚Ex-ante Kategorisierungen zu vermeiden‘). Bei der Verantwortung, welche Schülerinnen und Schüler sich selbst zuschreiben, geht es um die ‚Chancen, die wahrgenommen werden müssen‘. Hierbei ist ‚Anstrengung‘ ein zentrales Konzept, welches sich wiederum unterteilt in ‚Sich anstrengen‘ und das ‚Zeigen von Anstrengungsverhalten‘. Diese Konzeptionalisierungen sollen im Folgenden zusammenfassend erläutert werden.


Die ‚Chancen, die einem gegeben werden‘ lassen sich als eine Zusammenfassung von Konzeptionen verstehen bezüglich der von den Schülerinnen und Schüler zugeschriebenen Verantwortlichkeit von Lehrkräften für die Bedingungen und die Konsequenzen der Leistungserstellung im Unterricht, auf denen sich wiederum die anschliessende Zensurengebung gründet (vgl. auch Luhrmann, 2002; Säfström, 1999; Breidenstein, 2006). Unter anderem zeigt sich in dieser Kategorie auch, inwiefern die Akteursperspektive und das Offenheitsparadigma qualitativer Sozialforschung dazu beitragen können, Leistungsbeurteilung eben nicht nur
begrenzt auf den Akt des Beurteilens und Benotens zu verstehen, sondern dass sich diese aus Schüler_innenperspektive in ihrer empirisch gezeigten, situativen und notwendigen Einbettung in Lehr- und Lernprozesse erst umfassend und schlüssig nachvollziehen lassen. Bildlich gesprochen liess sich sagen, dass die Zensur, und insbesondere die gerechte Zensur, für Schülerinnen und Schüler lange vor der Notengebung ’beginnt‘ und weit über den ‚Raum‘ hinausreicht, den die Zensur in ihrer auf dem Papier niedergeschriebenen Form in Anspruch nimmt.

Die ‚Chancen, die einem gegeben werden‘ beinhalten, wie zuvor bereits erwähnt, auch die ‚Chancen zu lernen‘. Die ‚Chancen zu lernen‘ verweisen dabei auf die Konzeptionen der Schülerinnen und Schüler hinsichtlich der ‚Unterrichtsqualität‘, den ‚Pädagogischen Führungssqualitäten der Lehrkräfte‘ und die ‚Organisation der Lernprozesse‘. Der Vergleich zeigt hier für diese Studie eher unbedeutende, situativ-kontextuelle Unterschiede auf. Hier lässt sich zur Verdeutlichung beispielhaft anführen, dass in Schweden Mobiltelefone im Unterricht zugelassen sind, was zu Störungen des Unterrichts und damit zu einer Störung der Lern- und Leistungsgelegenheiten führt, denen viele Lehrkräfte aus Sicht der Schülerinnen und Schüler nicht gewachsen zu sein scheinen und woraus sich wiederum Nachteile für die eigene Note ergeben können. Während dieser Umstand vermehrt in den schwedischen Interviews diskutiert wurde, thematisierten die Schülerinnen und Schüler in den deutschen Interviews diesen Aspekt überhaupt nicht. Abgesehen von solchen Unterschieden, sind sich die Konzeptionen der Schülerinnen dahingehend ähnlich, als dass sie verdeutlichen, inwiefern eine mangelhafte Umsetzung der zuvor genannten Aspekte ihr Lernen und damit ihre Chance auf eine gerecht erteilte Zensur negativ beeinflusst. Die Ungerechtigkeit besteht für die Schülerinnen und Schüler darin, dass die Leistung, welche unter bestimmten Bedingungen hergestellt wird, in ihrer Konsequenz zu einer Zensur führt, die wiederum mit dem Verweis auf die Leistungsfähigkeit und -bereitschaft der Schülerinnen und Schüler begründet und legitimiert wird. Diese Ungerechtigkeit verstärkt sich, da den Schülerinnen und Schülern damit die Verantwortung für Bedingungen zugeschrieben wird, die sie weder verantworten noch positiv beeinflussen können.

Die ‚Chancen zu zeigen was man kann‘ verweisen auf die Konzeptionen der Schülerinnen und Schüler in Bezug auf die inferenzielle Natur des Lernens (s. hierzu bspw. auch Benett, 2011; Breidenstein, 2010) und damit der Angewiesenheit auf die Sichtbarmachung von ‚Können‘ als Grundlage der Leistungsbeurteilung. Aus Sicht der Schülerinnen und Schüler bedeutet dies, dass Zensuren eben nicht in unvermittelten Weise ihr ‚Können‘ und ihr ‚Wissen‘ abbilden, sondern auch erkennen lassen, inwieweit den Schülerinnen und Schülern überhaupt die Chance gegeben wurde, zu zeigen, was sie können

Aus einer Gerechtigkeitsperspektive heraus ist dies für die Schülerinnen und Schüler im schwedischen Kontext vor allem problematisch hinsichtlich des Inhalts und der Beschaffenheit der Bewertungskriterien. Wenn sie nämlich die Chance erhalten haben, zu zeigen, was sie ‚können‘ und ‚wissen‘, entscheidet aus ihrer Perspektive auch ihre generelle Fähigkeit kognitive Prozesse sprachlich adäquat auszudrücken darüber, ob gewisse Zensuren erreicht werden können. Dies ist beispielsweise der Fall, wenn Schülerinnen und Schüler für die höheren Zensuren im Fach Technik zeigen müssen, dass sie sich einer Problemlösung bezueglich eines elektrischen Schaltkreises analytisch nähern und es aus ihrer Sicht für die höhere Zensur keine Rolle spielt, ob das Lämpchen am Ende leuchtet oder nicht, sondern eher relevant ist, dass sie genau erklären können, warum sie welche Entscheidungen beim Bauen des Schaltkreises getroffen haben und welche Vor- und Nachteile sich aus unterschiedlichen Möglichkeiten ergeben et cetera. Die Zensur spiegelt daher aus ihrer Perspektive nicht ihr fachspezifisches Können wieder - was im genannten Beispiel also das erfolgreiche Koppeln eines Schaltkreises wäre - sondern basiert vielmehr zu einem zu großen Teil auf der generellen Fähigkeit eigener kognitiver Prozesse gewahr zu sein und diese sprachlich explizieren zu können. Von den schwedischen Schülerinnen und Schülern werden so zustande gekommene Noten als ungerecht erlebt. Bei den Schülerinnen und Schülern im deutschen Kontext geht es bei den ‚Chancen zu zeigen was man kann‘ eher darum in Konkurrenz mit den Klassenkameraden die Chance zu erhalten eine Frage gestellt zu bekommen, die dann, anders als im schwedischen Kontext, in nahezu dichotomisch erfahrener Weise, entweder richtig oder falsch beantwortet werden kann. Die Entscheidung darüber, ob eine Antwort ‚richtig‘ oder ‚falsch‘ war, liegt wiederum bei der Lehrkraft. Im Unterschied zu den Schülerinnen und Schülern in Schweden, geht es also eher um fachspezifisches Faktenwissen. Abhängig vom Fach kann diese durch die Lehrkraft bestimmte Dichotomie von ‚Richtig‘ und ‚Falsch‘ bei der gleichzeitigen konkurrenzorientierten Gestaltung des Unterrichts dazu führen, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler sich auf einer ungerechten Basis beurteilt fühlen.

Eine weitere Dimension, welche im Hinblick auf gerechte Leistungsbeurteilung aus der Sicht von Schülerinnen und Schülern relevant ist


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und wofür Lehrkräfte auf bestimmte Weise verantwortlich gemacht werden, ist die ‚Handhabung des Bewertungsspielraums‘. Aus Sicht der Schülerinnen und Schüler reicht dieser Bewertungsspielraum nämlich über einen Interpretationsspielraum hinsichtlich der Wertbestimmung, der Evaluation, einer gezeigten Leistung hinaus. Dies scheint besonders relevant im Hinblick auf Zensuren, die sich zwischen zwei Notenstufen befinden und konzentriert sich beispielsweise auch auf die Bedeutung gewisser ‚pädagogischer Präfixe‘, wie dies durch die der Zensur imaginär zugeschriebenen ‚Plus‘- und ‚Minuszeichen‘ zum Ausdruck kommt. Diese werden interessanterweise in beiden Kontexten angewendet, obwohl es in den Regularien hierfür keinerlei formale Anhaltspunkte gibt. Schülerinnen und Schüler im schwedischen Kontext erleben diesen Bewertungsspielraum, trotz der starken Standardisierung, als ermöglichtend oder erschwerend, der ihnen entweder zu ihrem Vorteil oder zu ihrem Nachteil gereichen kann und sowohl zur Motivation als auch zur Disziplinierung eingesetzt wird. Die Ungerechtigkeit besteht für sie jedoch darin, dass sie sich hier als den Entscheidungen der Lehrkraft ‚ausgeliefert‘ erleben. Letztendlich vergibt die Lehrkraft entweder die eine oder die andere Note, was wiederum weitreichende Konsequenzen haben kann bezüglich späterer Selektionsentscheidungen. Dasselbe gilt hier für die Schülerinnen und Schüler im deutschen Kontext, wenn auch in deutlich ausgeprägterer Form, da das Fehlen von verbindlichen Bewertungskriterien aus ihrer Sicht auch das Risiko von geradezu beliebigen Bewertungsentscheidungen erhöht und damit einer vielgestaltig ungerechteren Benotung, die sich jenseits ihres ‚Könnens‘ und ‚Wissens‘ auf andere Aspekte, wie etwa der Sympathie oder Antipathie der Lehrkraft ihnen gegenüber gründen kann.

Die letzte Analysekategorie hinsichtlich der ‚Chancen, die einem gegeben werden‘ befasst sich mit den von den Schülerinnen und Schülern erlebten ‚Ex-ante Kategorisierungen‘, deren Bedingungen sowie deren Konsequenzen für ihre Zensuren und in Verlängerung hierzu, ihrer weiteren Bildungschancen. Diese Kategorie repräsentiert vor allen Dingen die analytisch rekonstruierte Erfahrung der Schülerinnen und Schüler, schon bereits vor dem Zeigen ihrer Leistung als ‚leistungsstark‘ oder ‚leistungsschwach‘ etikettiert zu werden, was aus ihrer Sicht wiederum in unterschiedlicher Weise determinierend bedeutsam ist, hinsichtlich die Zensur, die sie erreichen können. Die Schülerinnen und Schüler im schwedischen Kontext erleben beispielsweise eine innere Differenzierung, eine sogenannte Niveaupositionierung (nivågruppering) (Giota, 2013, Ramberg, 2014; Bergström & Ekström, 2016), bei der die leistungsheterogene Klasse in ‚starke‘ und ‚schwache‘ Schülerinnen und Schüler eingeteilt wird und denen Aufgaben mit unterschiedlichem Schwierigkeitsgrad angeboten werden, die mit unterschiedlichen Methoden geleht werden und unterschiedliche Möglichkeiten eröffnen ein bestimmtes Zensureniveau zu erreichen. So

Neben den ‚Chancen, die man hat‘ und den ‚Chancen, die einem gegeben werden‘, spielt für die gerechte Zensur allerdings auch eine Rolle, inwiefern Schülerinnen und Schüler die Chancen, die sich ihnen bieten, auch ergreifen. Für die ‚Chancen, die man wahrnehmen muss‘, sehen die Schülerinnen und Schüler sich selbst in der Verantwortung. ‚Anstrengung‘ hat sich in diesem Zusammenhang als zentrales und bedeutsames analytisches Konzept herausgestellt (vgl. Eklöf & Nyroos, 2013; s. z.B. Stables, Murakami, McIntosh & Martin, 2013). ‚Anstrengung‘ ist neben den ‚Fähigkeiten‘ eine wichtige Komponente für das ‚Verdienen‘ einer bestimmten Zensur. Im Gegensatz zur ‚Fähigkeit‘, welche eher als statisch konzeptionalisiert wird (s. Dweck, 2015 hinsichtlich statischer Begabungskonzeptionen), steht ‚Anstrengung‘ eher für den flexiblen und für den durch die Schülerinnen und Schüler beeinflussbaren Teil der ‚verdienten‘ Zensur, und damit für den Teil,

5.4 Verstehen als Imperativ

Zuzüglich zu den normativen und den kontextgebundenen Gerechtigkeitskonzeptionen der Schülerinnen und Schüler zeigten sich im Datenmaterial auch analytische Muster, die mit dem Verstehen der Grundlagen und der Logik der Schulischen Leistungsbeurteilung zu tun haben. Schülerinnen und Schüler scheinen hier geradezu einen ‚Verstehensdruck‘ zu
erleben (s. Segermann, 2000 zur sprachdidaktischen Begriffsherkunft). Damit Bewertung und Benotung als gerecht erlebt werden, scheint es für Schülerinnen und Schüler wichtig zu sein, zu verstehen, was beurteilt wird und in die Zensur einfließt, warum sie eine bestimmte Zensur erhalten haben und was sie tun können, um diese zu verbessern. Dieser Dreischritt erinnert stark an die bekannten Dimensionen formativer Leistungsbeurteilung (z.B. Wiliam, 2010), ist aber anstatt auf Lernfortschritte per se auf Zensurenverbesserung ausgerichtet. Des Weiteren scheint es hierbei um mehr zu gehen als lediglich um Information (vgl. Tierney, 2013). Die Schülerinnen und Schüler erwarten eher eine sehr detaillierte Konkretisierung der obengenannten Aspekte. Wenn diese detaillierten Konkretisierungen ausbleiben, kann dies zu einer als ungerecht erlebten Leistungsbeurteilung beitragen, weil es eine gewisse Willkür impliziert. In beiden Kontexten scheinen Schülerinnen und Schüler viel Energie darauf zu verwenden, die Grundlagen und Erwartungen der einzelnen Lehrkräfte zu dekodieren und sich an diese anzupassen.


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APPENDIX

A. Interview guideline

(English translation of the interview guidelines used in this study)

Opening questions
Can you tell me your name, how old you are and why you wanted to participate in the interview?
How is it going in school?
What are your plans after the exams\(^{321}\)?

Introductory questions
Well, can you explain to me, how assessment works? How it is assessed?
Is it always like this or is there another way, too?

Questions about assessment – transition questions
What are the good and what are the bad things with grades?
How would it be if there would be no grades at all?
In general, why do we have grades?
When shall one get a good grade?
When shall one get a poor grade?
How do teachers know what grade to assign?
What do you have to do in order to get a certain grade?
How do you know how good you are?

\(^{321}\) In the Swedish guideline, pupils were asked about their plans after finishing comprehensive school.
If you would be a teacher, how would you assign grades?
Do you have a teacher, who is really good at grading? In which way?

Justice questions – key questions
Can you tell me about a situation in which you were unjustly graded?
What could be the reason why the teacher assigned you a grade that you found unjust?
What do you do if you receive an unjust grade?

Ending questions
Do you have some good advices on how assessment could be improved?
Could you say everything that is important to you? Is there something else you want to say or that was not asked?
B. Handout for pupils and legal guardians

(English translation of the original handouts that were used in this study)

B1. Letter

Hello,

With this letter you will also receive some information about the research project that we talked about when we met in school today.

My name is Bettina Vogt and I work at the Linnaeus University in Sweden. My research project is about what pupils think about just assessment in school. For this purpose, I talk to pupils in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany and to pupils in Sweden.

I met with you today, because I wanted to ask if you want to participate in a group interview regarding just assessment in school. I am interested in knowing more about what you think in regard to this issue.

Your participation is of course, voluntary. Whenever you want to, you can leave the interview without any need for explanation. But if you participate, it is important that you do not retell what other pupils have said during the interview or who else participated. The interview will be taped and everything said will be written down afterwards. Already when writing down the interview, your data will be anonymised. That means that nobody will know that it is you who participated and who you are. Please see the information letter for more details. In case that you or your legal guardians have any questions, you are warmly welcome to contact me (you will find my contact details below).

In case you want to participate in the group interview, I would appreciate if you could contact me no later than xxxxx, either via email at Bettina.vogt@lnu.se, via telephone xxxxxxxxx or with a short message xxxxxxxx. Please remember to write your first name.

Best regard,
Bettina Vogt
B2. Information

Information about the research project

„Just assessment in school – pupils’ conceptions in Sweden and Germany”

About the project
Grades and assessment are of great importance for pupils because of their importance in their future life chances. For example, grades are important when one shall be promoted to the next year or for the choice of school type. Grades are also important with regard to if one can get the place for vocational training or can get access to the university program that one is interested in. Since assessment is so important for pupils it is important that grades are just.

But what is a just grade for pupils? Which ideas and experiences do pupils have? We still know too little about what pupils think about this issue. These questions are studied in this research project.

What is examined?
This research project examines the justice conceptions of pupils regarding assessment. This is examined with pupils in two countries: Germany (NRW) and Sweden. The research project will result in a so-called doctoral thesis and will be concluded in 2017.

This research project collaborates with a bigger project. In this bigger research project it will be also examined, what teachers and school inspectors think about just assessment. In this research project, the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, collaborates with the Linnaeus University in Sweden (for more information, please see: https://www.erziehungswissenschaften.hu-berlin.de/iew/forschung/unterschiedliche-welten-der-meritokratie)

How is examined?
In order to examine pupils’ justice conceptions, group interviews with pupils in all school-types are conducted\(^{322}\), who attend the ninth or the tenth\(^ {323}\) year respectively in the region xxx.

The school helps to get in contact with pupils in order to present the project. Pupils, who wish to participate, get in contact with us via Email, SMS or telephone.

\(^{322}\) That part was not named in the Swedish handout.
\(^{323}\) In the Swedish handout, just the ninth school year was named.
The interviews are conducted in a solitary room. The group interviews are recorded and written down verbatim for analysis purposes. Already when writing down the interviews, the data is anonymised. Pupils can leave the interview at any point and without explanation. In case pupils decide to participate, it is important that pupils do not retell what other pupils have said or who participated in the interview.

The group interviews will last about one hour and consist of three up to six participants. During the interview, pupils will talk with each other and with the interviewer about their thoughts and experiences. There are no „wrong“ answers, but only valuable contributions that will help us to understand more about what pupils think regarding just assessment.

Who is responsible?

Bettina Vogt, Ph.D. student, Linnaeus University, Sweden, Department of Pedagogy, Email: xxxx, Phone: xxx, Mobile: xxxx, Homepage: xxxx

Main supervisor: Professor Daniel Sundberg, Linnaeus University, Sweden, Department of Pedagogy, Email: xxxx, Phone: xxxx

Second supervisor: Professor Florian Waldow, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany, Centre for International and Comparative Education, Email: xxxx, Phone: xxxx
C. Consent form

(English translation of the original consent forms that were used)

1. Contact details

First name: ________________________________________________
Email: ________________________________________________
Telephone: ________________________________________

2. Background information

Gender:     male O     female O     other O
Both of my parents or myself are born abroad:     yes O     no O
Both of my parents have the following education background:
O  a school diploma
O  a vocational training diploma
O  a university diploma
My grades in school are:
O  good        O  average         O  not so good

3. Consent

I want to participate in the study. I understand what it means to participate and what the study is about. I also understand that

- my participation is voluntary and that I can leave the interview whenever I want to, and without the need to give an explanation.
- all my personal data are anonymised.
- that I may not retell what other participants have said and who participated in the interview.

_____________________________  ______________________________
Date            Signature
D. Table over the participants

The table below shows the background information regarding the participants in the interviews. This includes the interview code, pseudonyms, gender (male-M, female-F, other-O), migration background (yes-Y, no-N; in terms of if the pupil or both parents are born abroad), parents highest education (no vocational training-NVT, vocational training-VT, academic studies-AS), pupils’ perceived level of school performance (low-average-good).

Table 9. Overview of participants in the German interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Migration background</th>
<th>Parents’ highest education</th>
<th>Perceived level of school performance</th>
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<td>NVT</td>
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</table>
E.

Transcription rules

• The software F4 is used for the transcription of the interviews.
• Time-markers are included when there is a change of speakers.
• Each transcript contains the interview code, the date of the interview, the school type (in the German interviews), as well as participants’ pseudonyms. The pseudonyms are chosen with respect to maintain the character of the participants’ names. That means that modern names are replaced by modern names, Swedish names by Swedish names, Arabic names by Arabic names etc.
• Within the transcript, the interviewer is abbreviated with “I”. In case of two interviewers, Interviewer 1 (Bettina Vogt) is abbreviated with “I1”, Interviewer 2 (Christian Brüggemann) is abbreviated “I2”.
• The interviews are transcribed verbatim, which means that everything is transcribed word-for-word as recorded. That also includes pauses or fillers like “uhm”.
• The language is smoothed out in cases of dialect or broad colloquial expressions, i.e. words like “isses” or “ham wer” are written down as “ist es” and “haben wir”.
• In case that speakers’ utterances overlap, all overlapping parts are written down and marked with // when the overlap begins and when it ends.
• All mentioned names of persons, cities etc. are anonymised by maintaining the first letter and by adding a description if necessary. “Mrs Müller”, being the English teacher for example is written down as Mrs. M. English teacher. In case pupils use nicknames, anonymised equivalents are written down.

Within the transcriptions, the following indicators are used:

Table 11. Rules of interview transcription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Speakers’ utterances are</td>
<td>Josefin: Yes, and then //I also found that he// could have said that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overlapping</td>
<td>Maria: //Because he’s always// xxxxx //</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses</td>
<td>I1: And well, what I also wanted to=to=to ask you was (..) wait, I have to (5)/. Alright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 sec: (.) 2 sec: (..) 3 sec: (…) 4 and more sec: (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Overview of participants in the Swedish interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Migration background</th>
<th>Parents’ highest education</th>
<th>Perceived level of school performance</th>
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<td>SWE01</td>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jonas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Josefin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tobby</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE06</td>
<td>Algot</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evelina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Transcription rules

- The software F4 is used for the transcription of the interviews.
- Time-markers are included when there is a change of speakers.
- Each transcript contains the interview code, the date of the interview, the school type (in the German interviews), as well as participants’ pseudonyms. The pseudonyms are chosen with respect to maintain the character of the participants’ names. That means that modern names are replaced by modern names, Swedish names by Swedish names, Arabic names by Arabic names etc.
- Within the transcript, the interviewer is abbreviated with “I”. In case of two interviewers, Interviewer 1 (Bettina Vogt) is abbreviated with “I1”, Interviewer 2 (Christian Brüggemann) is abbreviated “I2”.
- The interviews are transcribed verbatim, which means that everything is transcribed word-for-word as recorded. That also includes pauses or fillers like “uhm”.
- The language is smoothed out in cases of dialect or broad colloquial expressions, i.e. words like “isses” or “ham wer” are written down as “ist es” and “haben wir”
- In case that speakers’ utterances overlap, all overlapping parts are written down and marked with // when the overlap begins and when it ends.
- All mentioned names of persons, cities etc. are anonymised by maintaining the first letter and by adding a description if necessary. “Mrs Müller”, being the English teacher for example is written down as Mrs. M. English teacher. In case pupils use nicknames, anonymised equivalents are written down.

Within the transcriptions, the following indicators are used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Within transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speakers’ utterances are overlapping</td>
<td>Josefin: Yes, and then //I also found that he// could have said that…</td>
<td>// xxxxx //</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maria: //Because he’s always//</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses</td>
<td>I1: And well, what I also wanted to=to=to ask you was (..) wait, I have to (5). Alright.</td>
<td>1 sec: (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 sec: (..)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 sec: (...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 and more sec: (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Rules of interview transcription.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis of words</th>
<th>Maja: Well, we tried REALLY hard …</th>
<th>The emphasised word or part of the word is written with capital letters.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certain high/low volume when a word is emphasised</td>
<td>Sarah: She drives me CRAZY [loud] Michi: I don’t know what I have done wrong [quiet]</td>
<td>Emphasised word in capital letters and notes [loud] or [quiet]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background noise or important explanations</td>
<td>Olaf: Well, one simply cannot/ [a bottle of water was dropped] (13) Well, what do I want to say?</td>
<td>[description]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions or brakes of thoughts or sentences</td>
<td>Sandro: Where shall he mo/. Well that’s so/. I don’t know.</td>
<td>The interrupted thought or word is marked with /.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with understanding what is said.</td>
<td>Katja: I thought as well that the assessment needs to be [incompr. Part of the oral grade?]</td>
<td>Marked with [incompr.], can be complemented with what is believed to be said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumping together words</td>
<td>Sandrine: I=i=i never thought of=of that.</td>
<td>The words that are lumped together are linked by an =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching of words</td>
<td>Hans: Because:s:s:se</td>
<td>The stretched part of the word is marked with :</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## F. Glossary

### Table 12. Key concepts in Swedish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Explanatory comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedömning (Kunskapsbedömning)</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Etymologically, <em>bedömning</em> implies to make a judgement. <em>Kunskapsbedömning</em> implies a judgement of an individual’s knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betyg</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Expressed in letters A-F, allocated at the end of a term or course (<em>gymnasieskola</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralprov</td>
<td>National tests</td>
<td>Implemented during the 1960s in <em>gymnasieskola</em> and <em>fackskola</em>, when Sweden had a norm-related grading system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Förskoleklass</td>
<td>Pre-school class</td>
<td>Transition year between pre-school and year 1 at primary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri skolval</td>
<td>Free school choice</td>
<td>Since the 1990s, pupils and their parents can freely choose, which school they want to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grundläggande högskolebehörighet</td>
<td>Basic higher education qualification certificate</td>
<td>Basic certificate necessary for access to higher education sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grundskola</td>
<td>Comprehensive School</td>
<td>Primary and lower secondary level school, open to all pupils between year 1 – 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymansieexamen</td>
<td>Upper secondary certificate</td>
<td>Certificate allocated after successfully completing the upper secondary level. Either giving access to higher education or certifying the successful completion of a vocational training programme at <em>gymnasieskola</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnasieskola</td>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>Attended by most pupils after <em>grundskola</em>. Contains tracks, which prepare for higher education, vocational training and individual tracks for pupils, who not allowed yet to attend a national program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuell utvecklingsplan (IUP)</td>
<td>Individual development plan</td>
<td>Written documentation of pupils’ educational development, also used as basis for developmental talks with legal guardians and pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduktions-program</td>
<td>Introductory program</td>
<td>At upper secondary level, for pupils, who are not allowed yet to attend a national program at <em>gymnasieskola</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 13. Key concepts in German.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamburger Abkommen</td>
<td>The ‘Hamburg-treaty’</td>
<td>Political treaty from 1964, in which the federal ministers of education decided upon a standardised national grading scale ranging from 1-6 as well as on national standardised school-leaving certificates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abitur</td>
<td>Higher education certificate</td>
<td>Mandatory educational certificate for entering the higher education sector, only accessible for pupils who successfully attended and completed the ‘Gymnasiale Oberstufe’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abschlusszeugnis</td>
<td>School-leaving certificate</td>
<td>Certifies the successful completion of a particular educational track and according to this, it provides access to different further education opportunities within the school system or vocational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jämlikhet</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Can include equality of opportunity and equality of outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunskapskrav</td>
<td>Knowledge requirements</td>
<td>Grading criteria, which describe for each subject or course, for different years and for each grade level which knowledge pupils need to show in order to get a certain grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursplaner (universitet)</td>
<td>Course plans</td>
<td>Programs are organised in standardised courses, including purpose, aim, forms of examination and obligatory literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Läroplan</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>National curriculum, which includes the overall educational aims and values as well as the syllabuses for each subject that include purpose, content and assessment criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likvärdighet</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
<td>Comparatively equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritvärde</td>
<td>Merit value</td>
<td>A certain amount of points ascribed to each grade. Used for ranking and monitoring purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationell program</td>
<td>National program</td>
<td>Educational track at upper secondary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationella prov</td>
<td>National tests</td>
<td>National assessments used for control, governance and support of teachers’ assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nivågruppering</td>
<td>Level grouping.</td>
<td>Internal, performance-based differentiation of pupils in the comprehensive school setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regeringens propositioner</td>
<td>Governmental propositions</td>
<td>A political suggestion of the government that the parliament has to decide upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativ betygssystem</td>
<td>Norm-related grading system.</td>
<td>Grading system used between the 1960s until the 1990s, according to which grades were allocated with regard to a normal distribution curve and in relation to pupils’ results on a national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Särskilt stöd</td>
<td>Special support</td>
<td>Individualised support and adjustments for helping pupils to reach the national educational aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skolinspektionen</td>
<td>School inspection</td>
<td>Official body, established in 2008 as a part of the Ministry of Education that controls schools’ quality, pupils’ rights and that the schools follow the laws and official regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skollagen</td>
<td>School Act</td>
<td>Law that defines the legal basis of school in Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skolverket</td>
<td>National Agency of Education</td>
<td>Central administrative official body, which is responsible for the public school system in Sweden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13. Key concepts in German.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English translation</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bildungsstandards</td>
<td>Educational standards</td>
<td>Educational standards on a national level, successively implemented for some subjects since the 2000s. Concretised on a federal state level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundesland</td>
<td>Federal state</td>
<td>Germany consists of 16 federal states, which to a great extent also decide independently upon educational matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesamtschule</td>
<td>Comprehensive school</td>
<td>Certain comprehensive school type in Germany, implemented during the 1970s, exists parallely to the differentiated school types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grundschule</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Primary school level, from year 1 to year 4 (or to year 6 in some federal states).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnasium</td>
<td>School type preparing for higher education.</td>
<td>Includes lower and upper secondary level. Prepares for the Abitur in year 12 or 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauptschulabschluss (Qualifizierter Hauptschulabschluss)</td>
<td>Certificate allocated at Hauptschule.</td>
<td>Certificate that is allocated after year 9 and the successful completion of the final examinations at Hauptschule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauptschule</td>
<td>Lower secondary level school type</td>
<td>Preparing for in-firm training in less qualified working areas, often attended by pupils from low-income families and/or migration background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahreszeugnis</td>
<td>Certificate allocated at the end of the school year.</td>
<td>Certificate that contains grades (or grading points in the Oberstufe) for each subject. It decides upon if pupils are promoted to the next school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klassenarbeit</td>
<td>Written tests</td>
<td>Individualised written tests prepared and graded by teachers, formal frames are highly standardised in terms of amount, timely frames and their weightening value factor in relation to the calculation of the final grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulturhoheit</td>
<td>Cultural sovereignty</td>
<td>Right of the federal states to decide themselves about matters of culture and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)</td>
<td>Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder</td>
<td>The national conference of the federal ministers of education that decides about national matters with regard to education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ländervergleichsstudien</td>
<td>National standardised tests</td>
<td>Used for monitoring purposes regarding the Bildungsstandards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung</td>
<td>Ministry for school and further education of the federal state of</td>
<td>Federal ministry responsible for educational matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MSW, NRW)</td>
<td>North Rhine-Westphalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mittlerer Schulabschluss</td>
<td>School-leaving certificate allocated after Year 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note/Zensur</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberstufe</td>
<td>Upper secondary level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realschule</td>
<td>School type on lower secondary level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regelstandards</td>
<td>Norm standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schulgesetz</td>
<td>School law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekundarschule</td>
<td>School type on lower secondary level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonstige Leistungen</td>
<td>Other performances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Überzeugung</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergleichsarbeiten (VERA)</td>
<td>Standardised tests on federal state level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verordnung über die Ausbildung und die Abschlussprüfungen in der Sekundarstufe I, APO-SI</td>
<td>Official directive regarding education and certification on lower secondary level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vornote</td>
<td>Pre-grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zentrale Abschlussprüfungen</td>
<td>Central examinations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certificate preparing for vocational in-firm training or, in case of good grades, for the transition to the ‘Gymnasiale Oberstufe’. It is allocated after Year 10.

Consisting of numbers 1-6, which are related to grade descriptors. Usually also allocated for single tests.

Preparing for the Abitur. School type related: only at Gymnasium and Gesamtschule

Preparing for vocational in-firm training in more qualified working areas or, in case of good grades, for transition to Oberstufe.

Educational standards formulated with regard to what the average pupil is supposed to have learned at a certain point of time.

Federal law regulating school matters

Cooperates with an upper secondary level school in order to prepare pupils for a transition to Oberstufe.

Besides ‘written tests’, the ‘other performance’ part is included in assessment and grade allocation. Includes oral participation, but also e.g. effort, cooperative abilities or orderliness.

Concept used for belief, conception or perception.

Implemented in 2007, used for monitoring purposes with regard to the national Bildungsstandards.

Includes also rules for assessment and grade allocation.

Grade based on pupils’ performance during the school year, which counts 50% of pupils’ final grade on the school-leaving certificate.

Central examinations consisting of written and oral examinations at the end of lower secondary education, it counts 50% of pupils’ final grade on the school-leaving certificate.
G. Calculation table for calculating the final grade in NRW

Zentrale Prüfungen am Ende der Klasse 10
Zentrale Prüfungen am Ende des 4. Semesters der Abendrealschule

Ermittlung der Abschlussnote bei der Durchführung einer mündlichen Prüfung (APO § 15 Abs. 2; APO-WbK § 6a Abs. 3)

Gewichtung: Die Vornote zählt 5-fach, die Prüfungsnote zählt 3-fach und die Note der mündlichen Prüfung zählt 2-fach.

Welchen Vornote und Prüfungsnote um 2 Notenstufen voneinander ab, dann besteht die Möglichkeit einer freiwilligen mündlichen Prüfung: Kennzeichnung durch grau unterlegte Felder.

In den Tabellen ist jeweils die Abschlussnote für alle möglichen Varianten von Vornote, Prüfungsnote und Note der mündlichen Prüfung aufgelistet.

1. Die Prüfungsnote ist besser als die Vornote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vornote</th>
<th>Prüfungsnote</th>
<th>Note mündliche Prüfung</th>
<th>Abschlussnote</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<th>Note mündliche Prüfung</th>
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<th>Vornote</th>
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<th>Note mündliche Prüfung</th>
<th>Abschlussnote</th>
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Figure 9. Original calculation table for calculating the final grade\(^{324}\).

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H. Overview of the NAE’s public databases

Figure 10. Original overview of the publicly available databases provided by the NAE.\(^2\)

\(^2\) The headline reads: “Find the information that suits you”. Top down, the five databases include a) “Swedish results in international comparisons”, b) “Sweden’s official statistics on national level”, c) “Compare your municipality over time” (including “grades in comprehensive, upper secondary and adult education”), d) “Find statistics about your school” (including “grades and results on national tests as well as the relation between results on national tests and school leaving certificate in comprehensive and upper secondary school”), e) “For pupils and parents” (“Search, compare and get support for school choice. Here, we present different indicators for school’s quality and results”, all translations B.V.). Source: https://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering [2017-08-16].
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