Robert Hamm

Negotiating Legitimacy

Reflection as a Social Act

Reflection Processes
of
Primary School Teachers
on
Rituals and Ritualisations

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Declaration

I certify that the material which I submit for assessment leading to the award of PhD
is entirely my own work and has not been taken from others,
save the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of the study.

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Acronyms

The use of acronyms in a text can be helpful, it can however also interfere with the readability of a text and "complicate language, muddying it instead of making it clearer." (Thilmany 2003)

I tried to use acronyms in the text only to an extent that helps the reader to keep the flow of reading. These are acronyms that you will find used at times in the text without further explanation:

BFAS	Bundesverband Freier Alternativ-Schulen (National Federation of Free Alternative Schools, Germany)
DES	Department of Education and Skills
FS	Refers to the source of information coming from a Free Alternative School
IDEN	International Democratic Education Network
IE	Refers to the source of information coming from an Irish Primary School
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
RS	Refers to the source of information coming from a German Mainstream School (the abbreviation is a short version for 'Regelschule', the: 'regular school', a term that is used in common parlance in Germany

Any other acronym used in the text will always be explained at the spot.

Preamble

Introduction

This thesis presents the findings of a study on the reflection processes on rituals/ritualisations in German and Irish primary schools. The main idea that comes out of this research is that the concepts of reflection as used currently in educational science do not do justice to the essentially social character of reflection processes.

The text presented here holds new insights even for readers with a great knowledge in the field of institutional education. In it aspects are brought together that have not yet been considered in this way in educational science, both in Ireland and internationally. The focus of attention lies on reflection processes of teachers in which they engage with such practices in schools that are understood to be rituals or ritualisations. The theorems put forward in the thesis are grounded in an extensive literature review, but first and foremost in the analysis of empirical material gathered in the professional field.

In an Irish context the perspective of looking at educational practice in terms of ritual is a novelty. No contribution has been made so far to the relevant debates from within Irish educational science. My presentation at the annual conference of ESAI in Cork 2012 (Hamm 2012a) was a first step to raise awareness of the potential of ritual analysis. This thesis then has to be seen as another crucial step for Irish educational science in that it provides an overview of the range of possible approaches for ritual analysis to be used in investigating the field of professional education.

The complex of rituals in school provides the platform to enter into the topic. Internationally school practice has been discussed in terms of ritual by a number of authors in the past. There is a comprehensive overview presented in the thesis about the respective contributions, thus allowing the reader to gain a substantial understanding of the discussions of rituals in school in educational science to date. I open an avenue for widening the scope of these discussions by transferring the suggestion of Catherine Bell to consider ritual practice in terms of ritualisation into the realm of institutional education.

As for reflective practice in the field of education there is in fact a large amount of literature available. A lot of this material is yet rather repetitive and in a specific way it is actually detached from the concrete experience of professional educators. The character of reflection as a social act is not adequately addressed in the popular concepts of reflection as will be shown in an overview on such concepts.

By systematically taking into account in my thesis the character of reflection as a social act I am going to demonstrate how this leads to the identification of professional reflection processes of teachers as negotiations of defining, articulating and shaping reality. Such a view comprises a decisive shift. It significantly widens the knowledge base in relation to the analysis of reflective practices that is available in scholarship and in applied science of education alike. I am employing this innovative concept extensively in the sections dealing with the concrete results of the research on which my thesis is based.

This research was conducted as a comparative study of three different school types: Irish national schools, German mainstream schools and German free alternative schools. The rationale for chosing those three school types as well as the choice of methods is explained in the text below.

As a result of the research I found that national discourses have an impact on the understanding and use of the term ritual. For the three school types I could identify different ritual cultures, representing rather coherent normative systems in the case of Irish primary schools and free alternative schools, but more contradictory norms, value systems and beliefs in the case of German mainstream schools.

I found that teachers in free alternative schools spend significantly more time in formal reflection settings than their colleagues in the other school types. I relate this scenario to the background of varying decision making structures, and varying educational concepts, in the three school types.

In their professional context, teachers engage in reflection processes almost exclusively amongst themselves. In just one single strand of free alternative schools teachers were found to also engage with children in these processes.

Critical reflection on rituals in school, which is understood as externalising and investigating power relations and uncovering hegemonic assumptions, is found to be largely absent from the current practice of teachers, this despite the connection of rituals to social order, norms and value systems. By stringently applying the idea of reflection as a social act this absence is contextualised. Teachers' engagement, or non-engagement as the case may be, in critical reflection is explained by the anchoring of reflection processes in the material reality of institutional practice in which a strategy of 'making allies' seems indispensible.

The documentation of a memory-work seminar conducted as part of this study shows that memory-work can be used to effectively arrive at critical reflection on rituals in school. Memory-work is a method of collective inquiry that was developed by feminist researchers in the 1980's. In an Irish context it has not featured yet. I have highlighted the scope of memory-work as a research method in my presentation at the conference on “New Agendas in Social Movement Studies” in Maynooth in 2011. The report on the processes within two memory-work groups which is included in this thesis extends this contribution by supplying expansive coverage of the application of the method in a group reflecting on rituals in school.

The critical dialogue that resulted from the various presentations of parts of my work at the conferences in Maynooth, Cork, but also in Berlin (Hamm 2011c) and Freiburg (Hamm 2012b) was an instrumental element in my research process. Extending my search for contributions on the topics beyond the published material proved similarly helpful. Discussions with authors of literature on ritual analysis of school (Franz Wellendorf, Hauke Pieper), and with Frigga Haug, Frauke Schwarting, Dirk Mescher on the complex of memory work added to the overall quality of my thesis.

What is provided here are new and challenging perspectives and arguments for educational science and practice. As a result the proposals put forward in this thesis pave a way out of a certain speechlessness in relation to the complex of professional reflection processes of teachers.

Before the main body of my thesis, I am going to sketch the context from which the topic was originally derived. An overview on the content of the chapters will provide a map to enable the reader to access the thesis in an assured manner.

Trigger, Framework, Research Questions

My initial interest in rituals in education was triggered more than twenty years ago by the "line of schoolchildren walking in pairs" (ref. Oxford English dictionary) called the crocodile. When I was working as an educator in Germany I was often in the position whereby colleagues of mine would request from children that they form a line of pairs, that they come into line, that they stay in line. Looking at this practice I found that the reasons given by these colleagues for lining up the children often did not carry a lot of substance. The rationale given was usually that it was done for safety reasons. And yet, the arguments often made little sense.

"The same children who are walking at 2.30 from Circular Road, through Queens Avenue to Edward Street, in a line of pairs, supervised to 'prevent damage of persons or goods' – are walking at 3.15 from Edward Street through Queens Avenue to Circular Road, unsupervised and not in a line of pairs, on their way home now that school is over – and this: every day(!) without leaving a trace of damage and chaos behind them … " (Hamm 1999, 30)

At some stage I decided to take the phenomenon of lining up in pairs as a topic for a detailed analysis. The result of this study was published in Germany under the title "Tanz nicht aus der Reihe" in 1999. By using the toolbox of Michel Foucault together with material from a psychoanalytic background it was possible to explain the dynamics within educational institutional contexts that lead to the implementation of the practice of lining children up. In my analysis I found that this activity is best understood if one looks at it as a ritualised activity. As such it is essentially linked to the generation, up-keeping, challenging, reforming, hence the negotiation of power relations.

However it is not the only ritualised activity that happens in educational institutions. In fact when looking at the overall practice in these places it becomes obvious that an incredible amount of ritualised activities are observable. I also found that rituals in educational institutions can be seen as indicators for the current state of affairs in a historical development within the field of pedagogy. This offers a way to also understand the peculiar co-existence of rather contradictory rituals in educational institutions.

For years I tried to discuss these issues with colleagues in my own workplace and also from other institutions. This proved to be difficult. My concrete experience was also mirrored by various authors who wrote about rituals in education and found that reflecting on rituals is a problem area. (e.g. Wellendorf 1979, Kapferer 1981, Piper 1997) In my study about the lining up of children I had touched on this area only marginally.

The particular problem of reflection on rituals stayed with me after leaving Germany in 2000. Being involved with schools in Ireland, via sports promotion, as a volunteer working with children in a local school, and on management level of a primary school, I had the opportunity to observe the practices over ten years. Similar to Germany, I found that in Irish schools there were numerous ritualised activities, sometimes smaller and sometimes bigger in scale. And similar also to Germany I found that it was difficult to discuss these activities with teachers.

It is based on this background that the plan developed which consequently led to this study about reflection processes of primary school teachers on rituals/ritualisations. As will be further explained below, reflection is seen as a substantial part of teacher practice. However reflection processes of teachers on rituals/ritualisations have not yet been specifically considered in the relevant field.

In planning my research project I formulated an overarching framework in which the concrete research design was to be developed. At the core of this framework was the aim to gain insight into the current 'state of affairs' in relation to professional reflection processes of primary school teachers on rituals/ ritualisations in schools. I aimed at establishing an inventory of current practice and at detecting potential problem areas whereby specific attention was given to critical reflection. The focus on critical reflection was based on an assumption that there may be a quality inherent to rituals that would make them difficult to access in such reflection processes. The close connection of rituals to the complex of power relations was seen as potentially playing a role here. Eventually I was also open to the possibility of arriving at a point where it would make sense to develop suggestions for an increased inclusion of the complex of rituals/ritualisations in processes of critical reflection on educational practice.

Having first hand experience of different educational systems and, within German framework, also of varying pedagogical approaches, I was aware that different environments can provide for different practices. Therefore it seemed reasonable to think about a comparative element between different school types and educational styles from the very beginning. Schools are built on concepts of childhood, adulthood that are paradigmatic for their practice. Schools are materializing (and at the same time generating) pedagogic and professional discourses. Their practice is always linked to particular aspects of these discourses at a given time/space constellation. Pedagogic discourse is not monolithic, but rather diverse tendencies exist within it. This accounts for a spectrum of diverse concepts on which schools are built.

My research emerged in an Irish context. Therefore it was an obvious choice to consider Irish schools as a first point of reference. Being involved in primary education myself I decided to concentrate on the primary sector. In Ireland all primary schools operate on the basis of the 'rules of national schools' and all schools follow the national curriculum. The school day in all schools is structured according to the allocation of times for the different strands (subjects) as derived from the national curriculum. Attendance in the lessons is compulsory for the children. Children have normally no say in deciding who is going to teach them.

As a counterpoint to the Irish primary schools then it was of particular interest to look at schools that are based on principles of self-regulation. In schools were children "decide individually how, when, what, where and with whom they learn" (IDEN 2005) the pattern of traditional power relations that are characteristic for mainstream schools are supposed to be shifted. It would be only logical to assume that this will have an effect on the way in which rituals/ritualisations are part of the practice in these schools and consequently also on the reflection processes of the adults concerning rituals/ritualisations.

Best known examples of such schools are probably Summerhill School in England and Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts. According to the International Democratic Education Network (IDEN) there are over 200 schools that offer an education based on principles of equal participation of children and adults and on the principle of self-regulation. While no such schools exist in Ireland in a European context the country with the biggest number of such schools is Germany. At present there are 87 schools organised in a national federation (BFAS). These schools refer to themselves sometimes as "free schools" but more often as "free alternative schools". I will stick to the latter term in my text. When designing my research project I decided to use these schools as one field of gathering information. It offered the requested counterpoint to the Irish primary schools. A detailed description of the specific characteristics of these schools will be included in chapter three.

However looking at Irish mainstream schools and German free alternative schools as two fields for a comparative study seemed not yet fully satisfactory. While there are certainly differences in the practice in these two school types that could be clearly traced back to differing pedagogical concepts it was also feasible to assume that there might be differences that are better explained by reference to the cultural differences between Germany and Ireland. Therefore it made sense to also include German mainstream schools in the research. They could be assumed to share with the free alternative schools the cultural background while at the same time sharing with the Irish schools essential elements of organising their pedagogy: compulsory attendance, set time-tabling, teacher's control over with whom, when, where, when, what the children do.

Aiming at an inventory of current practice in professional reflection processes and having identified the field for the research to be carried out I still needed an anchor point for the concrete research design. Thus the overall aim of the study was worked into a catalogue of research questions which functioned as a constant point of reference throughout the research process. These questions were:

1. Which are the currently used/preferred reflection settings for teachers in primary schools?
2. Are rituals reflected upon by teachers?
If yes: 3. which rituals are reflected upon?
4. … in which settings?
5. Can the process of reflection be described?
6. Can typical patterns be identified in the professional reflection processes of teachers in primary schools concerning rituals/ritualisations?
7. If typical patterns can be identified, how do such patterns relate to the settings in which the reflection takes place?
8. If such patterns are identifiable, are they similar for distinct backgrounds, or are there significant differences?
9. If there are significant differences, how can they be explained?
But also: if there are no significant differences, how is this to be explained given the diverse background and potentially different settings of reflection?
10. Does critical reflection on rituals take place?
11. Are there obstacles in relation to critical reflection on rituals/ritualisations taking place in professional reflection processes of primary school teachers?
12. If there are obstacles in relation to critical reflection on rituals/ritualisations:
a) how are these obstacles related to the intrinsic characteristics of rituals/ritualisations?
b) how are these obstacles related to the settings in which the reflection processes take place?
c) are they similar in different backgrounds/or not?
d) and how can this be explained?

Mirrored in these questions are those areas that were derived as a potential field of investigation from my earlier study on the lining up in pairs. In their concrete formulation they were directly related to the aims of the research as stated above.

In the course of the research it transpired that the concepts of reflection which I initially expected to be a pretty straight forward element of the study were substantially limited. The main factor missing in them was found to be the essentially social character of professional reflection processes. Consequently I developed a model to approach the material of my research with an enhanced concept of reflection. There is extensive coverage in the thesis given to the application of this conceptual view.

Reading the thesis – mapping access to the chapters

This thesis requires the reader to deal with relatively complex matter. To allow for easier access to the chapters I wish to briefly map out their content, structure and successive order. In case a reader feels it necessary at some stage to get reassurance of the pathway that she or he is following it is possible to come back to the passage here and briefly check on the trajectory of the text.

Chapter one provides a comprehensive review of literature on rituals in schools from both the English and the German speaking world. This includes conceptual thoughts on rituals in school, typologies and classification. A number of aspects of rituals that are highlighted in the literature are attended to and the German debate on rituals in schools is specifically addressed. For anyone who approaches this topic for the first time it is very likely that the impression of a rather dispersed discourse comes up. This is unavoidable and in fact it is one of the characteristics of the debate about rituals as such. In the chapter I am pointing towards the difficulties in ritual studies to come to a universal agreement about the use of terminology, the definitions and typologies applied. This is also reflected in contributions on rituals in educational science. Hence when reading the chapter it should be kept in mind that the lack of coherence in the discourse will always shine through in the review also.

For ritual studies Catherine Bell has made the suggestion to shift the attention from a phenomenon called ritual to lived practice in terms of ritualisation. A detailed recount of her proposal will be presented. It is deliberately placed at the end of chapter one because it provides an avenue out of an impasse that is prevalent in the attempts to analyse practice as ritual. Her suggestion functions as an important point of reference in my own considerations and it will be picked up at various points in the thesis later again.

Concepts of reflection are introduced in chapter two. Processual scale, functional and orientational character are identified as existing models for a classification of reflection processes. I also introduce the concept of critical reflection as put forward by Stephen Brookfield in this chapter. His approach to critical reflection will be used as a template to develop my own proposal towards the end of the thesis. In chapter two the different models are presented for their characteristics. In discussing these models the call for an enhanced understanding is formulated in which the essentially social character of professional reflection processes is included. This is in anticipation of the findings of my research project. It is not yet fully developed in this chapter simply because the underpinning of the framework of reflection as a social act is to be derived from the actual research results and they can be presented only further below in the text.

The third chapter provides the necessary background information on the three school types that form the field of the empirical research on which the thesis is based: Irish primary schoools, German mainstream schools, and free alternative schools. There is a specific focus in this chapter on describing the free alternative schools and their distinguishing pedagogical approach.

In a way the first three chapters stand beside each other and it is possible that the reader would like to know at this stage already how the different strands are interwoven. Such a desire is quite understandable. I have however decided to stringently develop my arguments in the thesis in a step by step description of the research results. Hence for the reader it may be helpful when reaching this point to simply let the three strands rest calmly in the background and be assured that they will successively be brought into play in the following chapters.

The choices made in designing the research project and the rationale that guided the choices are explained in chapter four. In the eventual research design I applied a mix of methods catering for the various aspects derived from the research questions. In this chapter I describe the application of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as employed in the study. The method of memory-work is introduced in the chapter but not yet explained in-depth. Due to the fact that memory-work as a method is largely unknow in Irish educational science the methodological remarks needed to be rather detailed. For reasons of coherence I decided to include them in chapter eight which is solely devoted to the report of a practical application of the method. By doing so the reader is enabled to connect closely the methodological considerations with the documentation of its application which accounts for a higher transparency than splitting the two elements. Obviously this is not necessary in relation to the more traditional methods. Questionnaires and interviews are in a way standard procedures within social science. Hence the methodology in this regard can be suitably addressed in chapter four already.

At this stage in the text with the three strands (ritual/ritualisation, reflection, field of study) presented and the methodology explained the way is paved for attending to the results of the actual research.

The first element picked up in chapter five concerns the reflection settings as currently used by teachers in the three school types. For this purpose the results of a questionnaire that I used on this topic are referred to. The quantitative dimension derived thereof is however transcended also by considering information gathered in the interviews. In light of this the currently used reflection settings in the three school types are compared with each other. It becomes obvious that differences in duration and frequency of reflection for teachers are essentially linked to the various institutional contexts. The presentation and interpretation of the data in this chapter is already an original contribution to widening the knowledge base in the field of educational studies. In the context of my research project it is yet only one part of a larger picture.

Chapter six brings up the results of the interview series. In this chapter a number of aspects are covered. National differences are depicted of teachers' understanding of rituals. The differing use of the term is explained with the reference to the “ready meanings … (that) … lie around” (Haug 1999, p. 11) and constitute a basis for the personal theories of ritual as held by teachers in Germany and Ireland respectively. Ritual cultures in the three school types are described. Rather coherent normative systems are found to be ritually enacted and regenerated in free alternative schools and Irish primary schools while German mainstream schools are seen to be characterised by more contradictory norms and value systems.

There is extensive coverage given in chapter six to the analysis of reflection processes of teachers as social act. This innovative approach is developed on the basis of the empirical experience of teachers as reported in the interviews. A large section of the chapter is devoted to the presentation of concrete examples from the interviews. This is deliberately chosen as a strong underpinning of the framework of reflection as a social act which I propose in this chapter as a substantial alternative to the existing theoretical approaches on reflection in educational science as presented in chapter two. The consequent application of the framework of reflection as a social act leads to an enhanced understanding of reflection processes as negotiations of legitimacy of defining, articulating and shaping reality.

The particular area of critical reflection is looked at in relation to teachers' reflection processes on rituals in chapter seven. Here the motif of power takes central stage and I pick up on Stephen Brookfield's suggestion to externalise and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions. The presence, or lack of critical reflection on rituals in the various school types is contextualised and referred back to particular aspects in rituals and ritualisations. Reflection and rituals/ritualisations are found to be two elements of one complex: Who is allowed to do what, with whom, when, where and how? Who can act upon possible actions to make them easier or more difficult, who is allowed to allow, or to constrain and forbid? Whose definition of reality is dominant in a given situation, whose is redundant? For critical reflection to happen it is found to be necessary to have a reflection setting in clear distance to (or suspension of) usual hierarchies.

Chapter eight attends to the method of memory-work which was applied with the intention to address the question regarding obstacles intrinsic to rituals that renders them inaccessible for critical reflection. Memory-work was chosen as a method for its inherent critical potential. It proved to be an exemplary application of a reflection setting that fulfills the requirement as free of institutional hierarchies. In applying the method it could be shown that there is nothing inherent in rituals/ritualisations that prevents them from being critically reflected. In the chapter the method is explained in its historical roots and its formal application. Memory-work resembles focus groups in appearance, however due to its methodical approach it goes well beyond their scope. A detailed report of the practical experiences in doing memory-work as a reflection on rituals with teachers is included in this chapter, too.

The concluding chapter nine looks at aspects of generalizability derived from the research. In it the research findings are related to transferability and expansion of action possibilities in the fields of education and the implications of my research findings are discussed.

This mapping of the trajectory of the thesis allows the reader to find her or his way through the text. As mentioned already if at some stage it seems as if the reader loses track there is always the possibility to come back here and have a brief glance at the overall structure of the thesis to gain reassurance.

1. School and ritual – an overview on contributions

1.1. Introduction

Rituals have been linked to education (and education to rituals) merely in passing since the early parts of the 20th century. In 1925 Siegfried Bernfeld's essay *Sisyphus or The limits of Education* refers to education in school as a derivation of rites in tribal societies (Bernfeld 1973, p. 43). Willard W. Waller remarks in 1932 that in school there are "complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them." (Waller 1932, p. 96[1])

However there is a certain fuzziness surrounding the application of the term ritual. In his welcome address to the International Conference on Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual held in 2008 in Heidelberg Axel Michaels accurately describes the situation within the field of ritual studies: "The large number of theoretical and applied perspectives presented and discussed by Catherine Bell in her overview compendia (1992, 1997) as well as by other authors (…) is truly overwhelming. (…) The term "ritual" cannot be unambiguously determined, neither in its past, nor in its present usage." (Collaborative Research Centre 'Ritual Dynamics' 2008; see also: Dücker 2007)

In line with the difficulties that are prevalent in ritual studies, there are also quite different approaches in the context of a debate on rituals in school. In their attempts to analyse rituals in school, the various authors always contribute also to an overall discussion about the actual phenomena that should be subsumed under the term (or excluded as the case may be).

A first step towards a more specific engagement with the topic of rituals in schools was made by Peter Fürstenau in 1962. In a lecture presented in the Institute for Psychoanalysis and psychosomatic Medicine, Frankfurt/M. he spoke about the psychoanalysis of school as an institution. The lecture was subsequently published in 1964 (Fürstenau 1964/1969). In the context of German educational science his text can be seen as a classic contribution that is still referred to in contemporary literature on rituals in school. However in the English speaking world the text does not feature at all, most likely due to the fact that it has never been translated.

The first major text on rituals in school that appeared in English is the essay of Basil Bernstein/Lionel Elvin/Richard Peters titled *Ritual in Education* which was written as a contribution to a conference in London 1966.[2] (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975)

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1 Willard W. Waller; *The sociology of teaching;* New York: Wiley 1932, p. 96 (quoted in: Xiao 2008, p. 15)

2 Basil Bernstein, Lionel Elvin and Richard Stanley Peters were professors at the Institute of Education at the University of London. Basil Bernstein notes about 'Ritual in education' that it "was written for a Conference on Ritual convened by Julian Huxley. Lionel Elvin, the then Director of the Institute of Education, and Richard Peters encouraged me to prepare a paper for the conference. It had to be written rather quickly. This paper, although, perhaps, of little consequence as a piece of analysis, looking back now, was critical to what followed. I wonder what would have happened if Lionel Elvin had not asked me to write on this subject. I certainly had no ideas about the subject of ritual, but I did see a connection between the forms of ritual and restricted code, between ritual and positional and personal forms of social control. I had of course read Waller's incredible book *The Sociology of Teaching*. At the back of my mind, possibly stemming from the first paper, were the different principles of control created by stratified as against differentiated structures, and the notion of one embedded in the other. I was also playing with the idea that bureaucracy could take different forms. Somewhere round the corner was also the issue

In this chapter, I am going to present a substantial overview of the contributions regarding rituals in school. I will take into account all major publications from an English speaking background since 1966.The debate on rituals that developed in German educational science will also be considered. To provide an avenue into the field of my study I will attend to:

- conceptual thoughts on ritual in schools;
- typology and classification of rituals in school;
- aspects of rituals.

In the respective sections of this chapter there will be no particular attention given to the national background of the authors. It is not my aim to trace a genealogy of the rather dispersed international debate on rituals in schools. The sections on conceptual thoughts, typologies and aspects of rituals are meant to provide an overview on the theoretical tools that are at hand for an engagement with rituals in schools. However a section will be included in the chapter also in which the specific direction will be attended to that discussion on rituals in school took in Germany.

It will become clear soon that there is a great variance prevalent in the debates on rituals (not only) in school. I am not attempting to smooth this picture in a bid to give the various contributions an appearance of coherency that in reality is in fact not there. However I will also present the suggestion of Catherine Bell to overcome certain difficulties resulting from the historical appropriation of the topic of ritual in various scientific disciplines. Her proposal to investigate ritualisation instead of ritual leads to questions to be asked not of 'ritual' but of the actors in ritual.

Eventually a section in which the main facets derived from the literature of the problem of reflection on rituals are depicted will conclude this chapter.

1.2.
Conceptual thoughts on ritual in school

Conceptual thoughts on rituals in school can be found in the English contributions and those from a German background, too.

Bernstein/Elvin/Peters introduce their essay with a description of ritual as generally referring to “a relatively rigid pattern of acts, specific to a situation, which construct a framework of meaning over and beyond the specific situational meanings” (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 160). They also explicate for rituals a number of functions, characteristics and develop a categorization of rituals. We will come to these aspects in the course of chapter one.

For Franz Wellendorf[3] (1979 [1973]) rituals are typical scenes in school. They provide a key for understanding the context of meaning in which the individuals in the social system of school find themselves, the interaction patterns and the identity patterns that are on offer in school and the problems arising from the attempt to bring personal historical interpretations of instinctual impulses and affects into the interaction processes in school.

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of what happened when the *basis* of expressive order changed, but not the instrumental. (...) I regard the Ritual paper as setting out conceptually what became almost an obsession: to try to understand the origins and consequences of different modalities of control. It was the sharp focusing upon principles of control which was probably responsible for the abstracted analyses of schools.” (2003, pp. 4/5)

[3] Franz Wellendorf was professor for psychology at the University Hannover. From 2001 – 2011 he was also the chairperson of the German psychoanalytic society.

Also with Wellendorf one can see school rituals as institutionalized patterns of interpretation of social identity for all participants. Essential for his approach is the assumption that ego identity[4] is not a fixed property. It rather has to be seen as the current identity-balance achieved in a process of identity bargaining.[5] (Wellendorf 1979, p. 35, 48).

Identity balance (as a result of identity bargaining) has two dimensions:

- on a horizontal level the problem of integration of diverse social identities assigned to an individual in different social settings, e. g. family, peer group, school;
- on a vertical level the individual biography of an individual with its resulting historical interpretations of instinctual impulses and affects which need to be re-interpreted in new situations.

In the process of identity-bargaining rituals in school present institutionally acceptable forms of common emotions, unified motivation and corresponding action. As such they in fact determine the social identity of the interaction partners.

Peter McLaren presents a detailed account of general definitions of ritual stemming from ritual studies which he assembles into a "strict definition" made up of nine "properties" and thirteen "functions" (McLaren 1986, p. 45). However he is very much aware of the problematic that surrounds the general attempt to define ritual. "To capture ritual completely in a definition is well-nigh impossible because individual rituals have such adverse assemblage of ingredients, components and functions ..." (McLaren 1986, p. 242)

For the purpose of his own field study in the context of an ethnographic research project in a Catholic Secondary School in Canada he thus develops a "weak definition" which functions as his point of departure: "ritualisation is a process which involves the incarnation of symbols, symbol clusters, metaphors, and root paradigms through formative bodily gesture. As forms of enacted meaning, rituals enable social actors to frame, negotiate, and articulate their phenomenological existence as social, cultural, and moral beings." (McLaren 1986., p. 48) In this definition we find in use two terms, i. e. ritualisation and ritual. McLaren does not specify what exactly the distinction between the two is and how they relate to each other.

According to Richard Quantz (1999) there may not be an ontological existence of ritual "outside of our intellectual use of it." For him ritual is "not an entity to be discovered. Rather, ritual is an analytical category that helps us deal with the chaos of human experience and put it into a coherent framework." In his sense definitions of ritual are neither right nor wrong, but more or less useful to gain an understanding of the world. Quantz comes up with the definition of ritual as "formalised, symbolic performance". All three elements in this definition are important for their connection makes an act into a ritual. In his opinion many actions appear only partially ritualistic and he emphasizes that it is more important to recognise the *aspects* of a social act that are formalised, symbolic performances, than come to a strict definition of the act as either ritual or not. One should think of a continuum in which social acts are seen as more or less ritualized.

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[4] In his use of the term Wellendorf refers to Erik H. Erikson who states, e. g. "The form of ego identity is more than the sum of the childhood identifications. It is the accrued experience of the ego's ability to integrate these identifications with the vicissitudes of the libido, with the aptitudes developed out of endowment, and with the opportunities offered in social roles. The sense of ego identity (…) is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity are matched by he sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (Erikson 1950, p 228)

[5] He borrows this term from Eugene A. Weinstein, *The development of interpersonal competence*, in: D. A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research,* 1969, pp 753 – 775, see also: Philip W. Blumstein, *Identity Bargaining and Self-Conception* in: Social Forces, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Mar., 1975), pp. 476-485

In Hauke Piper's view rituals are inherently ambiguous. He finds that they are located within "fields of tension" (1997, p. 220): form vs. content, specificity vs. routine, distance vs. bond, reflection vs. absorption, individual vs. community, emotion vs. rationality. Due to the ambiguity that results from oscillating between the various poles he sees rituals as "staged contrariness, thus they are always somehow contradictory staged." (Piper 1997, p. 242)

A slightly more technical definition of rituals can be found in Christoph Wulf's essay from 2006 in which he addresses a number of issues arising from the various debates around the idea of ritual as performative practice[6]. He explains that in his opinion one can only speak of ritual acts if they are mimetic. This includes three conditions all of which are to be met:

- they are movements referring to other movements;
- they can be considered as physical scenes which in addition possess a representative as well as a demonstrative aspect;
- they are not just autonomous and admit of being understood in themselves, but also make reference to other acts or other worlds.

With this definition he excludes "*non*-physical acts (…) just like mental calculations, decisions, structural links and premeditated or routine types of behaviour, as well as exceptional unique acts and rule violations." (Wulf 2006, p. 205)

In the words of Michael Göhlich, another member of the Berlin ritual studies, rituals are "repeated interaction patterns which by means of bodily-sensual expressions, stylized gestures and scenic arrangements constitute boundaries, order and norms of a community and deal with these boundaries, order and norms." (Göhlich 2004, p. 22)

For Ralf Bohnsack (2004) habitual action constitutes an elementary form of social action. He sees ritual action as a specific form of habitual action. Habitual action (and thus: ritual action) in his view can not sufficiently be described with models of instrumental rationality. Its meaning is not primarily found in the idea, the motive or intention, but rather in the empirically observable modus operandi, the execution or production of the action.

In the opinion of Jeannette Boehme (2004), to speak of a ritual in school there has to be a structural potential that establishes a specific leeway for a mediation of meaning and identity for a school (= myth) and also as a blueprint for an imaginary solution for structural crises that are based on inherent contradictions and paradoxes of school practice. Rituals are the arena where imaginary solutions get connected with the schools self-image, meaning, identity. In this sense ritual is seen as an arena for negotiating school myth, and every activity that is not geared towards this process is excluded, i. e. seen as 'not-ritual.' With her approach Jeannette Boehme attempts to counter what in her eyes constitutes a dilution and trivialization of the term ritual, e. g. its application for interactions in school like the opening of a lesson. While she sees such a situation also connected to an imaginary, mythic level (i. e. having meaning and identity beyond the actual act), what is missing in her understanding here is the leeway for negotiation of the mythic dimension. Consequently for her this is not to be subsumed under the term ritual. (Boehme 2004, p. 248)

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[6] Christoph Wulf was head of the project team of the 'Berlin ritual studies', a research project conducted in three phases over 11 years:

1999 – 2004 "The Emergence of the Social in Rituals and ritualisations"

2005 – 2007 "The Emergence of Learning Cultures through Rituals and ritualisation"

2008 – 2010 "Educational Gestures in School, Family, Youth Culture, and Media"

Results of the Berlin ritual studies have been extensively published in recent years in Germany. Some of them are also available in English (see literature list).

1.3.
Typology and classifications of rituals in school

General concepts of ritual can serve as a means to distinguish between activities that are either ritual or not. Once a certain set of activities is understood to have the relevant qualities to be subsumed under the term ritual it is furthermore possible to look at these activities in a comparative manner. By doing so one arrives at a more distinct classification, or typology.

To develop a typology it is however necessary to define a point of reference, a yardstick that functions as a measuring device for sorting a particular ritual into a certain category or class. There are three such yardsticks present in the literature on rituals in school. They are sorted either by scale, by function, or by ownership. I will attend to them in turns by depicting the relevant references in the literature.

When looking at the various typologies and classifications it is necessary to keep in mind that they are analytical categories that start from different points of departure, which consequently leads to developing different descriptive tools. These are however not exclusive of each other. Their separation is more a means of gaining descriptive clarity.

1.3.1.
Scale

A first point of reference for classifying rituals in school is their scale in terms of numbers of participants, periodicity, duration of the activity, planning or preparatory efforts. As easy as it is to see the differences in scale of the phenomena that are subsumed under the term ritual in the relevant literature, there is yet a rather peculiar lack of terminology that captures this in clear terms.

For Franz Wellendorf ritual comprises ceremonies, celebrations, special performances, but also everyday school interactions (morning rituals, prayers, lining-up). He acknowledges the difference in scale by distinguishing into ‘rituals’ and ‘everyday rituals.’ For the latter he also uses terms like ‘small rituals’ or ‘ritual partial activity’ and he recognises a great number of these in the everyday happenings within school, e. g. lining up after break time, entering of the school-building in a set order according to age, morning rituals like songs, prayers. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 89)

The practical approach to including activities as various in scale as a graduation ceremony and a morning prayer is widely repeated in the literature on rituals in school (e. g. McLaren 1986, Henry 1993, Eckstein 1999, Kellermann 2008, Xiao 2008[7]), although there are also examples in which the authors reject the suggestion that small scale everyday activities should be treated as rituals in school (Kapferer 1981, Boehme 2004)

Introducing a nomenclature that addresses the variety in scale Mary Henry speaks of “high rituals,” that is ceremonies, formal events conducted according to a deliberate and correct procedure, in contrast to “low rituals,” that is everyday events, ordinary and practical which have been sanctified. (Henry 1993, p. 136)

[7] Jiamei Xiao reports that in the course of her study her attention shifted from the “special events like Pancake Day or the Christmas concert” towards the “daily-based structural elements of schooling.” (Xiao 2008, p. 110)

Another attempt to capture scale differences in a working term is made by Peter McLaren who distinguishes "micro-rituals" from "macro-rituals." (McLaren 1986, p. 79) Micro-rituals for McLaren comprise of the individual lesson in school, while macro-rituals are the sum of all lessons, i. e. the entire school day.

Both classifications (high/low, micro/macro) however did not gain any significance in the subsequent discussion of rituals in school[8]. In the case of replacing 'lesson' by 'micro-ritual' and 'school day' by 'macro-ritual' it is rather obvious that there may not be a need for a new term, the old one is clear enough. In the case of high and low rituals the problem that is inherent in attempts to classify rituals according to scale remains: the scale is at any rate a sliding scale and while the extremes may be simple enough to determine as high or low, when it comes to those activities that are somewhere in the middle, the terms lose their sharpness.[9]

1.3.2.
Functions

The second way to approach the problem of typology and classification goes the route via functions of rituals.

The early essay of Bernstein/Elvin/Peters contains such a classification. They distinguish between consensual and differentiating rituals. (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 160) In their terms consensual rituals are those which function to bind a school community together (examples: assemblies, ceremonies), while differentiating rituals function to mark off different groups within the school community (along: e. g. age; sex; age relations; house).

These thoughts are taken up by Franz Wellendorf who maintains that "in every school ritual both aspects are detectable. Their effects indeed rest on the simultaneous presence of both aspects, whereby the accent lies in the display of solidarity at one time and in the display of difference at another time." (Wellendorf 1979, p. 73)

Nathalie Gehrke finds it helpful to look at a school class as a type of "tribe." In her opinion it makes sense to sort rituals in school "according to three primary functions benefiting the group." (Gehrke 1979, p. 106) She thus speaks of status rituals (establishing and expressing teacher/pupil status), rituals for soothing conflict (promoting common welfare), and rituals for crisis control (dealing with transitional crisis/rites of passage).

Functional classification is also applied by Peter McLaren who distinguishes: rituals of revitalization (injecting a renewal of commitment into the motivation and values of participants), rituals of intensification (sub-type of revitalization, aiming at emotional recharge without necessarily enforcing values or goals) and rituals of resistance. (McLaren 1986, p. 80)

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8 Mary Henry's notion of high and low rituals was at least referred to once in an article of Jill Fitzgerald/George Noblit published in the 'Urban review' (Fitzgerald/Noblit 1997)

9 Take e. g. circle-time at the beginning of the week as referred to in a couple of contributions (Friedrichs 1999, Hamm 1999, Kellermann 2008)

The dimensions as stated in Nathalie Gehrke's and Peter McLaren's functional categories are also contained in the more encompassing catalogue presented by Christoph Wulf. He can be located exactly in the overlap between anthropology and educational science. His classification of rituals comprises of rites of passage, rituals of inauguration or of assuming office, calendar rituals, intensification rituals, rituals of rebellion, interaction rituals. (Wulf 2006, p. 206) While he presents these as general categories of rituals they are also considered as relevant in the context of ritual studies within educational science. (Wulf 2004, p. 10)[10]

1.3.3. Ownership

The earlier contributions on rituals in school (Fürstenau, Bernstein/Elvin/Peters, Wellendorf, Gehrke) all dealt with rituals that were initiated by school officials, mainly teachers. With Peter McLaren's study a shift in focus took place. He introduced a point of view that also considers activities that are initiated by students/pupils under the general category of ritual in school.[11]

A particular push for such a wider view has been the work done over the last decade by the research group in the Berlin ritual studies under the leadership of Christoph Wulf. Activities like 'GoGo-games in the school playground' (Wulf et. al. 2010, p. 81), activities during transitional phases from yard to classroom (Wagner-Willi 2005) or helping each other during class instruction (Kellermann 2008) are now subsumed under the term ritual as much as graduation ceremonies (Helsper 2004), rewards and sanctions (Xiao 2008) or lining-up in pairs (Hamm 1999).

Further to the dimensions of analysis that categorises these activities along lines of scale or function a new aspect is addressed by the distinction introduced by Ralf Bohnsack and which I call the aspect of ownership. Bohnsack suggests looking at rituals in relation to their character as being communicative, conjunctive or experimental. (Bohnsack 2004) He derives the terms communicative and conjunctive from Karl Mannheim's "sociological theory of culture and its knowability" (Mannheim 1982, pp 141 ff).

Monika Wagner-Willi explicates this categorization by applying it in her study on transitional phases between lessons and break-time. With Mannheim she notes that there are two fundamentally different modes of experience or relationships: the conjunctive which is based on immediate understanding and the communicative which is based on reciprocal interpretation. (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 42)

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10 The classification of rituals is a major problem within anthropology and ritual studies itself. Catherine Bell comments on this: "The more complete and non-reductive a system attempts to be, (…), the more unwieldy it can be to use." (Bell 1997, p. 94) Christoph Wulf's classification then is quite close to the categories that she presents as a compromise between complete and useful: rites of passage, rites of exchange and communion, calendrical rites, rites of affliction, feasting/fasting/festivals, political rites.

11 Bernstein/Elvin/Peters in the concrete situation of Britain in the mid-1960's suggest a potential for "a switch from the dominance of adult-imposed and regulated rituals to the dominance of rituals generated and regulated by youth." (p 162) Where schools become "de-ritualized (…) pupils are then likely to generate their own consensual and differentiating rituals in order to assist in the development of a transitional identity." (p 164)
However in their essay they don't address this issue any further.

Conjunctive relationships are based on habitual consent, on understanding each other in the medium of self-evidence.[12] Habitual consent depends on practical knowledge which needs to be acquired through lived praxis. The process of acquisition is mimetic and the knowledge remains mostly pre-reflexive. Transmission of such habitual knowledge takes place mainly in ritual form. (Bohnsack 2004, p. 84)

In communicative spaces of experience actors need to mediate (negotiate) their various perspectives. Coming from different conjunctive spaces of experience habitual consent can not be presumed amongst them. Interpretations of social reality differ and on this basis they create their social relationships. Institutions where actors participate in different roles are seen as 'communicative collectivity.' (Wagner-Willi, p. 43)

Monika Wagner-Willi claims that this difference must not be neglected in studies of ritual action. She follows Ralf Bohnsack in stating that communicative rituals are determined by aspects of exteriority and coercion, are orientated towards codified rules and norms and are highly institutionalized. In line with the conceptual assumption that rituals are forms of habitualised action communicative rituals derive from institutional rules if the rules are internalized and habitualised and thus become rituals. (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 45)

Conjunctive rituals and ritualisations on the other hand are those ritual forms which take place within conjunctive spaces of experience. They are based on habitual consent, atheoretical and pre-reflexive forms of understanding amongst actors. Conjunctive spaces in school are those that are not under immediate control of institutional rules. This idea is similar to conceptual thoughts of Peter McLaren who presented a model of four states between which students (or pupils, as the case may be) transit numerous times during a school day: home-state, school-state, sanctity-state and streetcorner-state (McLaren 1986, pp. 83 ff). The streetcorner-state resembles the idea of conjunctive space amongst peers quite closely.

The categorization along the lines of communicative/conjunctive as suggested by Ralf Bohnsack can be seen as referring to the 'ownership' of the respective ritual. I borrow the term ownership from Catherine Bell who used it in relation to the historic process in which "social control via coercive strategies demanding personal presence and explicit conflict (…) shift to social control via ownership of the means by which 'reality' is articulated for cognitive endorsement by all. This process is inseparable from the development of institutions which ensure that such specialists do not need constant popular support in order to survive." (Bell 1992, p. 131)

Communicative rituals as defined above fit the idea of being means for articulation of reality. In school they are 'owned' by the official representatives of the institution. Conjunctive rituals can similarly be understood as articulation of reality, yet they are 'owned' by the "conjunctive experiental community" (Mannheim 1982, p. 194) that enacts it. While it is tempting to equate official representatives with adults, and more specifically with teachers, and experiental community with students, pupils, peer group, such an equation is too simple. Monika Wagner-Willi has shown that in school one can identify "several communicative microrituals"[13] that are initiated and performed by pupils (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 116 ff). However in terms of ownership these rituals are owned by the children *in identification with their official, institutional role as pupils*.

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[12] Ralf Bohnsack derives this notion from Aron Gurwitsch, *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt.* Berlin, 1977. (Transl. by Fred Kersten as *Human Encounters in the Social World*. Pittsburgh, 1979.)

[13] The use of the term ‚microritual' in her case is not at all related to the suggested classification of Peter McLaren. It is a mere signifier for the scale of the respective activity as to be 'small', a short (inter-)action in passing.

In theory it is also possible to think of teachers initiating and (co-)owning conjunctive rituals in school.[14] However the practical problems that are connected with a (temporary) shift of positions weigh heavy. Franz Wellendorf has covered the issue of teachers distancing themselves from their official role extensively in a chapter on "ritualized display of social identity and role distance." (Wellendorf 1979, pp. 147 – 175)

Here it may suffice to note that while in terms of classification of rituals in school communicative rituals are more likely to be owned by teachers, this is not exclusively the case. However conjunctive rituals in school are most likely initiated and owned by the children. Monika Wagner-Willi observes that "in contrast to communicative rituals they are not subject to a formal authority structure." (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 285)

It seems more accurate then to see the factor that decides about potential initiation and ownership of conjunctive rituals in the context in which the actors find themselves. Only where in this context they can define themselves as in opposition to (the demands of) an official authority or where this context is defined as free from an official authority will they be able to initiate and own conjunctive rituals.

In institutional contexts Ralf Bohnsack sees a distinct connection between communicative and conjunctive rituals. He notes that communicative rituals are mediated by conjunctive ritualisations. (Bohnsack 2004, p. 88)

In addition to the two classes of ritual he also maintains that in circumstances of eroding tradition new and experimental rituals can emerge. Ralf Bohnsack draws on studies of youth cultures[15] to show that particularly young people (adolescents) are likely to develop what he terms experimental rituals in "an undirected collective process of seeking in the hope of developing new milieus or elements of style." (Bohnsack 2004, p. 81)

In terms of rituals in school Monika Wagner-Willi sees these experimental rituals as being likely to appear in those spaces and at those times where neither the official institutional order nor the conjunctive peer group culture is in fact valid. (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 288)

The classification as suggested by Ralf Bohnsack allows looking at rituals in school as a dynamic process in which the actors make their respective moves in a dialectical relationship that is essentially structured by the institutional context in which they meet. In this sense it is also compatible with Franz Wellendorf's idea of rituals as factors in a process of identity-bargaining.

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[14] Based on my own experience in delivering coaching courses to primary school teachers I can only say that they do so where they are amongst themselves, i. e. not with children/students. It seems the status more so than their being adult that brings about a certain behaviour. RH

[15] e.g. Arndt-Michael Nohl, *Migration und Differenzerfahrung*, Opladen 2001; Ralf Bohnsack/Arndt-Michel Nohl, *Events, Effervescence und Adoleszenz*, in: Gebhardt/Hitzler/Pfadenhauer (Eds.), *Events. Zur Soziologie des Außergewöhnlichen*, Opladen 2000; Yvonne Gaffer, *Aktionismus in der Adoleszenz,* Berlin 2000;

1.4.
Aspects of rituals

Not all authors who wrote about rituals in school explicate their concept of ritual to the point where a distinct definition appears. However all contributions on rituals in school operate on the basis of stating certain elements that in the view of the author are characteristics of rituals. Similarly there is usually expressed an understanding of what function a ritual has. In many cases the actual way rituals are enacted is addressed or the efficiency of rituals is looked at.

It is quite easy to get lost in the multiplicity of statements, in their interdependence and cross-references. What follows in the next sections is a collection of aspects that are construed in the literature as elements of rituals in schools. By grouping various complexes under summarizing headings I intend to address them in a way that is comprehensive and comprehensible at the same time.

I will attend to: communication; actors/audience; structure of rituals; social order, norms, values; dealing with differences; ritual dynamics, ritual effects; conditions for efficiency, outcomes; psychodynamics of rituals in school; ritual style – rituals as indicators. However I am not suggesting that this could lead to a coherent and overarching list of ritual characteristics that would be applicable for classification purposes.

The emerging discipline of ritual studies itself can not provide such a coherent collection. Burckhard Dücker points to the fact that in ritual studies an “open register of characteristics” is used[16] of which for each ritual “at least some characteristics” are applicable. (Dücker 2012, p. 166) Dücker also notes that “the term 'ritual' (…) depicts a mode of action and a type of acting derived from it, but not a restricted register of acts.” With Catherine Bell he points out that in principle every act can be made a ritual when it is formed and organised accordingly. “Ritualisation thus depicts the transition of a routine activity to a ritual act.” (Dücker 2007, p. 31)

I am going to attend to Catherine Bell's suggestion to investigate ritualisation rather than ritual in detail below (see section 1.6). First however I wish to show how the problem of coming to a clear list of characteristics of rituals is mirrored in the literature on rituals in school and how the respective authors emphasise quite a variety of aspects.

1.4.1.
Communication

Bernstein/Elvin/Peters refer to the “highly redundant form of communication” within ritual, whereby “the messages (…) contain meanings which are highly condensed. Thus the major meanings in ritual are extra-verbal or indirect; for they are not made verbally explicit.” And they conclude that: “Ritual is a form of restricted code.” (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p 163)

16 Dücker lists: intentionality/target orientation; symbolism; framing; narrative structure; repetitiveness; staging; performance; sequentiality/complexity; formality/celebration; publicity; transcending everyday ordinariness; reduction of complexity; continuity; self referential; ritual roles (experts, participants, audience, supportive backstage staff, media audience, excluded others).

For Franz Wellendorf the scenic-situational aspect of the performance is dominant in rituals. He sees communication in rituals taking analogic form. Following Watzlawick/Beavin/Jackson (1967, p. 65)[17] he refers to the characteristics of analogic communication as
1. The simple negation is missing, i. e. there is no term for ‘not’
2. Simple logical basic patterns are missing like ‚if – then‘, ‚either – or‘
3. The expression of abstract terms is very difficult or impossible.
One consequence of the absence of the simple form of ‘not’ in analogic communication is that in school rituals it is extremely difficult to express something like: ‘I do not accept the meaning attributed to this activity.’ Furthermore analogic communication lacks unambiguousness and particularly the absence of clear expression for dimensions of time: past, present, future opens the route for a double, i. e. conscious and unconscious interpretation of social identity, while at the same time this double meaning is not open to verbalization. Thus school rituals offer a great chance for unconscious transference of early-childhood experiences. (Wellendorf 1979, p 196, 197)

The importance of bodily performance is highlighted by Peter McLaren. In the actual lesson the performative elements “gestures, verbal intonation and rhythmic methods of ritualized expressions” (McLaren 1986, p 104) of the teacher become crucial factors. The strength of ritual’s ideological force lies in its erasure of the “traces from that which it effects,” rituals embody meaning, they are enacted metaphors.

In recourse to the verbal and dramatic expressions as observed in ritual Fulbert Steffensky holds that “ritual breaks through the horizon of the pure verbal expression.” It “says” something that can not be said in words. (Steffensky 1999, p 101) Rituals are seen to “unfold their effects ‘in scenic participation’, not in the reflective appropriation of the values and norms displayed.” (Combe 1999, p. 108)

Richard Quantz finds that bodies of actors thus play an important role in ritual. Any display, be it gestures, mien, dress or equipment can be symbolic if it is displayed for others to observe, and in this case it is ritually displayed. The way actors perform in ritual bears meaning. He also states that this for most people is far more persuasive “than any rational-discursive argument.” (Quantz 1999)

The way of communicating via gestures, postures, restricted codes, in analogic form is closely related to the symbolic qualities of rituals.

Christoph Wulf/Jörg Zirfaß note that rituals are performed physically, they are acted out, displayed. In rituals mimetic processes and symbolic meaning are intertwined in a way that they can only be separated analytically. The figurations, sequences and schemata of rituals are engrained in the bodies of participants, and with them also the symbolic meaning. (Wulf/Zirfaß 2004, p. 8)

[17] Roxanne Blanford (2009) gives a brief summary of the concept of analogical and digital communication: “(...) analogical communication loosely refers to that which is represented by likeness. In other words, if someone understands that an action, a symbol, or a movement implies and/or infers a particular thing exactly as intended, it is a successful communication. More precisely, non-verbal communication, in which meaning and intent is represented either without words (pictures, drawings, physical gestures), or by indicating something external, can be categorized as being analogical. That is, some "thing" stands for, and is likened to, something else to which the meaning, or idea, is being referred. On the other hand, digital communication is more exact and identifiable in that this form of communication makes direct reference to the thing by its articulated name. Speaking a language and using easily identifiable and concrete terms and words, as when people are conversing, or reading text, is a digital communication.”

The symbolic use of activities and equipment in schools is also highlighted by Hauke Piper (Piper 1997, p. 219) and by Ingrid Kellermann, who holds that rituals convey their meaning in performative acts and/or by use of symbols. (Kellermann 2008, p. 39) Just like Peter McLaren she also refers to the specific techniques used by teachers and observable in classrooms: pronounced use of voice; prosodic use of language, intonation; pronounced arrangement of bodies (or equipment) in the classroom space. These are triggers for the magic charge (the creation of social magic) that is part of the 'ritual performance.' (see e. g. Kellermann 2008, p. 160)

1.4.2.
Actors - Audience

Rituals are seen to be performed and displayed by actors in front of an audience.

Franz Wellendorf states: "In rituals ... the context of individual activities of interacting partners with the entire interaction-system is made visible", and "they show to all participants (actors and spectators) by means of symbolic representation which are the conditions for being or becoming a member of the system: which values to accept, which norms to adhere to, which power structure to adapt to" (1979, 67).

Reference to the presence of spectators is also made by Mary Henry who refers to rituals being performed in front of an audience in a "public or collective" setting. (Henry 1993; p. 135).

Richard Quantz (1999) highlights ritual as an "action intended for an audience (even if the audience is oneself)" He further explains: "the idea that one might perform for oneself may seem strange, but imagine the nineteenth century English colonialist of literary, if not historical, reality insisting on keeping the ritual of teatime even when all alone in the jungles of India, or the single person who maintains the practice of saying grace before eating a meal even though eating at home all alone.“

In the analysis of the phenomenon of children lining-up in educational contexts I have taken a close look at the role that the audience plays for rituals in schools. I raised attention to the effects on teachers from the (real or imagined) supervision of supervisors. (Hamm 1999, p. 28)

In the approach that guides the Berlin ritual studies ritual is explicitly understood as performance. While this term is used in different ways (see for a discussion of concepts of performance, performative: Audehm 2004), there is yet a quite basic understanding also, that relates to the components of actors and audience. In this regard a performance always relies on the audience, even where "in ritual the actors are always also their own audience." (Wulf/Zirfaß 2004, p. 27)

1.4.3.
Structure of rituals

Rituals are seen as activities that follow a set pattern, a structure that is observable and can be deciphered, be it by the participants or by onlookers. This is contained already in Bernstein/Elvin/Peters' definition of rituals as "relatively rigid pattern of acts" (1975, p. 160).

Mary Henry describes rituals in school as having a "grammar (…) a set of formal properties that identify it as such. The structure is like a musical score that repeats itself." There is a special timing for each component in the ritual. There is also generally a precise order in which moves/acts are (to be) performed by participants. (Henry 1993, p. 135)

In Richard Quantz' definition of ritual as 'formalised, symbolic performance' the idea of formalisation points to the complex of structure within ritual. There is a correct time, a correct space and a correct way of acting (according to the expectations held by those involved as actors and as spectators) that make an activity a ritual. (Quantz 1999)

Similarly Hauke Piper (1997) and Alfred Hinz (1999) see rituals as activities that are repeated at the same time, same place in the same manner as prescribed. In line with the idea of repetition and structure of rituals in school Kathrin Audehm (2004) finds reoccurring problems being dealt with in reoccurring patterns.

An interesting route is opened by Peter McLaren who borrows the term 'monochromatic time'[18] to describe the "segmentation of time into 'units' of 'periods' [which] influenced the students' perception of work such that work became time spent 'doing one thing over and over' until the period was over. Time literally became 'death' – an enemy to avoid." (McLaren 1986, p. 198)

The observation that in schools there are numerous sequences of routine activities and routine arrangements is also made by Thomas Ziehe. He finds that these activities are in fact "smallest rituals" that "incite this peculiar feeling for time … everything seems the same, time seems to come to an agonizing standstill and yet years pass by." (Ziehe 1987, p. 16)

1.4.4. Social Order, Norms, Values

The connection between ritual and social order is a topic for ritual studies from their very beginning. It is also a major area of concern for authors who wrote on rituals in school. The basic idea then, that rituals have to do with social order, norms, values runs through the literature on rituals in school like a red thread from the earliest to the most current contributions.

While he concentrates mainly on the role that rituals play for the psychodynamics for teachers and students in school, Peter Fürstenau also sees the connection between the ways how the participants in a school context interact and the social order in which the school is set. He finds that "where children have to basically fit in with a predefined – and on top of that contradictory – order the only possible consequence for them in expressing their drive for emancipation and autonomy will be 'disciplinary problems'." And he concludes that "our school shares apotropaic and exorcising magic features with oldest educational rituals." (Fürstenau 1969, p 24)

[18] Peter McLaren states as his source Edward T. Hall. In his literature list McLaren includes the two volumes:
E. T. Hall (1973); *The silent language;* New York
E. T. Hall (1984): *The dance of life, the other dimension of time;* New York

The interpretation of rituals in school context offered by Bernstein/Elvin/Peters heavily draws on the issue of social order. Rituals are seen to "relate the individual (…) to a social order, to heighten respect for that order, to revivify that order within the individual and, in particular, to deepen acceptance of the procedures which are used to maintain continuity, order and boundary and which control ambivalence towards the social order. (…) The rituals also serve to prevent questioning of the values and of the social order which transmits them." (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 160, 161)

On the last point Franz Wellendorf sees the prevention of questioning the values or social order as expressed in rituals brought as a consequence of the specific form of ritual and their structure as rigid patterns of acts. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 70)

That there are connections between rituals and social order, norms, values is similarly accepted by more current authors. What however changes is that these connections are looked at and interpreted differently. The rather static view of an order that is preliminary to the ritual, hence expressed or imposed through ritual has been shifted to a more dynamic model.

Assessments like Hauke Piper's, who finds that in ritual a pre-defined order is impressed upon the participants (Piper 1997, p. 221) stand alongside statements which put an accent on the generation or establishment of community (von der Groeben 1999, p. 13). Mary Bushnell holds that rituals (…) construct and communicate values. (Bushnell, 1997, p. 286)

For Christoph Wulf/Jörg Zirfaß in the ritual performance the social is created. That includes the social order in which power relations are expressed, between classes, generations and the sexes. The ritual performance as a physical experience makes them appear to be natural. Rituals conjure social peace, but the assumed consensus often implies acceptance of power relations. (Wulf/Zirfaß 2004, p. 8)

In this view it is still acknowledged that rituals traditionalise attitudes, world-views, values and norms (Kellermann 2008, p. 40), that they mark boundaries and act as a means of social differentiation. (Audehm 2004, p. 56), but they are also seen to "deal with these boundaries, order and norms." (Göhlich 2004, p. 22)

Reference was already made to the concept of communicative and conjunctive (and experimental) rituals as presented by Ralf Bohnsack. For him rituals are crucial in the establishment and maintenance of collectivity (Bohnsack 2004, p. 83), which however is not contrary to the dynamic that is contained in his typology.

In fact rituals are also seen to create, interpret, maintain and change social realities by Prengel/Heinzel (2004, p. 116) The dynamic qualities of ritual feature particularly prominent in the surroundings of the Berlin ritual studies. Christoph Wulf maintains that social relationships are shaped by rituals that oscillate between conflict and integration. Rituals can be invented, e. g. in political battles or inter-generational conflict, to draw demarcation lines between groups. (Wulf 2006, p. 207) While Christoph Wulf's comment originates from a rather general consideration of rituals, the idea of inventing rituals is very much part of the quite specific debate on rituals in schools in Germany since the 1990's (see: Pädagogik 1/94; von der Groeben 1999).

1.4.5.
Dealing with differences

In their being linked to social order, norms and values rituals are found to be essentially dealing with differences.

As mentioned earlier Judith Kapferer's approach to rituals does not include the everyday activities (small, 'low' rituals) in school. In her terms the rituals counteract divisive tendencies on various levels of school life. She sees this as a result of the extraordinary character of the ritual which is established as an activity outside of routine and everyday practice. In addressing potential division the ritual functions as an expression of unity ("consensual" in terms of Bernstein/Elvin/Peters). There is yet no claim made by Judith Kapferer that the ritual would factually abolish division, but rather is it a case of the ritual making it appear as if there is no division.

She refers in this context to the internal division within the cultural bourgeoisie,[19] the dominant clientele of private schools in Australia. These divisions may be covered up in school rituals. However they do not disappear but rather prevail behind the façade of "false consciousness". (Kapferer 1981; p. 270)

The assumption that rituals deal with differences is yet also shared by authors whose view on ritual classification includes the everyday, small, 'low' rituals. The concept of identity-bargaining as put forward by Franz Wellendorf in relation to school rituals already includes an inherent division, be it in vertical (social role expectations vs. biographical identity) or in horizontal (peer identity vs. institutional identity) direction.

Similarly the repeated transition from one "interactive state" to another (streetcorner-state, student-state etc.) as observed by Peter McLaren includes the topic of dealing with differences.

Monika Wagner-Willi looks at the transition between break-time and class. Based on the conceptual typology suggested by Ralf Bohnsack this can be seen as transition between spaces of conjunctive and communicative experience. She finds that in the transition periods differences within the peer group find entry into the classroom, are acted out and dealt with ritually. Her study particularly observes this for gender relationships and differences in relation to maturity (adolescence vs. childhood). (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 290)

That rituals deal with differences is also part of the general concept of ritual as presented by Christoph Wulf/Jörg Zirfaß (2004, p. 8) and can be found made explicit by Ingrid Kellermann who connects this idea with the assumption that rituals channel aggression and conflict. (Kellermann 2008, p. 40)

It is worthwhile noting that the dimensions that are referred to as above by Judith Kapferer and the ones that Monika Wagner-Willi or Ingrid Kellermann have in mind are a good bit apart of each other, the latter being concerned primarily with the micro-level of everyday activities in school. Nevertheless it is obviously possible on both levels to come to a conclusion regards rituals that sees them dealing with differences.

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[19] "The fraction of the ruling group that controls, dominates, and, in an important sense, owns (partly through consumer patronage, but also through public, professional activity) the means of educational production – the dissemination of knowledge, ideas, opinion, and judgments" (Kapferer 1981, p. 263)

1.4.6. Ritual dynamics, ritual effects

For the participants in rituals it is assumed that there are certain outcomes as a result of their participation. One line of argument refers to "ritual knowledge" which is acquired by participants: "primarily a bodily form of knowing as opposed to a cognitive skill." Ritual knowledge is not rationally to be 'understood', it is based on a felt experience and "it is a type of *mimesis*." (McLaren 1986, p. 204)

The importance of mimesis in and for rituals is highlighted by Christoph Wulf/Jörg Zirfaß. Ritual knowledge is practical knowledge, physical, ludic, historic and cultural. By acquiring ritual knowledge mimetically the individual incorporates an imprint of the social as performed in the ritual. At the next occasion this imprint can be actualized in a new ritual performance. However there is never an exact copy possible of the original. This is the creative potential of mimetic processes. (Wulf/Zirfaß 2004, p. 31) The figure underlying this is the concept of constant flow. In a way the ideas of mimesis, creativity, performativity applied to ritual introduce this concept into ritual studies.

Seen from the perspective of the individual actor, the mimetic processes allow for individual derivation. (Kellermann 2008, p. 40)

From their very start ritual studies in general have always seen a close connection between ritual and emotions. In reference to Emile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1947, p. 214 ff) Randall Collins exemplifies this for the sociology of ritual which he identifies as "a sociology of gatherings – of crowds, assemblies, congregations, audiences. (…) Once the bodies are together, there may take place a process of intensification of shared experience." (Collins 2004, p. 34, 35) He in fact ascribes emotions a central status in the context of interaction rituals. "… rituals begin with emotional ingredients (which may be emotions of all sorts); they intensify emotions into the shared excitement that Durkheim called 'collective effervescence'; and they produce other sorts of emotions as outcomes (especially moral solidarity, but also sometimes aggressive emotions such as anger). This puts us in a position to use the flow of emotions across situations as the crucial item in the micro-to-micro linkage that concatenates into macro patterns." (Collins 2004, p. 105)

In the context of literature on rituals in schools the emotional charge that is associated with rituals is taken up by Peter McLaren whose field study took place in a Catholic Secondary school. His rituals of revitalization and rituals of intensification both contain the element of "emotional recharge for the participants." (McLaren 1986, p. 80) For Peter McLaren the emotional aspects of ritual play an important role. He identifies "spontaneous communitas" as characteristic for an 'authentic' or 'genuine' ritual and finds that in school there is a general lack of it, which also leads to him speaking of the school day as "a bastard version of Van Gennep's[20] rites of passage." (McLaren 1986, p. 98)

[20] Arnold van Gennep; *The rites of passage;* Chicago 1960

Thomas Ziehe notes that ceremonies, staged events fill the gap between the individual (subjective) and the formal (objective), they allow for 'collective effervescence' to be experienced. (Ziehe 1987, p. 17) For Ameli Winkler rituals are invented realities which – if they are not regulating or schematising[21] – out of nothing create reliability, confidence, a feeling of togetherness and even consolation. She compares them to a "railing that the (child's) soul can hold on to." (Winkler 1994, p. 67)

These rather positive assessments of the emotional side of rituals are not unanimously shared by Mary Bushnell for whom rituals also have an abusive and deterministic potential which she traces back to the fact that "rituals can coerce through their symbolic qualities – rituals get to our emotions." As holistic experiences involving body, emotion and intellect she finds that rituals are non-trivial – they "gain significance and power." (Bushnell 1997, p. 288)

At any rate from the early psychoanalytic contributions (Fürstenau, Wellendorf) to Ingrid Kellermann's most recent study who finds that the magic boundary between 'us' and 'them' establishes a feeling of belonging together (Kellermann 2008, p. 40) it can be seen as commonly accepted that rituals have effects on an emotional level for the participants.

Another effect of rituals is observable for those who do not 'fit in' with the actual demand. "Once a pupil has ritually been affiliated to school, there is no institutionally legitimized motive any more, not to follow the expectations put to him. If he still refuses or protests, he becomes a 'problem pupil' who needs special treatment." (Wellendorf 1979, p. 76)

Peter McLaren in his chapter on "the antistructure of resistance" notes that "resisters challenged the legitimacy of the social pressure which read 'You must do this' or 'You must do that'. Resistances often provoked fulminations from the teachers …" (McLaren 1986; p.149) And in reaction to this "redressive measures within the social drama involved expelling the occasional offender, trying to find a more 'appropriate' programme for the student in another school, and administering detentions." (McLaren 1986, p. 150)

There are consequences for those who do not participate in rituals as expected. While there may be leeway via mimetic performances, this leeway is not endless. Ritual performances invite to 'play along' – and by doing so accept the expressed meanings, structures, order, power relations. Those who don't 'play along' are excluded and can become a scapegoat, a screen for projection of negativity and violence. (Wulf/Zirfaß 2004, p. 9)

School rituals are not isolated activities. They are connected in chains, building on each other[22]. They thus constitute a process of continuous (re-)interpretation of identity (in the identity-bargaining), which leads to a particular 'school career' for the individual pupil/student. (Wellendorf 1979; pp 127 – 142) In this way it is possible to understand rituals as a means of 'sorting out' within a school context, a tool for selection.

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[21] While Ameli Winkler mentions that rituals can be regulating or schematising this comment is made more in passing and she does not acknowledge her own observation any further in her article.

[22] For looking at rituals as connected in chains see also: Randall Collins (2004).

Jiamei Xiao suggests a different perspective when looking at the effects of rituals in school. Her investigation aims on discovering the experiences of children in their own terms. In her dissertation she presents the results of a field observation and interviews conducted with children in a UK-primary school. Her main focus lies on "trivial everyday experiences" (Xiao 2008, p. 6) and "repeated procedures and routines in the classroom" (Xiao 2008, p. 11) which she sees to have "the characteristics of routine or ritual" (Xiao 2008, p. 69).

For the concrete ways of children's acting in school she identifies "three styles of response in terms of attitudes and actions: acceptance, resistance and reflection" (Xiao 2008, p. 214). Jiamei Xiao finds that "all three responses are reflected in more or less all the children as different aspects of their experience." (p. 215) She suggests that for the children the two contrary responses of resistance and acceptance are co-existent, even overlapping attitudes. She eventually concludes: "On a closer examination the differentiation between the two opposite attitudes (…) turns out to be difficult, even meaningless (…). Children's resistance is a natural, spontaneous response to the rituals of schooling whereas their acceptance is mostly a superficial response based on practical considerations and the pressure to be passive in the face of the schooling system." (p. 236)

Despite the rather peculiar concept of resistance[23] in Jiamei Xiao's thesis her reference to the co-existence of seemingly contradictory effects of daily routines and everyday rituals in school points to the lack of certainty in predicting which result a particular ritual will bear for a particular participant. This is also acknowledged by Mary Henry who states that there is no guarantee of a particular experience to be made by each or any individual participant. (Henry 1993, p. 27)

A specific type of ritual are those concerned with change/s of status for participants. They are seen to formally structure access to formal and informal roles within the system (Wellendorf 1979, p. 67). Mary Henry refers in this context to status elevation as an effect of rituals (Henry 1993, p. 40). Status elevation suggests that the direction is always 'up', but rituals are similarly seen to be involved in bearing opposite results e. g. in the context of examinations (Wellendorf 1979, pp 111 – 113).

[23] She describes five categories of "resistance and rebellion" (Xiao 2008, p. 218):
"awareness and consciousness of the existence of regulative sanctions and the restraining features of the school on the children's part", "children show their concern over certain issues like grouping …", "complaints over discipline and sanctions are made explicit", "children express disagreement with the perspectives of the teacher", "at the level of actual behaviour, their observed deviant actions such as distractions, time-killing strategies and disruptions." She deems the first four to be "attitudinal resistance." (ibid., p. 221)
She further distinguishes the actions of resistance and rebellion into five forms:
a) strategic resorts, e. g. "Several boys revealed that they just remember the names before and after theirs and wait for either to come up during the course of registration, and then get ready to answer the teacher. Most children automatically choose 'PE' as the best thing of the day when the teacher asks them to reflect at the end of the day and report what they liked best." Jiamei Xiao essentially refers here to "ways of passing time. Common ones include day-dreaming, fiddling with something, throwing a pencil, going to the toilet and going to the sharpener in the front of the room" (ibid., p 225); b) issues concerning friendships, e. g. "Henry and Peter yelled excitedly when they heard the teacher had put them in the same literacy group. A girl was told off because she swapped seats with another child to be with her friend."(ibid, p. 227); c) unauthorized talk; d) jokes; e) messing about.
However she finds that "all five forms of deviant actions are actually under the teacher's disciplinary control." (ibid., p 228)
The use of the terms resistance and rebellion for 'day-dreaming' or 'fiddling with something' is quite a distance away from my understanding of the terms. I see a shortfall here in the absence of any structural analysis of school as an institution in Jiamei Xiao's text. While she describes numerous aspects of school life in ways that are easily identified as resembling the character of experiences within total institutions there is yet no going beyond the level of the immediate teacher-child domain.

However it is a commonly accepted assumption that rituals have an effect on social status of participants. Kathrin Audehm notes that “the power of the inauguration is such that it changes the inaugurated person. On the one hand the image which others have of her/him and their behaviour towards her/him changes, on the other hand her/his self-image and her/his behaviour to which s/he feels obliged due to the authority and participation in the institution that is ascribed via the title.” (Audehm 2004, p 50)[24]

References to inauguration rites are commonly made in relation to children becoming pupils (e. g. Wellendorf 1979, p. 74; Riegel 1994, p. 24; Kellermann 2006, p. 105). However in school contexts adults can similarly become part of inauguration rituals.

Enja Riegel gives an interesting example of such a ritual in a school context that in fact concerns teachers rather than pupils. “Always on the last day of the summer holidays the first staff meeting takes place. Teachers have breakfast together, they chat. On the floor in the centre of the room there is a red velvet carpet. On it a mandala is formed, a circle of stones, which symbolizes a source of energy. On bare feet a new colleague steps into the middle of the circle. He is joined by the principal. She presents a stone to him. The teacher is supposed to make a wish for his time in the school. The principal proclaims: Now you are one of us.” (‘die tageszeitung’ 29. 01. 2003)

Literature on rituals in schools in general does not place great emphasis on investigating the rituals of inauguration or initiation that teachers experience themselves. As an exemption Alfred Schäfer's article should be mentioned (Schäfer 2004, p. 228) in which he refers to the school inspector's visit at the end of the probation year of newly qualified teachers as a variation of an initiation ritual.

1.4.7.
Conditions for efficiency, outcomes

In the section on structures of rituals it has been already mentioned that there is a correct time, space and form for each and any ritual. Ritual depends on time and space. A certain behaviour can be completely appropriate in one context, but completely inappropriate in another. (Gehrke 1979, p. 106) On this basis it is self-evident that if the correct form is not adhered to, the space and time are chosen wrong in or for a ritual there emerges the risk of the ritual not meeting the expected targets. The outcomes of the ritual thus will be doubtful and may not be achievable at all.

Mary Henry summarises what in her view are the necessary elements for a ritual to work: the participants, the timing, the repetitive structure, the order of events, and the ‘magic’ of the performance. (Henry 1993, p. 136) Similarly Kathrin Audehm for whom ritual interaction is directly influenced by the scenic arrangements, use of space and time, the material and sensual conditions of its staging (Audehm 2004, p. 56), and Ingrid Kellermann who finds that repeated interaction rituals make use of settings, specific movements to establish symbolic and classifying framing, so as to distinguish themselves from other situations. (Kellermann 2008, p. 40)

A slightly different slant is prevalent in Richard Quantz’ and Peter Magolda’s suggestion that the continuing effects of ritual on social life rest not on the separation of ritual (its borders) from the everyday life, but rather on the fact that it is ‘integral’ to it. (Quantz/Magolda 1997, p. 228)

[24] She develops this line of argument on basis of: Pierre Bourdieu; *Was heißt Sprechen;* Vienna 1990

The legitimacy of a ritual is also seen to be an essential factor to its efficiency. Pupil's response to rituals in school is observed to be depending on the school's value system being in line with value systems outside of school (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 162) and accordingly rituals can lose their efficiency if social developments progress and the rituals are counter to new hegemonic conditions/world-views (Wellendorf 1979, p. 153, 165).

The question of legitimacy is implicit also in the references made to the status of teachers as a deciding influence on the effects of school rituals. Rodney A. Clifton (1979) has explicated the consequences for practice teachers arising out of the 'marginal' situation in which they find themselves. He describes that often the orderly behaviour in a classroom dissolves into chaos when the class-teacher leaves the room and the practice teacher is left on her/his own with the class with the students not taking any notice of commands of the practice teacher. The main aspect missing for the practice teacher in this situation is the fact that s/he has no official and institutionally sanctioned authority.

The connection between official role and practical "ability to structure and enforce the protocol of the occasion" is also pointed out by Peter McLaren who sees this ability as "inextricably woven into the status of the teacher as an instrument or arbiter of punishment." (McLaren 1986, p. 101)

The same thought is mirrored in Ingrid Kellermann's book in an interesting passage on disciplining rituals. She explains what she sees as a difference between the disciplining rituals that are initiated by the teacher and those disciplining rituals that occur amongst the children themselves. For the teacher's intervention she finds that "the social magic of the disciplining ritual unfolds through the collective acceptance of the teacher's authority. (…) [In] Disciplining rituals amongst the pupils the acceptance of legitimacy and authority amongst the actors is not established *sui generis* like for a teacher, but rather situational assigned or withdrawn." (p. 216)

Ingrid Kellermann does not comment any further on the quite obvious difference between the activities amongst children and the disciplining activities from the side of the teacher in the examples she provides. The teacher's interventions constitute a break in the flow of the lesson, have an expressive function and are exemplary. This is not the case with the children's activities. They are rather immediate reactions to a situational problem (annoyance) caused by another child.

Ingrid Kellermann herself actually notes that while children use a variety of expressive forms (e. g. physical defence or attack, ignoring each other, verbal insults) in attempts of disciplining each other, the ultimate ratio for them is always the appeal to the teacher for help.

The catalogue of potential behaviour listed for the teacher (Kellermann 2008, p. 216) comprises of:

- fleeting gestures
- symbolic body language
- specific mimic and gestures
- ostentatious verbal and gestural reprehension
- intentional focusing gaze
- verbal and prosodic variations (depending on the situation: friendly-ironic, friendly-formal, sharp-disapproving, accusing-insistent, explicit-implicit)

It is interesting that the more immediate forms of acting on another are with the children. Their techniques are far more direct, and one might assume therefore also apt to incite a direct reaction or result. However that is obviously not the case. At the end of the day it is the official authority of the teacher that makes the difference.

Regarding outcomes and effects of rituals I have highlighted the fact that rituals have as their first and foremost outcome the creation of a particular reality. In taking Erving Goffman's four varieties of behaviour for inmates in total institutions as model (Goffman 1968, p. 61) I found that life in school "establishes a constant process of cooling-down, the attitude to be: 'Be quiet' - the first task of a citizen, rather: 'avoid trouble', 'endure', 'stay calm'. As long as silence is guaranteed, the machinery rolls on – serving the interest of the institution, a most comfortable way of perpetual celebration of itself. If everyone functions, everything functions. Every gesture of obedience enhances acceptance in the fibres of the body since it is inseparably connected with it." (Hamm 1999, p. 20)

This line of thought can also be found in general ritual studies. Catherine Bell points to the physical outcome of ritual action. "The molding of the body within a highly structural environment does not simply express inner states. Rather, it primarily restructures bodies in the very doing of the acts themselves. Hence, required kneeling does not merely *communicate* subordination to the kneeler. For all intents and purposes, kneeling produces a subordinate kneeler in and through the act itself." (Bell 1992, p. 100)

Where the ritual is seen as self-sufficient, its effect being first of all its manifestation, the question of compliance, conformity and belief becomes important. Peter McLaren has devoted a section of his book to this problem. He notes "Regardless of the monotonous repetition, the invariance and the formality of classroom instruction, most students conformed to what was required of them, although this conformity did not, in most instances, entail belief. While student conformity did not necessarily symbolize students' belief in the values of the school, it did serve as an 'index' of accepting those values.(…) By simply performing a ritual, the participant subordinates himself to that order. For a performer to reject whatever is encoded in the ritual in which he is performing is a contradiction in terms and therefore impossible." (McLaren 1986, p. 128)

Thus each and any effect of a ritual has as its first condition compliance on the side of the actors. It is a matter then of the trajectory that an investigation into rituals in school takes whether authors find this a sufficient basis. Bernstein/Elvin/Peters' remark that where the social basis for a ritual is weak, it can become a social routine (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 162) can be read as a proposal that from their point of view compliance is not 'enough'.

Andreas Eckstein remembers how as a child in school in the former GDR he learns to say things that mean nothing. In primary school when a teacher enters class, s/he says: "be on guard", the pupils answer: "always on guard;" formula like, mechanical like a pendulum. Later in secondary school, the greeting formula changes, the teachers says: "friendship," the students answer: "friendship." However the formula is empty, hollow, the students realize quite well that "declarations of friendship in school have as little to do with interest, care or attention as the 'be on guard' with concentration, activity and participation." (Eckstein 2000, p. 51)

From his time as a teacher in the GDR during the 1980's he recalls: "My simple 'good morning' was as much a surprise to the students of year 9 as their unassertive and inquiry-like 'friendship?' to me. Thoughtlessly I answered: 'that we will find out yet.' – Was that a threat? It did not sound like a promise, but then, there was at least a chance of coming together." (Eckstein 2000, p. 52)

Andreas Eckstein does not discuss his experiences in terms of efficiency of rituals. The question that jumps to mind however is what the effects for participants are in the first example based on what seems to be meaningless, formula-like compliance compared to those in the second example based on a spontaneous break of the ritual routine.

1.4.8.
Psychodynamics of rituals in school

The first article that paid considerable attention to rituals in the context of school came from a psychoanalytic context. Peter Fürstenau interprets rituals as defence mechanisms against drive impulses that are experienced as threatening and thus unacceptable. He develops his thoughts in line with the early argument put forward by Siegfried Bernfeld, one of the pioneers of psychoanalytic pedagogy. In Bernfeld's understanding for the adult teacher in school there is an unconscious revival of their own experiences in childhood, including all drives, emotions and attitudes that were constitutive for the relationships with their own parents. What a teacher "does, what he grants and prohibits, is what his parents did to him. In the pedagogical pair group he appears in the double role of child and educator; (…) Thus he faces two children: the one before him to be educated and the other repressed within him. He really has no choice but to treat the former the same way in which he experienced the latter (…) He repeats the destruction of his own Oedipus complex with the other child as with himself. This is true even if he appears to do the opposite of what his parents did to him." (Bernfeld 1973, p. 107)

For rituals in school Fürstenau states that they separate and isolate from the subject matter that is taught all those libidinous and aggressive elements that are threatening within the hierarchical structure of school. (Fürstenau 1969, p. 18) However for Fürstenau rituals and ceremonies are also formations in which the repressed returns in a different and unrecognised form. He states that "practising rituals and ceremonies, the dealing with people in strongly stylized form, itself satisfies specific drive related wishes, furthermore it leads to a fixation with these wishes and their way of satisfying and it exerts an appeal on the partners for a similar fixation." (Fürstenau 1969, p. 19)

While school rituals rely on psychic dispositions that originate in earlier socialisation processes (Wellendorf 1979, p. 71), they are also seen to be particularly open to satisfy pedantic type of aggression, in the name of order. (Fürstenau 1969, p. 19) A rather pronounced example from Peter McLaren: "One of the most telling moments for me was when a teacher, standing with his legs apart and his hands on his hips, 'guarded' the entrance to the aisle where the pupils genuflected towards the altar as they filed into the pew. In effect, the students were literally kneeling submissively at the feet of the teacher, who wore a look of unmistakable self-satisfaction." (McLaren 1986, p. 152)

Fürstenau's study constituted the basis on which Franz Wellendorf developed his theses about school rituals. Fürstenau's view focuses stronger on the psychic situation of the teacher than Wellendorf who concentrates more on the immanent psychic dynamic that unfolds for teachers and pupils in the school rituals. As mentioned earlier Wellendorf's conceptual approach attends to school rituals on the basis of the notion of identity-bargaining.

He highlights that despite the fact that rituals fulfil their function 'over the heads of the individuals' their effect depends on the subjectivity of the participants, too. "They bring with them their psychic dispositions or in negative terms (…) deformations and pathology (…)" (Wellendorf 1979, p. 145) and these for them are the basis on which they enter into the process of identity bargaining. The individual's instinctual impulses, affects, needs therefore are constantly present in all their aspects, irrespective of their fitting-in with the context of meaning.

In turning towards the specific situation of teachers Wellendorf holds that in their role as pedagogues in solidarity with the pupils teachers are expected to understand and accept the individual problems of pupils. Yet as representatives of institutional order and agents of selection they are expected to put in practice the principle of performance and in this role are bound to ignore the personal (biographical) identity of the pupils. Due to their own economical and social dependency within the school system teachers can not possibly openly act against the demands to uphold the values, rules, norms of school (or change them completely). In this situation developing and expressing role distance can be an attempt for teachers to solve the problem of balancing their own identity in face of conflicting demands. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 156)

In the dynamics between teachers and pupils the exercising of role distance by teachers actually shifts the problem of ambivalence away from the teachers and puts it to the pupils. They are requested to accept the dilemma of the teacher in dealing with their own demands and implicitly take the teacher's position as their own. By doing so they are expected to take a good part of the burden of the teacher's shoulders and allow her/him to maintain identity-balance without being accused of double moral standards. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 158)

For pupils the discrepancy between official role expectations as represented by teachers and informal solidarity with their peers can be a decisive factor in the decision to express their own role distance, and "(…) keeping in view the informal group relations in the context of scenes in school, it becomes clear that the chance for individual pupils to display role distance and personal identity is at the same time one that is allocated by the group." (Wellendorf 1979, p. 162)

Wellendorf therefore draws on the importance of being aware of the audience in a particular school ritual to understand the dynamic of the emergence of role distance. Just as much as the distancing from the official role can be a criteria for credibility within the peer group, it can similarly be not useful to show role distance openly where there are diverse audiences (peers, teachers, school administration, parents) present at the same time. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 158)

No other author has attended specifically to the psychodynamics of school rituals. However there are a number observations in the literature that relate quite closely to this area.

Writing from the perspective of a practising principal Enja Riegel finds teachers often caught in a dichotomy of emotions, a dichotomy of individual needs vs. administrative demands. The space in between these two poles is often blinded out by teachers. This space however provides the realm for "language of symbolic forms" which could "cultivate" it. Thus in her opinion it is important to speak about rituals as a team time again. (Riegel 2000, p. 28) She also suggests that rituals "give each individual psychological support." (Riegel 2000, p. 21)

In reference to functions of rituals Hauke Piper states that by providing a pre-defined pattern of routine behaviour rituals in general offer a relief of the "pressure to decide" what to do in a given (problematic) situation. However Hauke Piper claims that the development of routines or ritualized patterns of behaviour is essentially something that individuals do for themselves. School rituals then are not developed in an "autonomous process" by the participants, i. e. the pupils, but rather they are developed, established and modified by the teacher. "The teacher thus becomes the founder of rituals and supervisor of their correct enactment." (Piper 1997, p. 222) In contrast to this he states that rituals which effectively have a relieving function are to be developed by the group. He also notes that there is a possibility that within a particular official ritual in school a second layer of unofficial "sub-ritual" may develop in reaction to the official demand.

These thoughts are quite close to the typology of communicative, conjunctive, experimental as suggested by Ralf Bohnsack.[25] It is also clear from the literature that investigations into psycho-dynamics of ritual will always have to look at the school as an institution with a particular influence on the relationships within it and a narrow view from within one discipline can not suffice. (see e. g. McLaren 1986, Hamm 1999, Althans/Göhlich 2004, Kellermann 2008)

Annemarie von der Groeben (2000) seeks for the ontogenetic roots of rituals and finds them with Erik Erikson in recognition, primarily experienced between infant and mother, from which is derived a feeling of "belongingness and of personal distinctiveness." (Erikson 1966, p. 605) Echoing this interpretation of origins of rituals Annemarie Prengel and Friedericke Heinzel suggest the examination of rituals in school as the staging of regard/disregard. They present two rather typical examples of staging of a ritual of disregard from primary school contexts in which the assessment of a child's performance is closely linked to the assessment of the child's character.[26] For German schools they also maintain that such rituals of disregard are widespread in all school types[27]. (Prengel/Heinzel 2000, pp. 119 - 121)

At the same time they however also acknowledge that alongside there are "innovative school rituals" (they also use the term "multiple social inventions") that address the complex of recognition. Exemplary they refer to the practice of circle time in relation to gender equality. (Prengel/Heinzel 2000, pp. 122 – 124)

Ingrid Kellermann provides another indication of the psychodynamic qualities of ritual. In her eyes one characteristic of rituals is that they channel aggression and conflict (Kellermann 2008, p. 40). Apart from this more general statement her entire research project is concerned with the process of identity-bargaining of school beginners in the first couple of weeks of their school career. She gives numerous descriptions of ritual activities (of smaller or bigger scale) in which these school beginners are pupilified, i. e. get accustomed to their new social identity.

1.4.9.
Ritual style - rituals as indicators

Judith Kapferer's essay from 1981 takes into focus rituals in Australian private schools. In the context of her discussion she also refers to the difference which she recognises between these schools and the state schools in relation to 'school spirit.' The latter in her opinion may in fact contribute to the rise of the cultural bourgeoisie by not providing a basic attachment to academic values, and by the failure to symbolically hold them up for "collective inspection and validation" in rituals and ceremonies. (Kapferer 1981, p. 273)

[25] Obviously Ralf Bohnsack's typology was only suggested in 2004.

[26] An example: "Art lesson: the children work on a sponge rubber dragon. The teacher takes Karl's dragon and raises it up so that everyone can see it. The teacher says loud for everyone to hear that Karl, the rascal, has ignored the task as usual. He points out how bad Karl's dragon actually looks. Karl says nothing, stares at the floor. - The problem of the teacher was that Karl did not cut the eyes of the dragon out of the piece of sponge rubber, but rather painted them on it and that he had furthermore decorated it." Prengel/Heinzel comment on this: "The teacher walks through the class between the rows of sitting children to the place of Karl. From here he exposes the product of the child to the eyes of the entire class. In this case the derivation on basis of creativity functions as trigger for disregard. (…)" (Prengel/Heinzel 2004, p. 120)

[27] This again can be read as a reinforcement of the theses of Fürstenau and Wellendorf, although Prengel/Heinzel do not go down that route.

As we have already seen, rituals are commonly recognised as expressing values, norms and beliefs. The lack of a distinctive ‘school spirit’ as observed by Judith Kapferer for the Australian state schools during the 1970’s can be closely linked to these schools not having a “school culture” in the sense as put forward by Mary Henry (1993, p. 39).

In her terms a school culture is understood to be “a set of relationships, beliefs, values, and feelings shared by those who make up a school.” (Henry 1993, p. 39) Rituals are one of the five interconnected domains in which she analyses school culture; the others are: historical/social context; stories, myths and ‘philosophies’; curriculum and evaluation; time/space and social relations. (Henry 1993, p. 40)

Each school has its own school culture. For different schools having different underlying paradigms, world views and ideals, even the same ritual can signify different meanings, and she exemplifies this with a comparison of advent celebrations in an Anglican high school and a Waldorf school. (Henry 1993, p. 171)

In this respect Mary Henry’s study expands extensively on an idea that was already part of Peter McLaren’s book on schooling as a ritual performance who speaks of a “ritual charter” that he found in the school of his field study. (McLaren 1986, p. 183)

In an outlook at the end of her study Mary Henry is of the opinion that it is not possible to “invent rites or any other part of school culture and artificially impose them to ‘make’ culture. Rites come out of a larger picture which includes the history of the school, the school population, the parent body, the school’s traditions, it’s philosophical and mythical foundations.” (Henry 1993, p. 216)

In this regard it is interesting to follow up on the discussions in German educational science (and practically in German schools) where exactly this conscious shaping, influencing of school culture plays a big role. (e. g. Riegel 2000, von der Groeben 2000, Hinz 2000)

The concept of “ritual knowledge” was mentioned already. In the form as used by Peter McLaren the term referred to the knowledge of individuals about the rituals in their school environment, a type of “ritual mastery” (Bell 1992, p. 107). It could similarly be called ‘ritual literacy’ but this term has been used by Mary Henry in a slightly different fashion. She understands this to be “the rituals of a particular school” rather than a certain ability, knowledge of the school population. (Henry 1993, p. 171)

Yet another use of the terminology can be found in the article of Birgit Althans and Michael Göhlich on ritual knowledge and organizational learning. They maintain that schools as organisations have a ritual knowledge – which is rather close to Mary Henry’s idea of ritual literacy. Organisational learning in their eyes consists of the inclusion of ritual knowledge from contexts outside of the organization, bringing it together with traditions within the organization and transferring it into a new traditionalised ritual knowledge for the organization. School modifies ritual knowledge for its continuity as an organization with specific function, aims and traditions. (Althans/Göhlich 2004, p. 207)

In line with the symbolic and expressive character of rituals as rolled out earlier, rituals then can be looked on as indicators. We have seen already that rituals in this sense are carriers of information about the norms, values, beliefs that are constitutional for the school in which they appear.

I have highlighted the fact that various rituals that are observable within a given school do not necessarily all represent the same values, even if these rituals are understood as ‘school rituals’ or ‘communicative rituals.’ I have further put this phenomenon into a stringent relation to the discourse on and within the discipline of pedagogy. (Hamm 1999, p. 26)

To speak intelligibly about rituals in this sense is only possible if one takes into account the historical situation in which they appear.

1.5.
The German debate on rituals[28]

As can be seen in the review of literature on rituals in schools I have taken into account the major contributions from an English speaking context, but also those from a German background. It may be useful to point out that the reciprocal fecundation between these two contexts is rather limited.

While the contributions of Bernstein/Elvin/Peters and Peter McLaren enjoy at least a certain proliferation within Germany, other publications (e. g. Gehrke, Kapferer, Henry, Quantz) are often unknown even in scholarly circles.

Similarly for the German texts in the English speaking world: the early contributions from psychoanalytic background (Fürstenau, Wellendorf) have never been translated. The practice-orientated debate of the late 1980’s and 1990’s (e. g. Ziehe, Riegel, Steffensky, von der Groeben) and the critical contributions of the late 1990’s (e. g. Piper, Hamm) are similarly unavailable in English. It is only in the last couple of years that something like an exchange of thought has started. I say ‘something like an exchange of thought’ quite consciously. In fact what is observed is that results in the context of the Berlin ritual studies have been published in English (e. g. Werler/Wulf 2006; Wulf et. al. 2010). However to call what is going on in relation to this exchange of thought a lively debate would surely be an exaggeration. It is a start though.

For English speaking readers it may be worthwhile to at least sketch the major lines of the German debate on rituals in education.

During the 1960’s and 1970’s in (West-)German educational debates the dominant view was that rituals are a means of conservative and even reactionary control. Peter Fürstenau and Franz Wellendorf provided the main theoretical background for argumentation in this context. A view that identified rituals as elements of authoritarian pedagogy was widely accepted. It is also reproduced by Helmut Fend in his seminal publication “Theorie der Schule” where he refers to ritualisations as a means of coercion. (Fend 1980, p. 176)

In the context of an overall conservative roll-back in West-Germany during the mid 1980’s a new discussion on rituals in schools was triggered which went on also after the re-establishment of a unified Germany throughout the 1990’s. The structuring functions of rituals were highlighted and appreciated in various ways. Practical applications of rituals were discussed as solutions for discipline problems in school. (see e. g. Ziehe 1987; Riegel 1994)

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[28] This section is an adapted version of the presentation at the annual conference of ESAI (Educational Studies Association Ireland) in Cork 29. - 31. 03. 2012

The importance of periodicals at the overlap between theory and practice for the transmission of lines of argumentation for teachers should not be underestimated. Antje Langer (2008) has produced a remarkable study about contemporary body practices, body concepts and their discursive mediation in the context of schools in Germany. Her innovative methodological approach combines ethnographic field studies with discourse analysis. She shows how argumentative figures are disseminated via these periodicals that contribute to the interpretation of rituals as legitimate practices in German schools. We will come across elements of these argumentations in the empirical part when comparing the results of the interview series that are part of my study. (see section 6.2)

Antje Langer has pointed out that rituals in contemporary German schools can be seen as preventive didactic practices. Their desired effect is a disciplining of bodies. “Descriptions of ritualised practices (…) take up the position of a discipline that is thought of as productive. A negative depiction of the term [discipline] as sanctioning regimentation can not do that.” In the periodicals which she surveyed “explicit suggestions for body oriented work with pupils are exclusively made for primary school, Hauptschulen and special schools.”[29] (Langer 2006, p. 272) These suggestions aim at the establishment of silence, quietude and calmness.

Antje Langer puts these contributions in a context of a discourse about a reorientation of pedagogy, away from the “poisonous pedagogy” of the past.[30] Discipline in this context is no longer modelled along lines of punishment. “(...) coercion is not desired. It comes to a peculiar constellation: the teachers should achieve a disciplined situation (…) without disciplining.” (Langer 2006, p. 272) The solution for this dilemma then is sought in ritual practices. They are suggested as means to achieve a disciplined situation in the classroom while at the same time their disciplining character is not discussed.

Rituals of the past are branded for their repressive character. However, modern day pedagogy is depicted as a long way from its dark history. Critical examinations and ambivalences in argumentations are restricted to general discussions of rituals. “In reports from experiences which can be at the same time read as manuals for possible didactic practices, and in the context of everyday school rituals (…) such a problematisation does not feature.” (Langer 2008, p. 177)

[29] The German secondary school system is traditionally organised in a hierarchical three-tier system of “Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium.” Only graduates from the Gymnasium can go on studying in a University. It is no accident that suggestions for the use of rituals as techniques within classroom practice are made exclusively for primary school, Hauptschule and special schools. It merely shows how a certain type of behaviour is depicted as the norm for all. The Gymnasium provides the model. Physicality, immediate bodily expression, movement, noise are to be repressed, the body of the child has to be a mere carrier of the person, but not an entity in its own right. A stringent line can be developed from this phenomenon to the process of civilisation (Elias). In a way detecting the dissemination of these suggestions, and their application in practice, provides a window to look at the process of civilisation in progress. The construction of categories of 'normal' and 'deficit' children is part of this process.

[30] I am using the translation “poisonous pedagogy” here instead of the literal translation of the original term “black pedagogy” (schwarze Pädagogik) as used by Antje Langer. The term “schwarze Pädagogik” was coined by Katharina Rutschky. It refers to restrictive and repressive educational techniques that make use of inflicting of pain (physical and emotional), to the total supervision of children (control of their bodily expressions, rigid codes of behaviour, demanding total submission) and to the taboo of sensual physical contact.

In a peculiar way teacher educators and teachers seized the concept of ritual and developed it into a whole body of practical suggestions. There is an underlying premise on which these suggestions build. The overall cliché of children's needs provides a killer-phrase[31] in any discussion. It is pronounced that “children need rituals” (Sattler 2007, p. 28).[32] On this basis there is no legitimate questioning of the idea of ritual as such any more. The general desire in human beings to feel safe is translated into the demand for rituals to provide this safety in the institutional context of school.

In teacher education in Germany in 2012 seminars on rituals in school are on offer and the notion of ritual as a basic concept within education informs the teaching of teachers.[33] Student teachers can (and routinely do) choose to do assignments on rituals in schools. A plethora of publications appeared over the last twenty years in which manuals for rituals in school are presented. The most notorious title is probably Astrid Kaiser's “1000 rituals for primary school” which was reprinted in seven editions since its first publication in the year 2000.

Rituals are thus seen not only as a legitimate practice within educational institutions, they are portrayed as a necessity (because: children need them!), which immunises them against infundamental critique. Accordingly rituals are developed into a didactic means (didactic here understood as: the art of teaching) that should be standard part of the repertoire of a good teacher.

The choreography of rituals in German schools in 2012 however differs from the one in the 1960's. Circle time is probably the most prevalent example. According to a study conducted by Friederike Heinzel in 2001, circle time was practised in 89 % of German primary schools. (Prengel/Heinzel 2004, p. 122) I would expect that ten years later this figure is even higher.

A teacher in Germany who introduces circle time in the classroom will necessarily have an understanding of this practice as to be a ritual. If the teacher has been attentive during the lectures in teacher training she or he will make pronounced use of symbols, a sound-bowl or a rain-stick may be used to create an atmosphere of meditative silence, a certain gesture may be required from children who wish to speak, a toy fetish may be passed around from speaker to speaker[34] etc.

And in line with the hegemonic discourse in Germany this ritual will be seen as serving a substantial need of children, providing regularity, reliability, structure, safety – all of which are terms that have a highly positive connotation in contrast to e.g. anxiety, strife, restlessness, etc.

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[31] Stephen Brookfield suggested the term “premature ultimate” for such a cliché that is used in discussion to end discussion: “To claim to meet the community's needs is to assert one's credentials as a humanistic, concerned adult educator. The phrase, therefore, functions as a "premature ultimate" in that its invocation precludes further debate on the adult educator's professional responsibilities. The air of reverence surrounding the term serves to prevent critical scrutiny of what constitutes community adult education.” (Brookfield 1985, p. 232)

[32] Examples from school programmes in 2012:
“Children need rituals for orientation and structuring in their everyday life. They need quietude to calm down and to contemplate.” [orig. “Kinder brauchen Rituale zur Orientierung und Strukturierung ihres Alltags. Sie brauchen Stille, um zur Ruhe zu kommen und sich zu besinnen.”] (Hainwaldschule-Voerum, Peine);
“Children need rituals. Rituals establish orientation, safety, trust and respect.” [orig. “Kinder brauchen Rituale. Rituale lassen Orientierung, Sicherheit, Vertrauen und Achtung erwachsen.”] (54. Grundschule, Leipzig);
“Children need rituals. Rituals establish orientation, safety and trust.” [orig. “Kinder brauchen Rituale. Rituale lassen Orientierung, Sicherheit und Vertrauen wachsen.”] (Montessorischule Reumontstrasse, Aachen)

[33] See e. g.: https://www.tu-braunschweig.de/schulpaedagogik/studium/prak/ups
www.uni-potsdam.de/zfl/studium/broschuere.pdf
http://astrid-kaiser.de/lehre/veranstaltungen/rituale.php
www.egora.uni-muenster.de/ew/studieren/bindata/KVV_SS08_GS.PDF

[34] This practice is not restricted to children as I have documented in the article on parents meetings. (Hamm 2011a)

Excursus: Ritualisation as distinct to ritual

In the literature on rituals in school there is quite frequently a use of terminology that includes notions of ritual, ritualisation, ritual interaction, ritual activities etc.

In two newer publications the authors have also tried to explain a difference between ritual and ritualisation. For Monika Wagner-Willi (2005) the term ritualisation captures the process character of activities including the particularly fleeting, spontaneous and playful actionism. Ritualisations are located at one end of a spectrum of rituals. They are counterpart to communicative-generalised rituals. Ingrid Kellermann (2008) similarly points to ritualisations as sequences of activities or behaviour which contain ritual components without yet being identifiable as classified rituals. However neither of the two authors expands further on this distinction.

In the next section I wish to show how a conceptual difference can be developed if ritualisation rather than ritual is taken as a starting point. For this purpose I will have recourse to Catherine Bell's seminal contributions on ritual theory and ritual practice (Bell 1992, 1997). Through an expanded account of her proposal it will become obvious that her approach opens a possibility of shifting perspectives also in relation to rituals in school.

1.6.
Catherine Bell's suggestion: Ritualisation as a strategy

In her study on *Ritual theory – Ritual practice* (1992) Catherine Bell notes that from the numerous contributions on defining ritual a plethora of ritual types has been derived along lines of liturgics, religious ritual, secular ritual, ceremonies, political ritual, civic ceremonial, private ritual, collective ritual, rites of rebellion, rites of solidarity, dramatic performance, formality of games, festival, holiday. (1992, p. 69)[35]

In general she identifies two ways of defining ritual as common to ritual studies.

The first tries to list a number of relevant categories that make a particular activity a ritual, thus separating ritual from other activities by way of specific features that are found in ritual but not in the other activities. Ritual in this way is usually located on one side of a pointed distinction like e. g. symbolic vs. pragmatic, routinised vs. spontaneous, expressive vs. instrumental. Catherine Bell notes that "the distinction between ritual and instrumental activity can easily collapse into a distinction between the rational and the irrational or the logical and the emotional." (1992, p. 71)

The second approach sees ritual as an aspect of all human activity, usually highlighted as its expressive, symbolic, communicative aspects, or as elements of routinisation and formalisation. Implied in this approach Catherine Bell finds "promiscuous tendencies" particularly where "it identifies ritual with formal communicative functions and then finds ritual to some degree in all or most activity." (1992, p. 73)

As we have seen, attempts have been made also to find definitions for rituals in school in line with these approaches.

[35] All footnotes in this section refer to Catherine Bells text from 1992.

Considering the two approaches for Catherine Bell "an impasse appears to loom. (…) On the one hand there is evidence that ritual acts are not a clear and closed category of social behaviour. On the other hand many problems attend the attempt to see ritual as a dimension of all or many forms of social behaviour. How can the distinguishing features of so-called ritual activities be approached without cutting ritual off from what it shares with social activity in general?" (1992, p. 74)

Her suggestion then is to attend to social action in general and take into focus how and why people act "so as to give some activities a privileged status vis-à-vis others." Therefore she proposes a framework of 'ritualisation', "the production of ritualized acts" (1992, p. 140) to "draw attention to the way in which certain social actions strategically distinguish themselves in relation to other actions." (1992, p. 74)

In her understanding ritualisation is a practical way of dealing with specific circumstances, therefore it is situational and strategic. It "involves the (…) drawing (…) of a privileged distinction between ways of acting." Essentially ritualisation establishes itself as more important or powerful than other ways of acting. (1992, p. 90)

The motif of ritual knowledge as tacit knowledge appears in her book in the notion of a "sense of ritual." She finds that participants in ritual construct a "ritual environment" which in turn impresses the ritual schemes upon the bodies. She finds that this process, if it is recognised at all, tends to be misrecognised in that the norms, values impressed are thought of as stemming from sources of power and order beyond the process itself. Due to its rootedness in the body ritualisation in her terms is "a particular 'mute' form of activity" which is "designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking." (1992, p. 93)

She identifies as the end of ritualisation "the production of a ritualized body (…) invested with a sense of ritual." (1992, p. 98) As such ritualisation can be understood also as a means of socialization, which makes it an important feature for any discussion about education, particularly where it is seen as a strategy which is situational applied. "The goal of ritualisation as a strategic way of acting is the ritualisation of social agents. Ritualisation endows these agents with some degree of ritual mastery. This mastery is an internalization of schemes with which they are capable of reinterpreting reality in such a way as to afford perceptions and experiences of a hegemonic order." (1992, p. 141)

At the same time ritualisation aims at producing a certain reality. While there may be an internal resistance against kneeling "for all intents and purposes, kneeling produces a subordinate kneeler in and through the act itself." (1992, p. 100) To this extent, ritualisation is an act of production of social reality anchored in the body by means of the body.

Catherine Bell also points to the "strategic 'misrecognition' of one's end and means" which is an essential element of lived practice, and is also found in ritualisation. In reference to Louis Althusser she finds that while "ritual practices are produced with an intent to order, rectify or transform a particular situation (…) they would not see what they actually do in ritually ordering, rectifying or transforming the situation. Foucault implies a similar principle when he notes that people know what they do and they know why they do what they do, but they do not know what what they do does. For Althusser, this constitutes the intrinsic 'blindness' of practice." (1992, p. 108)

For Catherine Bell ritualisation "(…) is a way of acting that sees itself as *responding* to a place, event, force, problem, or tradition. It tends to see itself as the natural or appropriate thing to do in the circumstances. ritualisation does not see how it actively creates place, force, event, and tradition, how it redefines or generates the circumstances to which it is responding." (1992, p. 109)[36]

As rites "take place specifically in lieu of explicit logical speculation" she furthermore finds that "ritualisation is simultaneously the avoidance of explicit speech and narrative." (1992, p. 111)

Catherine Bell notes that ritualisation brings the social body, the community, the largest image into a "configuration of coherent continuity." She coins the term 'redemptive hegemony' to describe that element of ritualisation that accounts for the actors finding their position in 'the order of things' within the world, giving their agency a point of reference. And yet she sees this configuration being appropriated in the interest of persons or groups. "The coherence is rendered and experienced as redemptive for those empowered by the schemes of the ritual." (1992, p. 115)

This inevitably puts ritualisation into an arena of the social where contrasting or conflicting interests prevail and in which power relations are to be negotiated. It also means that ritualisation can not be questioned as a neutral strategy, but rather has to be traced to the relevant interests of those engaged in it.

According to Catherine Bell to get a full grasp on ritualisation it is also necessary to consider the larger context of ritual traditions and systems in which ritualisation takes place. To understand a particular situation in which ritualisation is enacted is only possible if the historical dimensions of the situation, its connection to certain traditions as well as its spatial, temporal dimensions and the role of ritual specialists are taken into account.

As for tradition Catherine Bell points out that in fact tradition can be invented. She underpins this with reference to Eric Hobsbawns report on the successful "invention of a number of rituals in America in the later nineteenth century that worked to differentiate Americans and Americanism from ethnicity and 'un-Americanism' of the large number of immigrants entering the country at the time." (1992, p. 122)

However she also holds that ritualisation can not be equated with a standardized process of traditionalisation. While at times it may effect traditionalisation at other times ritualisation may just as well be a strategic way to challenge and renegotiate tradition and to bring about change.

The spatial dimensions of ritualisation as noted by Catherine Bell usually refer to a set of binary oppositions: "(1) the vertical opposition of superior and inferior, which generates hierarchical structures; (2) the horizontal opposition of here and there, or us and them, which generates lateral or relatively egalitarian relationships; and (3) the opposition of central and local, which frequently incorporates and dominates the preceding oppositions." (1992, p. 125) She goes as far as stating that the "horizontal and vertical relations played out in time (…) are simultaneously the context and the very stuff of ritualisation." (1992, p. 128)

[36] This is another example for the way language is used in a way that creates abstract subjects. 'Ritualisation' does not see anything at all, 'ritualisation' has no eyes to see. Only human beings, that is: the actors in lived practice can see, or in seeing not see, i. e. misrecognise …

Referring to a neo-Marxist discussion as represented by Georg Lukacs, Fredric Jameson or Pierre Bourdieu she recalls the development of ritual specialists in the process of objectification of human beings and their relationships. With the establishment of institutions a body of specialists appears within these institutions who take on a controlling role not on basis of personal presence and explicit conflict, but rather "via ownership of the means by which 'reality' is articulated for cognitive endorsement by all." At the same time the specific institutional authority is backed up by the development of institutions "which ensure that such specialists do not need constant popular support in order to survive." (1992, p. 131)

This can be applied to the role of a teacher in school whose authority derives not from personal qualities but rather from the position as office holder within an educational institution called school. The school itself is integrated in the 'education system' which is comprised of the entire machinery of the department of education, teacher training colleges, educational science, government agencies like inspectorate, council for curriculum development, school psychological services, professional development providers etc. All these various agencies and institutions shape up to a system of specialists who take on "the formulation of reality." (1992, p. 131)

As a general tendency Catherine Bell identifies that "when strategies of ritualisation are dominated by a special group, recognised as official experts, the definition of reality that they objectify works primarily to retain the status and authority of the experts themselves." (1992, p. 132)

Turning to the idea of ritual as a means of social control Catherine Bell tries to progress from the view of "ritual as an ideologizing mechanism for transforming ideas into sentiments and sentiments into significance." Instead she suggests that "the projection and embodiment of schemes in ritualisation is more effectively viewed as 'mastering' of relationships of power relations within an arena that affords a negotiated appropriation of the dominant values embedded in the symbolic schemes." (1992, p. 182) In this context she specifically attends to the aspects of belief, ideology and legitimation.

Within the actual practice of ritual activity she finds that what is required is little more than minimal consent and general compliance rather than a consensus based of shared belief system. Taking recourse to motives of Gramsci she talks about the way consent of subordinated classes to dominant values is to be seen as "negotiated" even if "alternative voices are suppressed into silence." Such consent simply rests on the absence of articulated alternatives. And with Bourdieu she understands the consent of subordinated classes as complicity with dominant-class values, however this complicity is "neither passive submission (…) nor free adoption (…) It is fundamentally an act of misrecognition by which the dominated class accepts the legitimacy of the values of the dominant class (…)" (1992, p. 190) And yet, this misrecognition according to Bourdieu is essentially a strategic engagement. Implied in the development of the argument is also that misrecognition as strategic engagement can give way to other forms of strategic engagement where in fact there are articulated alternatives.

For actors in the social sphere Catherine Bell finds "when they agree, they do not passively follow or obey; they appropriate, negotiate, qualify. Evidence suggests a rich variety of ways in which people can consent, resist, or manipulate aspects of dominant ideologies." On this basis she refers to the suggestion that "ideology should be seen as a set of practices" that are apt to direct the "potentially infinite meaning of various cultural elements and relations in determinate ways." (1992, p. 191) Such an understanding of ideology brings with it a renewed understanding of the actors in social struggles. They are in fact seen to be quite active despite potential division and over-determination.

Catherine Bell contrasts ideology to physical force, noting that ideology is a "strategy for not using coercive physical force, ideology assumes that it will not be met by physical force in return." (1992, p. 192) She indicates that as people engage in ideological practice they will identify a self-interest that relates to their engagement.

The view of ritual as a disguise of the threat of physical violence that legitimises power in her opinion needs revision. Instead she follows Clifford Geertz[37] in outlining that ritual "constructs an argument, a set of tensions" and should be seen as "the thing itself. It *is* power; it acts and actuates." (1992, p. 195) Such a proposal shifts the notions of power, politics or social control as entities that have an existence outside of the actual lived practice and are symbolized or expressed in ritual towards an understanding of ritual activities, ritualisation as "the very production and negotiation of power relationships." (1992, p. 196)

Catherine Bell takes up the approach to power as promoted by Michel Foucault. This approach dismisses the idea that power is a substantive entity, a 'thing' that can be possessed. Instead of developing a theory of power, Foucault suggests to analyse power "in terms of human relations." Power thus becomes a "matter of techniques and discursive practices that comprise the micropolitics of everyday life." (1992, p. 199)

The influence of this approach on Catherine Bell is quite obvious, not least in the fact that her study on ritual follows the same pattern, i. e. she explicitly attempts to "avoid a theory of ritual", but rather forges "a framework for reanalysing types of activities usually understood as ritual." (1992, p. 219)

For Foucault "every power relationship implies, at least *in potential*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal."[38] Hence Catherine Bell notes that for Foucault the "exercise of power is a strategic choice from among ways of interacting." (1992, p. 201)

From the numerous references in Foucault's writings to ceremony, liturgy and ritual she derives support for the framework which she develops for understanding ritual activities via the focus on ritualisation. "Foucault's discussion helps clarify the purposes of ritualisation as an effective way of acting, namely, how the production of ritualized agents is a strategy for the construction of particular relationships of power effective in particular social situations." (1992, p. 202)

This leads to her proposing that "ritualisation is a strategic play of power, of domination and resistance, within the arena of the social body." (1992, p. 204) She finds that any "moderately socialized person" has access to a repertoire of situational forms of ritualisation, a repercussion of the earlier argument for a 'sense of ritual' and 'ritual mastery'. This repertoire is the obvious effect of the socialization process that the particular person experienced, "a self-constituting history that is a patchwork of compliance, resistance, misunderstanding, and a redemptive personal appropriation of the hegemonic order." (1992, p. 208)

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[37] Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali,* Princeton 1980; she also refers in this context to: David Cannadine & Simon Price (Eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge 1987;
And: Maurice Bloch, *The ritual of the royal bath in Madagascar*, in: Cannadine/Price 1987, pp 271 - 297

[38] Foucault, Michel; *The subject and power;* in: Critical Inquiry, Vol 8, No. 4 (Summer 1982) p. 794

The location of one's own actions and lived practice within the hegemonic order along a vision of personal redemption is what allows for the ability to engage and affect this order.[39] The immediate understanding that an actor has of her/his actions and their connection to the order of things may vary from the understanding of other actors (or ritual specialists).

Catherine Bell is well aware that the consent for participation "may be based in great part on material needs" but she insists that this does not account for an "ideological colonization of the participant's consciousness." In simple terms this can lead to an assertion of a "consenting physical body experienced as distinct from a resisting mind." (1992, p. 208) Participation for Catherine Bell thus is negotiated participation.

She finds the aspect of negotiation also in the way participants in rituals act. "They do so in ways that open up for them some personal and provisional understanding of how the immediate universe works and how they as individuals fit into it." (1992, p. 208) In this notion of negotiation we can find implicit the idea of mimesis as developed particularly by the Berlin ritual studies (and with it the idea of ritual change), but also the concept of identity-bargaining as put forward by Franz Wellendorf.

Due to the fact that ritualisation "implies and demonstrates a relatively unified corporate body" and yet remains beyond the "threshold of discourse of systematic thinking," in absence of an actual exchange of thought on ritualisation in ritualisation, the impression that participants (and spectators) get is often misled to assume a far bigger consensus than there is in reality. (1992, p. 210)

The "need to presume at least an illusion of consensus among participants" also points to the limits of ritualisation. If participants do not care about potential gains or costs from not consenting, and if they are not afforded an "opportunity to appropriate and/or resist in negotiated ways," (1992, p. 211) ritualisation as a strategy will not work. And yet such a situation is only possible on the basis of "either total resistance or asocial self-exclusion" (1992, p. 214).

Ritualisation leads to the investment of a particular authority in certain participants. In this regard Catherine Bell distinguishes the way ritualisation establishes authority from the form of contractual authority and from coercive force. "Just as contractual authority must be renewed (…) and coercive force must be constantly vigilant in maintaining its threat, in the same way power constituted through ritualisation must regularly sustain itself through the recreation of tradition, the reobjectification of office, and the reproduced display of its magnificence." (1992, pp. 212/213)

1.7.
Investigating ritualisation as a strategy in school

By taking up Catherine Bells notion of ritualisation the discussion of those phenomena in school that are subsumed under the term ritual can be altered decisively. The idea of ritualisation as a situational strategic intervention in a process of negotiation of power relations brings onto the plane the agency of the participants in rituals; their intentions, wishes, hopes, demands suddenly take centre stage, and with it the 'blindness of practice' as well as the question of hegemony, domination and subordination. What is suggested here is a shift in perspective.

[39] This includes a potential positioning 'in opposite to the hegemonic order', which is yet dependent on this order.

Looking at ritual for its symbolic, expressive, performative, normative etc. qualities easily ends up in the impression of ritual being a phenomenon in its own right with an existence that is simply fulfilled by the actors. Such a view in a peculiar way only mirrors the often noted camouflage of values, norms promoted in ritual as being derived from some higher authority.

By looking at those acts that are otherwise seen as ritual through the lenses of ritualisation, and situational strategic intervention in a process of negotiation of power relations, each and all of these acts gain a new quality. They are open to analysis as a series of strategically chosen moves of actors. The actors however are just as much active agents in shaping their reality as they themselves are the ensemble of social relations.

The various questions of performance, use of language, movement, space, time etc. become mere questions of techniques. Answering them informs us about the internal logic of a given ritual and as such they are worth being posed, in fact when analysing a particular ritual they are essential to gain an insight into the way how the respective ritual relates to other contemporary activities.

What the perspective of ritualisation opens up instead is a new level of questions. These questions are asked not of ‘ritual’ but more so of the actors in ritual. What is on the table is the whole complex of questioning their acting as reasonable, grounded or explicable. Also on the table is their acting in its ambiguity within a wider social context. What is on the table is further the question of articulated alternatives.[40]

1.8.
Rituals and reflection (I)

The phenomenon of strategic misrecognition as put forward by Catherine Bell implies that there is something to be recognised that is actually not recognised – or else something to be acknowledged that is not acknowledged, at least not at this time in this situation. She states that actors in ritual “do not see how they have created the environment that is impressing itself on them but assume, simply in how things are done, that forces from beyond the immediate situation are shaping the environment and its activities in fundamental ways.” (Bell 1997, p. 82)

Strategic misrecognition or blindness of practice are phenomena that must have an influence on reflection, in our case: on teachers' reflection on rituals. Where literature on rituals in school attends to the question of their accessibility for reflection this is usually understood as a problematic area. On the one hand there are suggestions as put forward by Enja Riegel who maintains that to gain self-assurance “it is important to speak as a team about rituals again and again” (Riegel 2000, p. 28). On the other hand there are voices who state that, while rituals are reflexive (i. e. they reflect a value system), they are unquestionable, i. e. not exposed to reflection. (Wellendorf 1979, p. 144)

The unquestionable character of rituals is also pointed out by Judith Kapferer who furthermore says that rituals are not questioning either. In her opinion “ideas and actions organized in ritual form receive a certain ‘sanctity'.” (Kapferer 1981, p. 264) Peter McLaren sees rituals of classroom instruction gaining unquestionable status on the basis of pedagogical practices becoming sanctified. (McLaren 1986, p. 127)

40 For a discussion of Catherine Bell's concept see also my text in response to Burckhard Dücker (Hamm 2012c)

In rituals a merely pre-reflexive[41] and affect-loaded basis of moral development is seen to be at work by Arno Combe. He holds that they claim the bodily-material, sensual-active relationship to the world and that they are opposed to the culturally dominant habitus of the rational actor. (Combe 2000, p. 111) That rituals are pre-reflexive is a view also shared by Ralf Bohnsack. He concludes that while rituals deal with experiences of differences, they do so not in meta-communicative or reflective manner. (Bohnsack 2004, p. 83)

In Hauke Piper's opinion the particular aspect of analogical forms of communication as suggested by Watzlawick/Beavin/Jackson (see above, footnote 17) is a hindrance to accessibility of rituals for reflection. Ritual cannot be criticized within the ritual. A negation of the ritual implies that one has to step out of the situation and criticizes it in digital form. (Piper 1997, p. 221)

For Nathalie Gehrke ritual is symbolic of the participants' belief in a power beyond human experience. (Gehrke 1979, p. 103) Michael Göhlich is more specific in his statement that the cultural and historical background, the underlying power relation and the fact that rituals can actually be changed is covered up by their assumed naturalness. However he also maintains that these all can be uncovered by conscious efforts (Göhlich 2004, p. 22) which would suggest that there is in fact a chance to reflect on rituals.

A distinction is made by Monika Wagner-Willi who claims that communicative rituals are reflexively accessible and explicable while conjunctive rituals are only in parts reflexively accessible or explicable. (Wagner-Willi 2005, p. 47)

Based on my experience of working in educational institutions for 15 years, of being involved in numerous educational initiatives and organisations over the last 25 years and being a member of the management structure of a primary school in Ireland the scepticism expressed in the literature regarding reflection on rituals in educational contexts seems fairly justified. When the various authors touch on the issue of rituals and reflection they however do not expand in any substantial manner on the idea of reflection as such. Questions regarding the accessibility of rituals for reflection, the dynamics or the effects of such reflection if it then happens, remain largely unexplored. Comments in these areas are often rather common sense, yet they are not substantiated for their actual applicability in the reality of school life. Thus it seems necessary to be far more specific when addressing the issue of rituals and reflection.

[41] The term pre-reflexive is used by Arno Combe in opposite to a cognitivist access to a given phenomenon (here: moral development via rituals).

2. Concepts of Reflection (as part of professional practice in schools)

2.1. Introduction

The concept of teachers as reflective practitioners enjoys immense popularity in the educational world. For a teacher to state publicly that she or he does not reflect on their practice is anathema. The proliferation of the catchy slogan of reflective practice clearly has a prescriptive character for teachers: it formulates a demand as much as an obligation.

Based on the suggestion made by various authors who wrote on rituals in school that these rituals are not open to reflection, or in case they are reflected upon they change their character, hence they are not rituals any more (Piper 1997, p. 225) the question arises: if teachers are obliged to (and assuming they do) reflect upon their practice, how do they reflect upon rituals in school which are obviously part of their practice? Or else: do they reflect upon rituals at all?

Furthermore taking into account Catherine Bell's suggestion of speaking of rituals in terms of ritualisation (situational strategic interventions in negotiations of power relations) and Franz Wellendorf's characterisation of rituals in school as typical scenes in which a process of identity-bargaining takes place, a particular interest arises in the question of how rituals/ritualisations are brought into interactive reflection processes within the professional arena in which they take place.

In a way similar to the uncertainty that surrounds the term ritual it is quite obvious that there are also a significant number of attempts to present concepts of reflection. It seems inevitable that with the growing popularity of a term (not only) within educational scientific discourse the number of its interpretations and uses grows accordingly. Depending on their various backgrounds and derived thereof their various visions, socially, politically, authors approach the term reflection differently. In the specific case of the term reflection that has led to a array of publications dealing with what the authors deem to be reflection over the last 30 years. Only recently Nona Lyons has successfully proven that it is possible to fill 600 pages with nearly 30 articles from various authors dealing with the concepts of reflection from all sorts of angles (Lyons 2010).

In light of this abundance of articles I have made a decision to take the idea of the 'reflective practitioner' as my point of entry. I will sketch the idea behind the term 'reflective practitioner' and point to the limits of the concept in relation to my own study.

Afterwards I will move on to general concepts of reflection that are brought into discussion in educational circles. I am going to depict models of processual scale, functional character and orientational character of reflection as currently used in literature on reflection processes. The concept of critical reflection will receive attention in this context, too. The shortcomings of the usual models of reflection in relation to investigating concrete reflection processes of teachers in their professional practice will be touched on. A shift towards an understanding of reflection as a social act will be suggested and parameters for my own research will be derived.

2.2.
Reflective Practitioners

The newly established Teaching Council of Ireland set out in 2005 to issue codes of conduct for the teaching profession in Ireland. All teachers in recognised schools in Ireland are obliged to be registered by the Teaching Council and to pay a membership fee. The codes of conduct that were eventually published in 2007 have the character of a binding document. Each teacher in Ireland is supposed to follow the principles laid out in it and live up to the proclaimed standards.

"As with all new documents, the format, the titles, the paragraphs, the sentences and the words were the subject of much deliberation and consultation." (Teaching Council 2007, p. 5) One of the aspects that was included in the codes of conduct was the idea of "The Teacher as Reflective Practitioner" The Teaching Council states that: "Teachers acknowledge the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning. Drawing on practitioner-based research, they plan for teaching and learning through continuous reflection on their own current practice." (Teaching Council 2007, p. 17) This was further explained: *"*The listing of values suggests the importance of a reflective, learning teacher within a dynamic, vibrant teaching profession. They suggest also the importance of teachers pausing to ask about the value of education and of their work and about the role of professional educators in preparing young people for life.*"* (Teaching Council 2007, p. 5)

The codes of conduct can be read as a declaration of intent, a statement of what should be. Hence there is an onus on teachers to continuously reflect on their own practice. The term of 'reflective practitioner' as used by the Teaching Council has its roots in Donald Schön's work.

Donald Schön was inspired by what he observed as a crisis of confidence in professional knowledge. "According to the model of Technical Rationality (…) professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique." (Schön 2006, p. 21) At a time when the trust of the general public in the problem solving powers of technical rationality was dwindling, Schön suggested to "search, instead, for an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring in situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict." (Schön 2006, p. 49)

He finds that in these processes practitioners are usually equipped with a type of knowledge that is not necessarily open to verbal explication. "I shall use *knowing-in-action* to refer to the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action – publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet. In both cases, the knowing is *in* the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit." (Schön 1987, p. 25)

In cases where a practitioner experiences an unexpected result or observes a process running in unexpected ways, "such experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, contain an element of *surprise.* Something fails to meet our expectations." In responding to such surprise it is possible to "brush it aside, selectively inattending to the signals that produce it." (Schön 1987, p. 26) Or else, it is possible to enter into a reflection about it. Schön now introduces a concept of reflection that is based on the distinction between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action.

In the first one thinks back on the experience "in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome. We may do so after the fact, in tranquillity, or we may pause in the midst of action to make what Hannah Arendt (1971) calls a 'stop-and-think'. In either case our reflection has no direct connection to the present action." (Schön 1987, p. 26)

In the latter reflection happens in the midst of action without interrupting it. “In an *action-present* – a period of time, variable with the context, during which we can still make a difference to the situation at hand – our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it.”

Reflection-in-action in Schön's sense then is a “rethinking of parts of our knowing-in-action [that] leads to on-the-spot experiments and further thinking that affects what we do.” (Schön 1987, p. 26) It has an immediate consequence for the action (or sequence of actions) in which an actor is engaged at the time.

For developing a mastery within the field of a certain profession the processes of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action gain significance. “Clearly, it is one thing to be able to reflect-in-action and quite another to be able to reflect *on* our reflection-in-action so as to produce a good verbal description of it; and it is still another thing to be able to reflect on the resulting description. But our reflection on our past reflection-in-action may indirectly shape our future action. (…) As I think back on my experience (…) I may consolidate my understanding of the problem or invent a better or more general solution to it. If I do, my present reflection on my earlier reflection-in-action begins a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become (…) more skilful (…).” (Schön 1987, p. 31) While Schön acknowledges explicitly that these several levels and kinds of reflection are important in what he calls “acquisition of artistry,” he yet does not expand on developing a conceptual framework for reflection-on-action rather concentrates on reflection-in-action.

It is based on these conceptual ideas on reflection that Donald Schön suggested a form of professional identity which he labelled the reflective practitioner. Part of this identity is also the idea that the professional is entering into a reflective contract with the client/s. Instead of assuming a position of technical expert the professional “attributes to his clients, as well as to himself, a capacity to mean, know and plan.” (Schön 2006, p. 295)

However practitioners are always also part of specific social contexts in which they operate. In case of teachers these are schools and Donald Schön identifies them as bureaucratic settings. In schools where teachers were to adhere to the idea of reflective contract and on this basis were to reflect-in-action continuously “conflicts and dilemmas would surface which are absent, hidden, or of minor importance in an ordinary school.” (Schön 2006, p. 334) In this regard he notes that reflection-in-action actually has the potential to pose a threat to what he calls the “dynamically conservative system” (Schön 2006, p. 332) of school.

This threat comes as a logical consequence of the character of on-the-spot experiments as being adverse to the regularities, routines of curriculum delivery in set classes in time-tabled sessions with large groups of children.

Thirty years on Schön's concept enjoys undiminished popularity and there can be no doubt that his ideas are overwhelmingly received as guiding and formative influences in the field of education. The concept of reflection-in-action however has also been questioned for its reliance on a Cartesian control-matrix and its negligence of the anchoring of knowledge in social practices. Peter Erlandson who makes these points claims that Schön establishes “a thinking 'entity' that is unnecessary for the explanation of the practitioner's practice” (Erlandson 2007, p. 43) and “matters of politics, of institutional interaction and of the workings of social categories are reduced to matters of thinking.” (Erlandson 2007, p. 46)

Such a claim is based on the assumption that knowledge resides in practices that are bodily acquired by actors in social situations. Professional knowledge, e. g. of teachers about their teaching, which would be the point of reference in reflection-in-action in this way can be understood as so many inscriptions of such practices. Erlandson also brings into focus the situatedness of human action in relations of power as crystallized in institutions, here: schools. In this he follows the traces of Michel Foucault. As we have seen already rituals and ritualisations in school are very much at the core of the process of producing those 'knowing bodies' as bodies of knowledge.[42]

Erlandson points out that this dimension of practice is not represented in Schön's work. One may argue that Schön's suggestion of a reflective contract of the professional (teacher) with the client (student/pupil) bears the potential to bring this dimension to the fore. Yet it remains unexplored by Schön.

Max van Manen (1995) dismisses the suggestion that what happens when teachers act in classrooms can be adequately described in terms of reflection-in-action. Life in classrooms with all their frenzy and the "daily grind" (Jackson 1968) does not allow for a teacher to take the step back that in van Manen's view is required to actually engage in a process of reflective thought and decision making. He finds that reports of teachers about their practice are at odds with the concept of teaching as reflective decision making.

While teachers make countless decisions these decisions are based on a kind of thoughtfulness that differs from the deliberative rationality that is connected to the idea of reflection in that it is "more something like a mood, an attitudinal state of mind." (van Manen 1995, p. 7) Teachers actions in the classroom are dictated by the totality of micro-situations that expand well beyond the overall intent and lesson plan. For teachers to act they rely on a practical knowledge that "ensues from one's body and from the things and the atmosphere of one's world." (van Manen 1995, p. 11) Van Manen suggests to speak of this type of knowledge in terms of "tact" which transcends the dichotomy of theory and practice (or body and mind): "While steering clear of the stubborn theory-practice distinction, we may follow Muth (1982) and suggest that, with Herbart, tact is a kind of practical normative intelligence that is governed by insight while relying on feeling." (van Manen 1995, p. 10)

Being involved in a sequence of interactions (not only in the classroom) for a teacher creates the necessity to stay in the situation. There is no time for a teacher to distance her/himself from the immediacy of the situation. Van Manen refers to the example of a university teacher who reports that by times he purposefully tries to reflect on what to say or do while at the same time speaking or acting. The result is a feeling of artificiality that in fact hampers his ability to engage with the students, an experience which he describes in terms of a split self. What this teacher lacks in the interaction then is authenticity.

[42] These 'knowing bodies' are at the same time the material entities that contain the knowledge, hence a 'body of knowledge' in this sense has a different shape than a 'body of knowledge' in terms of records in written format (books …). The knowledge is literally embodied in the limbs and bones of those who are involved in the relevant practices. They 'know' and only by them 'knowing' the 'knowledge' is actually 'in the world' – hence the 'knowing bodies' constitute the bodies of knowledge. As much as the body appropriates the knowledge, it is vice versa the knowledge that appropriates the body. Such a reading implies a concept of knowledge that goes beyond a division of knowledge from practice. It is however in line with the suggestion of Marx in his Feuerbach Theses that "the human essence is no abstraction in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."

What is questionable hence is the practical applicability of a concept of reflection-in-action if one tries to understand the decision-making process/es of teachers in the actual teaching situation.

I acknowledge that teachers are quite able to act in terms of Schön's on-the-spot-experiments, that is: change a pattern or plan of action according to a momentary influence or intuition. This in itself is surely part of what he calls the artistry of the profession. It is also acknowledged that there is an inner process of decision-making to be involved in the teacher to engage in such experiments.[43] I would however follow the caution raised by van Manen and Erlandson[44] particularly in relation to the focus of my own study.

Decision-making for (or against) on-the-spot-experiments during a ritual remains *within* the ritual. On-the-spot experiments in this sense may alter a ritual, they can be seen as practical interventions that may also cause a shift in the balance of power relations on the micro-level of the participating group (class). To reflect however *on* rituals or ritualisations it is necessary to distance oneself from the actual situation, step out of it, and look at it with deliberative rationality. I will pick up on Donald Schön's terminology again in Chapter seven.

2.3.
Reflection as connected sequences intermediate to acts

Rituals/ritualisations are concrete acts of concrete actors. They are experienced in a very basic sense on a physical level by those involved in them. Reflection on rituals/ritualisations thus starts with an act – and it leads back into another act. By stepping out of action and entering into a process of inquiry about the act or acts at hand, reflection has an intermediate character and is yet bound to the acts, before and after.

The actual intermediate process that lies between act and act has been modelled in a number of ways and I wish to briefly attend to some of them.

It is certainly no exaggeration to say that John Dewey's thoughts provided the platform for the entire debate of the last 30 years that surrounds the idea of reflection. Max van Manen has summarized the steps derived from Dewey's writings that make up the process of reflection (van Manen 1995, p. 1). They occur in a successive order which can be shown as a sequence of steps following each other[45]:

[43] It may be noteworthy to mention that the term experiment here includes all sorts of actions. Some may be of rather minute or minor character like changing a body posture, moving to a different spot in a room, changing intonation or rhythm of speech. Others may be more exalted like moving out of a classroom with the class.

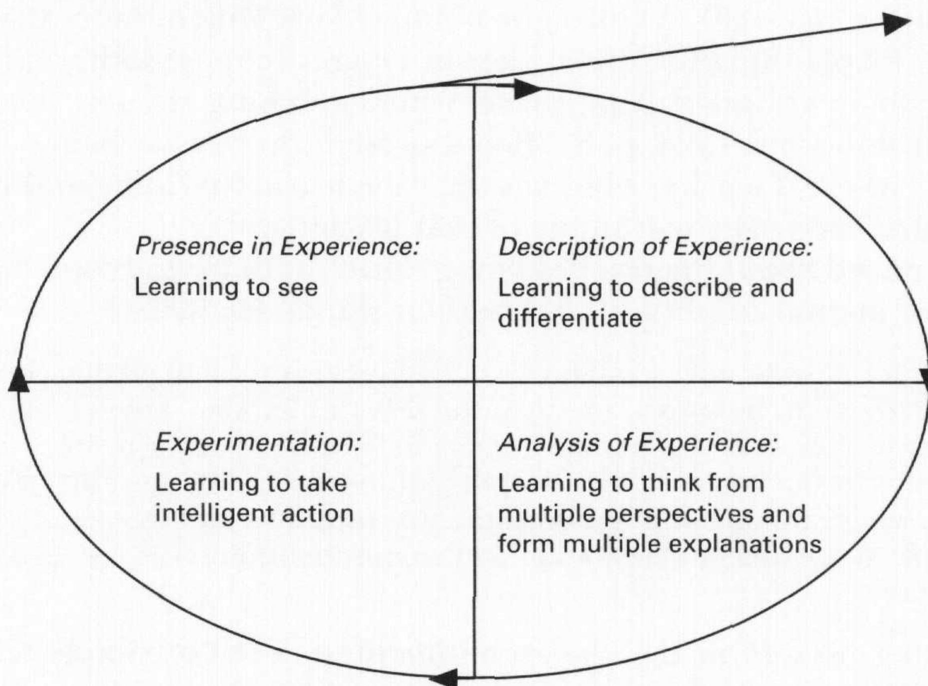
[44] Erlandson quite validly raises the question if one should probably not use the term 'reflection' at all due to it being "somewhat misleading in explaining and interpreting human action," but he finds that in the Western tradition of thought we are as stuck with the term "reflection" as we are with the term "mind". (Erlandson 2007, p. 52)

[45] The terms used in the table are a close representation of Dewey's original terminology as presented by van Manen.

situation (act) inciting perplexity, confusion, doubt	trial, preliminary interpretation of act	inspection of all attainable considerations; definition and clarification of problem	elaboration of trial hypothesis; suggestions	decision on a plan of action	new situation
→	→	→	→	→	

Carol Rodgers has used Dewey's ideas as a starting point. She finds that the overuse of the terms reflection and reflective practice has led to them losing clarity. In her attempt to explain the relevance of the idea of "presence" as a quality of teachers that increases their ability to perceive the complexity of classroom life, and the importance of the capacity to also describe the experiences perceived, she presents a modified version of the reflective process. (Rodgers 2006, 2010)

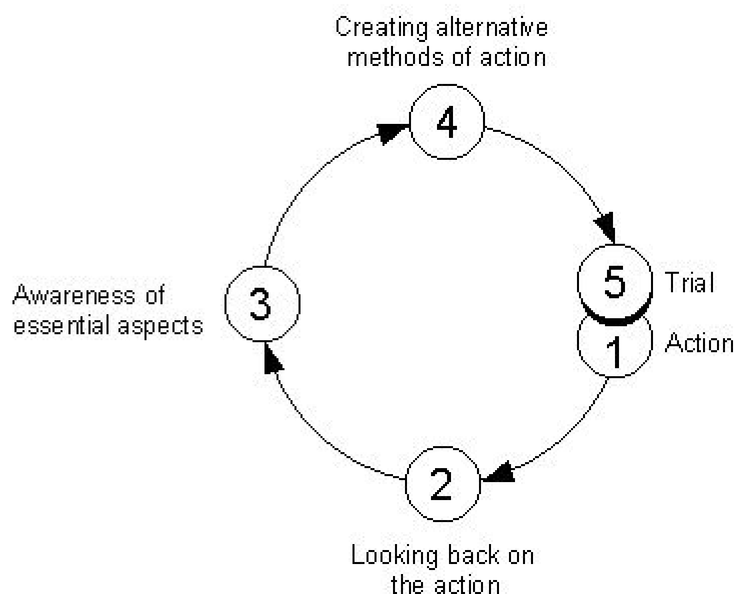
The model of Carol Rodgers is depicted as a cyclical process from action (experience) via reflection back into action. She presents a sketch to demonstrate what she understands as the "reflective cycle" (Rodgers 2010, p. 235)[46]:



[46] She has also made a slightly more differentiated version of the sketch available in which she highlights various elements of practical implementations of the descriptive phase. (Rodgers 2006, p. 215) For my purpose the simpler version is quite sufficient.

A particular emphasis is put on the stage of description by Carol Rodgers. From her experience as a teacher educator engaging in reflective processes with her students she finds that “description is perhaps the most difficult stage of the reflective cycle for teachers because it asks them to withhold interpretation of events and postpone their urge to fix the problems embedded therein until they can 'mess about' with the details” of descriptive stories (Rodgers 2002, p. 238). In relation to the process elements in her model there is acknowledged the potential for a need to move forth and back between different stages, particularly between description and analysis. (Rodgers 2002, p. 234).

The circularity of the reflection process is also highlighted in the ALACT-model presented by Fred Korthagen (Korthagen et al.; 2001; Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, 2010). The phases of a reflective process in this model are: Action – Looking back on the action – Awareness of essential aspects – Creating alternative methods of action – Trial (which is new action).



Korthagen also relates the model to continuous learning of teachers in their practice. Every completed reflection process (from Action to Trial, which is new action) then is seen as one complete spiral cycle in an ongoing process of professional development.

What is important to note in relation to my own study at this point is that reflection is unanimously seen as a process of thinking – even where the elements taken into account as material for thought are emotions or actions. The attempts made to describe this process in sequences or consecutive steps are continuously developing the theme brought up by Dewey who concludes: “Reflection involves not simply sequences of ideas, but a *con*sequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leads back on its predecessors.” (Dewey 2007, p. 5)

Understood in this way reflection therefore includes necessarily a type of systematic thought process in which action is mentally conceptualised and assessed.

2.4.
Processual scale of reflection

Morwenna Griffiths and Sarah Tann have used Donald Schön's ideas as a template from which they derived their levels of reflection (1992).

Concerned with what they observe as the divide between theory and practice, they argue that this in fact is a false divide. Instead they hold that "what we still tend to label as 'theory' and 'practice' are more accurately seen as 'public' and 'personal' theories." Practitioners should be encouraged to "theorise *from* their practice, at a number of different levels of reflection." (Griffiths/Tann 1992, p. 71) Taking their own practice as the matter for reflection thus in their opinion is characteristic for the reflective practitioner.

Griffiths/Tann present a theory of different levels of reflection of which they also note that "not only does it recognise different levels (and purposes) but also asserts that *all* of them are both necessary and important" at different stages in the life of a professional. Their model consists of five levels, of which the first two are seen as 'reflection-in-action' while the latter three are understood to be 'reflection-on-action':

1. Act – React (Rapid reaction)
2. React – Monitor – React/Rework – Plan – Act (Repair)
3. Act – Observe – Analyse and Evaluate – Plan – Act (Review)
4. Act – Observe systematically – Analyse rigorously – Evaluate – Plan – Act (Research)
5. Act – Observe systematically – Analyse rigorously – Evaluate – Retheorise – Plan – Act (Retheorising and Reformulating).

As common feature on all levels we find again the motif of reflection as a chain from act to act. What differs from level to level is the intermediate process.

On the first level (rapid reaction) one reacts immediately. There is no further process of engagement of thought as a mediation between action and reaction, one can say the action triggers an unmediated response. On the second level the reaction as triggered by the initial action is delayed and a process of 'on-the-spot' and very quick thought leads to a reworked plan that is similarly 'on-the-spot' enacted. Griffiths/Tann note on the fleeting nature of this process that "an untrained observer will miss it." (Griffiths/Tann 1992, p. 78)

Entering into the dimension of reflection-on-action on the third level the reflection process takes place after the situation has lapsed. The situation will have left a lasting impression and it is this impression that is observed.[47] As teacher educators Griffiths/Tann refer to examples, e.g.: "A teacher may reassess how a child is to be managed, or think again about group relations in the class." (Griffiths/Tann 1992, p. 78) Such thought may happen at various times and in various contexts, break time, in staff rooms before or after school, in the car on the way home.

[47] Griffiths/Tann don't actually refer to the impression of the action as being the trigger for the reflection process. However it is clear that only by leaving a lasting impression a particular action will become a matter for reflection, otherwise it would be already forgotten at the time when the reflection could take place.

The next level of reflection includes a systematic observation that will provide the material for the reflection. Collecting such material can take significant periods of time, Griffiths/Tann mention weeks or months. Once sufficient material is together, “the teacher will then reflect carefully on the reasons for the way the issue has arisen in the way it has, and also on the information collecting itself: its validity and reliability.” (Griffiths/Tann 1992, p. 79)

Eventually on the fifth level personal theories that guide practice are revealed and scrutinized, challenged, compared to public theories, and consequently confirmed or reconstructed in the process of reflection. But similarly the public theories will be critically examined and assessed for their validity.

Griffiths/Tann point out that remaining on any one level of reflection is likely to lead to superficiality. In case of the middling levels of repair, review and research this will mean that a focus is constantly on technical problems. But operating solely on the level of “academic theory is just as likely to lead to superficiality, though it is likely to be dressed up into apparent depth.” (Griffiths/Tann 1992, p. 79)

For the purpose of my own study the model presented by Griffiths/Tann is useful as a description of *processual scale* of reflection. In this sense the various levels which they suggest are to be seen as mere descriptive indicators marking certain points on the processual scale.

2.5.
Depth, Height and strategic approach

Speaking of levels of reflection evokes a spatial impression. In the last quote from Griffiths/Tann the dimension of depth was already prevalent. Korthagen/Vasalos' model of core reflection which will be presented in section 2.6. also refers to it.

Different levels are thus to be imagined in a relation of higher-lower, above-beneath each other. It is a peculiar phenomenon then to observe in the pool of literature on reflection that what some authors regard as the highest forms of reflection involves at the same time what is depicted frequently as the deepest engagement. One could say that the deeper one digs the higher one climbs. I will briefly touch on two more examples to illustrate how reflection is depicted in terms of depth or height.

The first is from Kember et al. and their desire to develop a “reliable protocol for assessing the level of reflection in written work.” (Kember et al. 2008, p. 369) They are particularly indebted in their work to Jack Mezirow, one of the main authors in the field of adult education. I will attend to important aspects of Mezirow's theories soon. Based on his ideas and also on earlier work which they had published Kember et. al. (1999, 2001) present four categories:

Habitual action, in which a procedure is followed without significant thought about it and consequently no reflection takes place.

Understanding, in which *“*concepts are understood as theory without being related to personal experiences or real-life applications .” Kember et al. hold that at this level thinking is limited and therefore the category does not imply reflection yet. (2008, 373)

Reflection, in which concepts are considered in relation to personal experiences, theory is practically applied. Concepts are thus related to existing knowledge and personal experiences, and a personal meaning becomes attached to them.

Critical reflection, in which perspective transformations are involved and which will take "significant periods between initial observations and final conclusions." (Kember et al. 2008, p. 370)

When Kember et al. note that "the highest level of critical reflection necessitates a change to deep-seated, and often unconscious, beliefs and leads to new belief structures" they suggest exactly the peculiar relationship of depth and height. Viewed in this manner there is established a hierarchy of reflection levels in which the deepest reflection takes place on the highest level.

The necessity to reach "deep" is also paramount in Jennifer Moon's thoughts about reflection in her "Handbook of reflective and experiential learning." (2004) What is of particular interest for the current context is her conceptualising of approaches of learners and their connection to reflection. She develops her thoughts on learning (and reflection) on the background of the limited field of formalised education (school, university). In doing so she observes that learners (students) can (and do!) follow their studies with either a surface approach, a deep approach or a strategic approach. With a surface approach students are apt to do rote learning, simple memorizing without further engagement with the topic at hand. A deep approach in contrast means that students seek to understand the material and look for meaning in it. Students who follow a strategic approach decide to apply either a surface or a deep approach depending on their calculation of necessities in terms of success in assessment tasks. (Moon 2004, pp. 61 ff)

She then transfers the idea of depth also onto reflection.[48] She recounts that deep reflection implies an element of transformation of meaning structures (frames of reference). "This implies a functional understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge and a metacognitive stance." (Moon 2004, p. 96) And she describes a critical stance to one's own understandings as well as those of others to be a quality of deep reflection. "Increasing the depth of reflective learning[49] implies a development in the ability to use different frames of reference with associated flexibility, openness and awareness of the range of relevant issues." (Moon 2004, p. 99)

Worked into such a description is the idea of depth as a variable, otherwise it could not be "increased." Apart from the ability to apply frames of reference with openness and flexibility in Jennifer Moon's terms elements that play a role in the depth of reflection are: to take into account variation in material, to recognise and manage relevance, the view of structures of knowledge as constructed and hence open to critique and change, and also the ability to manage emotion. (Moon 2004, p. 100) The more developed these abilities are in a person, the deeper this person will reflect, or to be more accurate: the person will be able to reflect.

What reflection however is good for in her view is also clearly related to the rat-race of the labour market, and be it the labour market for academics. In her essay on "Reflection and Employability" she concludes: "Reflection is a key contributor to employability, both in its own right, and in its role in underpinning other employability achievements." (Moon, 2004, 14)

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[48] In passages concerned with the idea of reflection and learning she also states that reflection occurs where a learner "wants to understand the material in a manner that is meaningful to her (takes a deep approach)." (Moon 2004, p. 87)

[49] She uses the terms reflective learning and reflection as synonymous in her book.

Here then the problem of depth of reflection poses itself in a somehow different fashion. In fact, a "deep approach" can easily become counterproductive. As Jennifer Moon rightly states the context of the workplace determines what kind of learning (hence: reflection) is required from an employee. "It may be more focused and strategic than that on a higher education programme and part of the reflective learning is the knowledge of how to be efficient and effective as a learner in the work context." (Moon, 2004, 4)

There is a sort of irony in promoting reflection as a means to increase one's "employability" and at the same time claiming for students in higher education programmes that they should reflect deep(er). At the end of the day, climbing the "employability-ladder" on the basis of deep reflection is a myth if the work context does not require it.

2.6. What to reflect on

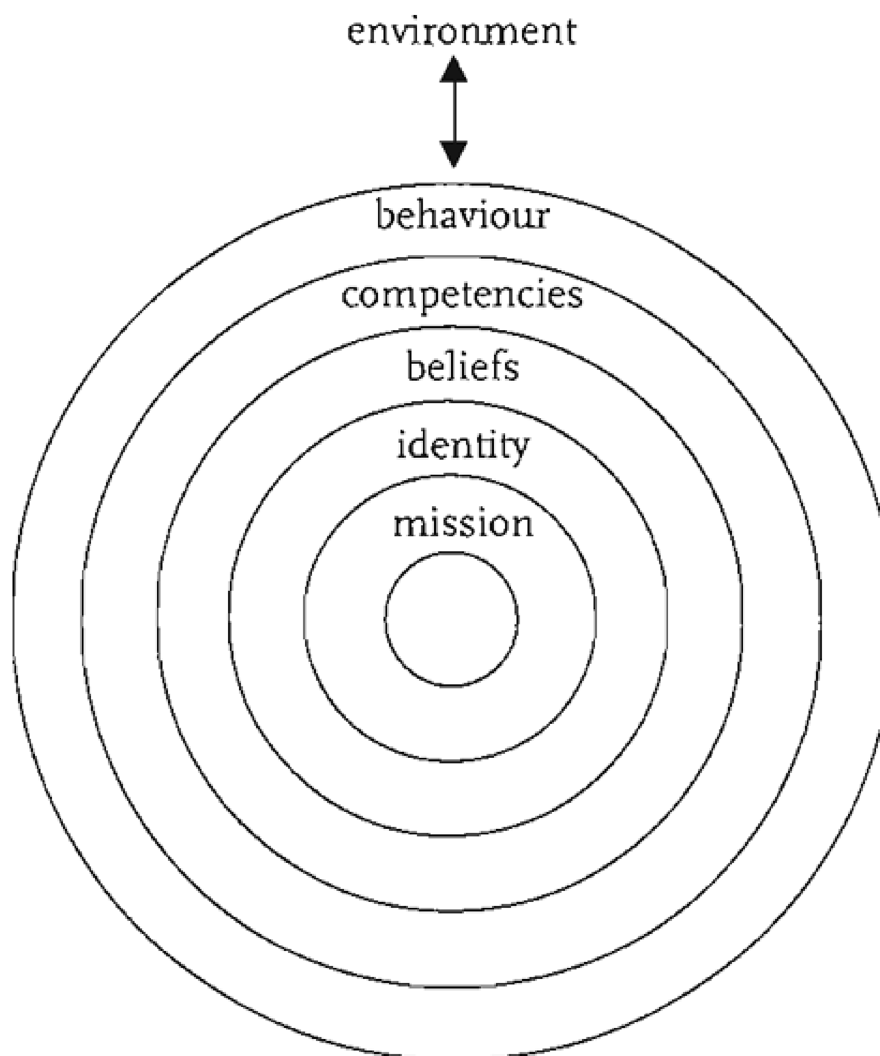
In reference to the ALACT-model (as described in section 2.3.) Korthagen/Vasalos note that it can help teachers understanding (conceptualising) various sequences in a reflection process. On the other hand it does not support teachers "in knowing *what* to reflect *on*, and that this can easily make the reflection somewhat superficial." (Korthagen/Vasalos 2010, p. 534) Accordingly they present what they call the "onion-model" as a means to conceptualise the topical content of reflection. In it the "environment" refers to everything that is outside of the person (i. e. the teacher who is reflecting). The other five layers then refer to 'inner' realms of behaviour, competencies, beliefs, identity and mission of the person:

According to Korthagen/Vasalos in reflecting on their practice teachers generally look for a "quick-fix, a rapid solution for a practical problem." (Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, p. 48) The issues that are at work underneath the levels of behaviour, competencies or beliefs remain largely untouched though.

"Behaviour" is understood to be all that a person actually does, be it physical acts or speech acts etc. "Competencies" refers to the ability to apply a certain skill or set of rules in a given situation. The ability to reflect systematically or also the ability to take into account different learning styles of children could be seen as a competence. (Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, p. 56). "Beliefs" are assumptions, e. g. about a certain student or about action patterns in school.

Korthagen/Vasalos acknowledge that beliefs can often be deep-rooted and persistent.[50] To advance further to also reach the issues underlying such deep-rooted beliefs they promote reflection that includes the levels of identity and mission. "Identity" is understood to include self-concepts and the way one experiences oneself. "Mission" refers to a transpersonal level, including e. g. the role that one wishes to play in relation to fellow man, or the meaning of one's existence in the world. Including these levels in the reflection process leads to what they call "core reflection." (Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, p. 53)

[50] They take recourse to Calderhead & Robson (1991) in this statement.



They also suggest a particular way to go about the business of doing core reflection. Their emphasis is on mobilising the inner potential of teachers, whereby the core qualities of the person are actualised and freed from the repression of limiting beliefs or images. (Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, p. 57) In this they remain safely in the realms of psychological terrain.

As core qualities they list empathy, compassion, love, flexibility, courage, creativity, sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, elements that could be seen in a wider sense as character traits of a person. Reflection that reaches the deepest level in their model then relies on the teacher consciously "*wanting* to support her/his development" and "*feeling* the frustration" of her/his limitations. Together with the process of thinking all three are important for Korthagen/Vasalos to develop new ways of acting on the basis of liberated core qualities. (Korthagen/Vasalos 2005, p. 58)

Measured against their own target to provide a conceptualisation of reflection that can help teachers to know what to reflect on such a model based on a classification of reflection levels is certainly much more appropriate than the sole process description of the ALACT-model. In its focus on psychological and personal issues and the negligence of the aspects of social and institutional influences on the shaping of "identity" or "mission" of a person it is however also restrictive.

2.7.
Cognitive interests as yardstick for classifying reflection

One of the most prominent classifications of reflection in a hierarchical sequence was presented 1977 by Max van Manen. Anchored in the writings of Jürgen Habermas he recounts the distinction among cognitive interests in the practical activities made by Habermas as concerning "(a) production and technical control, (b) communication and interpretive understanding, (c) emancipation and liberation." (van Manen 1977, p. 225)

Each of these areas corresponds to a knowledge system. Empirical-analytical or behavioural science looks at problems of technical-instrumental character. Phenomenological-hermeneutical science informs and guides communication and orientation, the latter being understood as equivalent to world-view.[51] Critical theory and psychoanalytic approaches in dealing with normative problems supply knowledge aimed at self-determination, liberation, emancipation.

Reflection understood as deliberative rationality is depicted by van Manen on three levels corresponding to the cognitive interests respectively.

On the first level the focus is on "means rather than ends." (van Manen 1977, p. 226) Central are problems of technical nature in achieving predetermined outcomes. Problems are to be solved rather than understood or interpreted. Informed by the empirical-analytical tradition in science, the criteria for finding solutions is dominated by principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The next higher level of reflection is based on the assumption that value judgements permeate all action and therefore need to be taken up in reflection also. The purpose of reflection on this level is to gain orientation for making practical choices, to anchor these choices in the rationale of a value system. For this purpose individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, and presuppositions need to be analysed and clarified.

On the last and highest level of reflection then "the question of the worth of knowledge itself (…) and the nature of the social conditions necessary for raising the question or worthwhileness (...) in the first place" are paramount. A constant critique of domination, institutions and of repressive forms of authority is involved on this level of reflection. And van Manen notes that " universal consensus, free from delusions or distortions, is the ideal of a deliberative rationality that pursues worthwhile educational ends in self-determination, community, and on the basis of justice, equality and freedom." (van Manen 1977, p. 227)

The levels of reflection depicted by van Manen are thus commonly referred to as technical, practical, critical (e.g. Zeichner 1994; Hatton/Smith 1995; Kabouridis 2011).

[51] Van Manen notes: "An orientation has the uncanny quality of encapsulating the person who has learned to adopt it. As soon as a student enters a certain realm of thought, be it science or Zen, he has to make the rules of this realm his own; consequently, the evidence flowing from them will appear compelling to him." (van Manen 1977, p. 211)

2.8.
Functional character of reflection

Jack Mezirow was mentioned already as an influence on Kember et al. In his monograph on transformational learning (Mezirow 1991) he presents a scheme in which he differentiates reflection according to its function into content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection. The scheme is in close proximity to van Manen's model.

One's feelings, perceptions, thoughts or actions provide the material for reflection. In content reflection these are taken up as given, the guiding question is: what is it, that I feel, see, think or do. These observations are used then to judge, assess a certain situation and consequently act according to this judgement.

In process reflection the focus shifts on the process of problem solving. The question how the functions of feeling, perceiving, thinking or acting are performed and in consequence on the assessment of how efficient they are performed.

In premise reflection eventually the question is asked why we feel, perceive, think or act in the way we do. This leads to an "assessment of the validity of norms, roles, codes, 'common sense', ideologies, language games, paradigms, philosophies, or theories that we have taken for granted." (Mezirow 1991, p. 105)

Thus premise reflection is less concerned with problem solving than it is with problem posing. This includes making the familiar a problem, putting up for scrutiny what seems most natural, raising questions about the validity of taken-for-granted assumptions. Mezirow tries to illustrate the distinction in a brief example:

"If the problem is to determine whether Joe is telling the truth about his age, for example, reflection on content might focus our attention on physical clues such as the colour of Joe's hair, the lines in his face, or the year he completed school. Reflection on process might lead us to assess the adequacy of our efforts to find relevant and dependable clues in order to improve our performance in solving similar problems in the future. Reflection on the premise of the problem might lead us to question the merit and functional relevance of the question: Why do, or should we care about how old Joe is? We might conclude that if Joe is physically healthy, active, and productive, his age does not matter to us." (Mezirow 1991, p. 105)

Taking the idea of premise reflection one could also turn this further. On observing one's application of categories like health, activity, productivity these categories can be posed as a problem themselves. It is likely then that any new answer will always open up another dimension for a question.

Similar to Max van Manen one of the main references on which Jack Mezirow builds his model of reflection is Jürgen Habermas. From him Mezirow draws the notion of three broad areas in which knowledge is produced: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. According to Mezirow the technical is representative of the domain of instrumental learning. The practical represents the domain of communicative learning. Knowledge generated on basis of emancipatory interest eventually "involves a learning dimension of critical reflection with implications for both of the other two." (Mezirow 1991, p. 73) It is obvious how the concept of content, process and premise reflection mirrors this schema.

Premise reflection operates on the level of exploring alternative ways of interpreting patterns of action, perceptions, thoughts or feelings. This makes premise reflection emancipatory in the sense that it allows for “libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional, or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives [and] have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control” to be scrutinized. “These forces include the misconceptions, ideologies, and psychological distortions in prior learning that produce and perpetuate unexamined relations of dependence.” (Mezirow 1991, p. 87)

Mezirow uses the term “critical reflection” for all those reflection processes in which one makes an assessment in relation to what is reflected upon. This can be done implicitly “when we mindlessly choose between good and evil because of our assimilated values,” or also explicitly in reflecting on the process of choice and assessing the reasons for making the choice. (Mezirow, 1998)

In premise reflection basic assumptions, “orienting dispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience” (Mezirow, 2000, 16) are put up for reflection. In this case Mezirow then speaks of “CRA”, depicting “critical reflection of assumptions” or “CSRA”, depicting “critical self reflection on assumptions.”

Critical reflection as a process of assessment, making a value judgement, is based on reasoning. With Harvey Siegal he notes that “principles by which reasons are defined and assessed evolve as their defining traditions change.” (Mezirow, 1998) Thus the reasoning of today may not be reasonable tomorrow. What counts as a good judgement depends on the culture and era in which the judgement is made. He refers to David Roochnik (1990) to make the point that if one enters into a debate one implicitly has to agree that in principle the debate can be won. This means that there has to be a standard against which one can decide what actually is the better argument (which wins the debate). In contemporary culture he finds this standard in the principle of rationality, logic and critical reflection.

The alternatives to make value judgements based on critical reflection, rationality, discourse in Mezirow's view are tradition, authority, or physical force. For Mezirow critical reflection of assumptions and critical self reflection of assumptions are what he calls “the emancipatory dimensions of adult learning.” They are the means for adults to use thought and language for liberating themselves from restricting frames of reference, paradigms, cultural canons. (Mezirow, 1998)

He also offers a taxonomy of critical reflection of assumptions. Here he distinguishes in objective reframing and subjective reframing. Objective reframing includes (a) “narrative CRA,” the critical examination of concepts, beliefs, feelings or actions that are communicated via speech, books, paintings etc. and (b) “action CRA,” the critical examination of one's actions (in performing a task).

Subjective reframing turns the direction inwards by relating to the 'self.' “CSRA” focuses on a critical analysis of what Mezirow calls distorted assumptions. He refers to four areas in which these are found: distorted assumptions about the reasoning process (logical, technical or methodological fallacies), epistemic premise distortions (the way how legitimacy of knowledge is conceived), sociolinguistic premise distortions (stemming from cultural codes, social norms, roles, practices), and psychological premise distortions (artefacts from earlier and childhood experiences, self-concepts). (Mezirow 1991, pp. 118 – 144) He denotes a number of variations of “CSRA” all of which refer to different areas of influences on the 'self': narrative, systemic, organisational, moral-ethical, therapeutic, epistemic.

Mezirow holds that critical reflection can happen within or without a "discursive group."[52] However for critical reflection to bear any practical result, the insights one may gain from it need to be tested – either in a discursive assessment, i. e. in discussion with others, or else by practically applying the conclusions about what's best to do that one drew from the critical reflection. (Mezirow 1998)

2.9. Critical reflection – orientational character of reflection

In both concepts, Mezirow's as well as van Manen's, the notion of critical reflection is already contained. Probably the most prolific protagonist of critical reflection is Stephen Brookfield. His essay in Nona Lyons' *Handbook of Reflection and Reflective Inquiry* (2010) gives a brief but concise overview of his concept of critical reflection which he developed in earlier writings (Brookfield 1990a, 1990b, 1995, 2000).

For Brookfield the general process of reflection involves the four stages: identifying assumptions, validating of assumptions, changing perspective, taking informed action. As such these four stages (hence: reflection) can be applied in each and any process of thinking about a situation that is experienced as problematic. Brookfield sees them as the "technical aspects of reflection." (2010, p. 218)

Reflection is not critical per se. It is possible to reflect on "the nuts and bolts of classroom processes" only. "For example, we can reflect about the timing of coffee breaks, whether to use blackboards or flip charts, the advantages of using a liquid crystal display (LCD) panel over previously prepared overheads, or how rigidly we stick to a deadline for the submission of students' assignments. All these decisions rest on assumptions that can be identified and questioned, and all of them can be looked at from different perspectives. But these are not, in and of themselves, examples of *critical* reflection." (Brookfield 1995, p. 8)

He finds that a concept of critical reflection can be rooted in various traditions, namely: a) critical theory (the Frankfurt School), with a focus on uncovering power relations and hegemony; b) psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, with a focus on impediments on adult development stemming from earlier (childhood) experiences; (c) analytic philosophy, with a focus on reasoning and practising logic; (d) pragmatic constructivism, with a focus on the agency of people in a world of open possibilities. Brookfield notes that depending on the perspective one takes as point of departure, critical reflection can have quite different meanings. He contends that critical reflection can be viewed as a contested idea. (Brookfield 2010, p. 218)

To demonstrate the contested nature of the term he refers to Chris Argyris' work in which business executives' use of lateral, divergent thinking strategies and double loop learning methods with the purpose of checking the accuracy of market assessments is seen to represent critical reflection. (Argyris, 1982) And he contrasts this to the view of Simon et al. (1991) for whom critical reflection necessarily implies an explicit critique of capitalism. (Brookfield 2010, p. 218)

[52] Mezirow understands discourse as: "(...) that special function of dialogue devoted to presenting and assessing the validity of reasons by critically examining the widest possible range of evidence and arguments in the context of attempting to find understanding and agreement on the justification of the beliefs." (1998)

For Brookfield to speak of 'critical reflection' implies a transformational difference to speaking of 'reflection' because of the idea of criticality being grounded in critical theory. Reflection thus can not be construed as critical if it focuses on increasing efficiency or productivity within an existing system. It necessarily has to call into question the foundations and imperatives of the system. (Brookfield 2010, p. 219)

In his own view what makes reflection critical is the purpose of externalizing and investigating power relations, and of uncovering hegemonic assumptions. Thus ideology critique is one of the central features of critical reflection. Brookfield holds that within the framework of critical reflection “teaching practices, professional and ethical codes, and accepted modes of decision-making [are] contested – phenomena containing the contradictory crosscurrents of the struggle for material superiority and ideological legitimacy that exist in the world outside.” (Brookfield 2010, p. 222)

Essential for an understanding of critical reflection as suggested by Brookfield is that the actual subject matter to be reflected upon is seen as social practice in which power relations are always already at work. In this way Brookfield's theory also relates to what Michel Foucault depicts as “a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting, a certain relationship to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relationship to society, to culture and also a relationship to others that we could call, let's say, the critical attitude.” (Foucault 1997, p. 42) For Foucault a critical attitude raises the perpetual question: “How not to be governed *like that,* by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such objectives in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.” (Foucault 1997, p. 44)

Critique then is “the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability.” (Foucault 1997, p. 47) It problematises the subjugation of individuals in “the reality of social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth.” (Foucault 1997, p. 47) Turned back onto the idea of critical reflection we see how a reflection process that aims on externalizing and investigating power relations or uncovering hegemonic assumptions relies on the critical attitude as an underlying orientation. In this sense we can understand the classification of a reflection process as “critical” as a description of the orientational character of the reflection.

For a person engaging in critical reflection according to Brookfield can have a number of consequences and he identifies common themes that most frequently appear in contexts of adult learning. In his earlier work he presented four of them (Brookfield 1995, pp. 228 – 245) as the risks of critical reflection:
Impostorship - self-doubt and feelings of inferiority, a sense of 'not getting it' and 'not being able' for critical reflection.
Cultural suicide – exclusion from social contact, being met with suspicion and resentments.
Roadrunning – back and forth movements in assimilating to (new) knowledge, the “feeling of being in limbo, being suspended above the canyon floor with the solid ground of familiar assumptions left behind.” (Brookfield 2010, p. 229)
Lost Innocence – nostalgic look back on times of ignorant certainty.

To negotiate the risks of critical reflection then Brookfield highlights the importance of having a community of like-minded people. (Brookfield 2010, p. 230) Approached in this way the necessity of being involved with others shifts in focus. Rather than being a condition for reflection (or critical reflection) to happen at all, as implicit in Mezirow's suggestion, for Brookfield the involvement with others has a clearly supportive function. In this way he acknowledges that reflection always happens in particular environments, and that these environments are not necessarily sympathetic to the idea of critical reflection. “In some societies, asking critical questions will lead to your being tortured and killed as an example to others.” (Brookfield 1995, p. 229)

Obviously for teachers in primary schools in Western Europe this is a rather unlikely scenario. Nevertheless the social consequences of raising “awkward questions” (Brookfield 1995, p. 228) can be quite serious. What Brookfield points to in this way is that reflection is as much a social act as any other, and that the social conditions in which a person finds her/himself need to be understood if one wishes to understand why certain reflection processes happen, or else don't happen, or happen in this way and not in another.

As a way to address the “fluctuating, emotionally complex and culturally punished nature of critical reflection” he thus suggests that the support of “peer learning communities” can be crucial. (Brookfield 2010, p. 230)

2.10.
The importance of reflecting with others

The importance of 'others' for reflective processes is a theme that is taken up also by authors who do not necessarily promote a concept of critical reflection. Carol Rodgers highlights that already in Dewey's writings it is clear that reflection is incomplete if it is done without the company of others. The lack of input of others in reflective processes in solitude is a limitation. Only in communication with others the own thoughts become more objectively visible to oneself, take definable shape and are made open to revision and refinement. (Rodgers 2010, p. 48; 2006, pp. 216/217)

This common sense argument is reflected in numerous initiatives as nurtured by school authorities or providers of continuing professional development. “Of course, the concept of doing things together certainly is not new. The educational landscape is littered with an alphabet soup of collaborative initiatives – NLCs (networked learning communities), PLCs (professional learning communities), IKCs (innovative knowledge communities), COPs (communities of practice), etc. ”[53] (Katz/Dack/Earl 2009, p. 36)

[53] See e.g.: Katz/Earl (2010) [NLC], Wood (2007) [PLC], Paavola, Sami/Lipponen, Lasse/Hakkarainen, Kai (2004) [IKC], Wenger (1998) [COP]. Also to mention in this context the initiative started by the Primary Professional Development Service in Ireland to nurture “Teacher professional communities” (TPC's) in order to “seek and share learning” (see: http://www.dwec.ie/programmes/tpc.html /17. 05. 2012/)

Neville Hatton and David Smith (1995) in their much cited article on reflection in teacher education draw on the importance of having others as partners to facilitate reflection as reported by student teachers.[54] In interviews on their experiences with reflection the student teachers identified particularly two strategies as helpful, both of which included a "high degree of verbal interaction with trusted others." (Hatton/Smith 1995, p. 41) "Critical friend" dyads and staff supervised peer group discussions were reported as overwhelmingly effective in facilitating reflection.

It does not need any further explanation that a change of perspective rests on the availability of another perspective and that obviously the exchange, communication, discussion with others provides the opportunity to obtain such a different perspective. Xiaodong Lin and Daniel Schwartz have made the point that even where reflection takes the form of an internal dialogue within the mind of one person it still is to be seen as social, a view which they find supported by Piaget: "Reflection is nothing other than internal deliberations, that is to say, a discussion which is conducted with oneself just as it might be conducted with real interlocutors or opponents. One could say then that reflection is internalized social discussion (just as thought itself presupposes internalized language)." (Piaget 1967; quoted in: Lin/Schwartz 2003, p. 10)

The social character of reflection is also highlighted by Alan Ovens and Richard Tinning (2009) who pay specific attention to reflection as situated practice. In their study they explore how student teachers enact reflection differently in different settings. Not surprising they find that the "discoursive context the individual is situated with" (p. 1130) has a strong influence on the reflection processes that these students report. We remember the observation of Jennifer Moon emphasising the strategic approach that student teachers display in the ways of relating to demands in context of their teacher training programs (see section 2.5.). Embedded in these observations is the essentially social character of reflection, although not acknowledged by Jennifer Moon.

Authors like Moon, Ovens/Tinning, or Hatton/Smith all write from a perspective of lecturers in teacher education. Consequently their main concern is on the experiences that are available for trainee teachers during their courses. Ovens/Tinning however in their study also include experiences of student teachers in their practicum and they refer to practical field of schools as the "professional discourse community of teaching" (Ovens/Tinning 2009, p. 1130) which is different to the discourse community of teacher education.

As for reflection of teachers then it is however not at all clear what exactly will happen in situations in which they are together with others. Communication is not necessarily the same as reflection, and as we have seen already, there are a number of different ways to look at reflection.

The particular emphasis laid on the social aspect of reflection in the context of the idea of critical reflection is well summed up by Stephen Brookfield who suggests that "critical reflection is an irreducibly social process." (Brookfield 1995, p. 141) He points to the value of colleagues' perceptions in gaining a clearer perspective on one's practice, but also to the importance to realise that individual experiences that appear to be problematic are in fact common to others, too.

[54] They also provide a categorisation of levels of reflection in which they refer to five stages of which they suggest that they are more like a developmental sequence. Starting with a relatively simplistic type of technical rationality the development follows a path through three hierarchical stages of reflection-on-action: descriptive, dialogic, critical. Eventually by incorporating and being able to apply any of the possibilities offered by the types on the four distinct stages of reflection in a given situation a teacher reaches the fifth stage which in Hatton/Smith's model is equivalent to Donald Schön's reflection-in-action. For them this includes the "contextualisation of multiple view points [and] dealing with on-the-spot professional problems as they arise." (Hatton/Smith 1995, p. 45)

But he also warns that conversation as such is not necessarily critical. “Indeed, teacher talk can easily become a swapping of mutually reinforcing prejudices, an experience in groupthink. (...) Putting teachers together in a room and suggesting that they talk about what they do will not necessarily increase the amount of critical reflection in the world.” (Brookfield 1995, p. 142)

2.11.
Rituals and Reflection (II)

At the end of the first chapter I pointed out that if one attempts to speak about reflection on rituals, and particularly in my context about reflection on rituals in schools, one needs to be more specific than was done so far in the relevant literature.

As we have seen, reflection can be understood as a bridging process from action to renewed action. It can happen at different speeds, more or less systematic, with more or less analytic rigour, it can concentrate on different aspects of action, it can focus on one's own experiences, it can be concerned with interpersonal, psychological, social, political dimensions of action, it can aim at finding technical solutions, it can aim at retheorising and on transformative learning.

The various attempts to conceptualise reflection offer a spectrum of possibilities to describe reflection processes. Models of processual scale (Griffiths/Tann), functional character (Mezirow), and orientational character (Brookfield) can be helpful in doing so. There are however also limitations in these concepts. If we want to understand why *these* teachers in *this* school do or don't reflect on rituals/ritualisations, or do reflect on rituals/ritualisations in this form, to this extent and not in another it seems vital to enhance the figures of thought applied to the concepts of reflection.

Reflection happens in a given situation. It is context-bound to a specific constellation of time/space/environment. In its reference to a subject matter – in this case rituals/ritualisations as concrete acts of concrete actors - reflection is always concerned with the search for a definition of reality.

As such when teachers reflect they negotiate different options of defining the concrete acts on which they reflect. Reflection in this sense can not be understood as a neutral activity. While reflection offers ways of understanding it also excludes other ways which in a social context plays a role for the way how reality can be articulated for “cognitive endorsement by all” (Bell 1992, p. 131).

Looking at the environment of school it is clear that we deal here with an organisation in which there are always others. There is no such thing as the lonely teacher[55] who acts free of all bounds. Rituals understood as actions that are expressive, constitutive or modifying of social order, norms, values are public practice even were they happen in a classroom with the door closed. Ritualisations in terms of Catherine Bell's suggestion are similarly social action. They make sense only in the context of a social situation.

[55] Although teachers may by times feel quite lonely in their schools …

What interests me in my study is how far these actions are actually brought into a reflective process that in itself is a social activity, one of exchange of thought and yet an arena of negotiation of legitimate forms of articulating and consequently shaping reality. For the purpose of my own study I therefore concentrate on reflection processes of primary school teachers in which they engage with others in their professional field.

Reflection of teachers in their professional practice then needs to be understood as an essentially social act in which definitions and articulations of reality are negotiated. These parameters will be contextualised in the empirical part where extensive coverage will also be given to examples as derived from the collection of material accumulated in the course of my research.

Before moving on to the empirical part I will however include a chapter on the field of my study and another one in which the research design and the methods used in the research are explained.

3. Field Description

3.1.
Three different school settings

As explained in the preamble my study includes a comparative element. Based on the assumption that the concrete practice in schools is based on concepts of childhood, adulthood that are paradigmatic and that different concepts will lead to different practices it follows that rituals will differ also in schools of different types.

Not many of the studies of rituals in schools specifically include a comparative element of at least two different school types. Mary Henry (1993) looks at school cultures in a Waldorf school in comparison to an elite boarding school, both located in a rural community in the South-East of the United States. Judith Kapferer (1981) compares Australian states schools with private schools exemplified by a protestant co-educational secondary school in relation to socialising role of ritual in those schools. Basil Bernstein/Lionel Elvin/Richard Peters in their essay from 1966 attend to differences between 'stratified' and 'differentiated' schools and the role ritual plays in them.[56]

For rituals being inherently connected to social norms, order, values as understood in ritual theory, and even more on the basis of clearly identifying ritualisation as a situational strategic intervention in negotiations of power relations as suggested by Catherine Bell, it is obvious that the complex of power is central to understanding the role of rituals/ritualisations and consequently to the reflections on rituals/ritualisations in schools. For this reason I was looking for a model of school where an approach to power relations different to the one in mainstream schools is prevalent. It was of particular interest thus to look at schools where children decide individually how, when, what, where and with whom they learn. In Ireland it was not possible to find such schools. In a European context the German free alternative schools provided the most promising field with a substantial number of schools.[57]

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[56] "Ritualisation is likely to be highly developed in schools where pupils are ordered and grouped on the basis of a fixed attribute or an attribute which is thought to be fixed. This fixed attribute can be sex, age or IQ. If IQ is considered as a fixed attribute, then this acts to produce divisions within an age/sex group. Thus if a fixed attribute is taken as a basis for ordering relationships within a school, then a fairly explicit vertical and horizontal form of social organization develops. We shall call such a structure a stratified one." (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 162) "The expressive order of a differentiated school is likely to be transmitted, not through ritual and its restricted code, but through a communication system where the meanings are verbally elaborated, less predictable and therefore more individualized. If the basis for social control through ritual is extra-verbal or indirect, impersonal or non-rational, then the basis for social control where ritual is weakened is likely to be personal, verbally explicit and rational. A major source of control in stratified schools is the internalizing of the social structure and the arousal and organization of sentiments evoked through ritual, signs, lineaments, heraldic imagery and totems. In differentiated schools there is likely to be a weakening of ritual and its supporting insignia. The social structure is then unlikely to be experienced as a unity, and social control will come to rest upon inter-personal means." (Bernstein/Elvin/Peters 1975, p. 163)

[57] While the multi-denominational schools in Ireland are often presented as an alternative to the 96 % of schools under denominational patronage they are yet a long way from the conceptual orientation of the free alternative schools. Multi-denominational schools operate as much on the basis of the national curriculum with the corresponding rules and regulations as derived from the rule of national schools as the denominational schools.

However having identified those two school types it was also likely that cultural differences between Ireland and Germany would play a role for potentially different practices, experiences.

While such an assumption may be regarded as common sense it was further warranted by results of the study on civil enculturation published by Werner Schiffauer, Gerd Baumann, Rita Katoryano and Steven Vertovec (2004). Besides comparing curricula and texts used in schools in the Netherlands, France, Germany and Britain the researchers in the project particularly observed pedagogical practices and interactions in schools in these four countries. With a focus on the way young people from a post-migration background managed their identities they collected data in field studies in classrooms. As might be expected they found quite obvious differences in the school cultures in the four countries. In the presentation of the results of the study Sabine Mannitz also points to "cross-cutting phenomena that limited the scope of nationally specific enculturations" (Mannitz 2004, p. 308) in the form of a globally marketed youth culture.

What a study like the one on civil enculturation however makes clear is that comparing Irish primary schools and free alternative schools on their own would run the risk of ignoring quite significant influence factors that are grounded in the national discourses and cultural heritage. It was necessary therefore to also include German mainstream schools as a third point of reference.

Hence what I deal with in my study are: Irish (mainstream) primary schools – German mainstream primary schools – Free alternative schools in Germany.

It seems appropriate at this point to explain which differences between the free alternative schools and the mainstream schools were considered relevant for choosing them for comparison. To do so I will start with an brief outline of the historic roots of free alternative schools.

3.2.
Free alternative schools – foundations, trajectories

The first free alternative schools in the former Federal Republic of Germany were established in the early part of the 1970's as a result of developments closely connected to the extra-parliamentary opposition during the second half of the 1960's, particularly the "kinderladen-movement."[58]

The parents who started the first projects of alternative kindergarten[59] wanted, for their children, an education free of the authoritarian treatment that was commonplace in the mainstream institutions. At the same time these projects were a reaction to the lack of kindergarten places as such which was also seen as a repressive element in that it tied women to the house and effectively excluded them from full participation in society, be it in terms of work or in involvement in politics. (see e. g. Moysich 1990, p. 15 ff; Sieglin 1992, p. 163 ff)

[58] Klaus Rödler (1987) has pointed to historical roots of the alternative schools that can be traced back to models of reform pedagogy in the Weimar Republic (1919 – 1933). In the discussions amongst the kinderladen-movement authors like Siegfried Bernfeld, Wilhelm Reich, Wera Schmidt, Edwin Hoernle provided points of reference. However the free schools in their programmatic papers do not explicitly see themselves as heirs of the reform movement within pedagogy during the 1920's. Thus it seems appropriate to take as a starting point here also the late 1960's and early 1970's.

[59] In Germany children start school at the age of six.

In September 1967 the first anti-authoritarian kindergarten was founded in Frankfurt. The motivation of the founding members was based on an understanding that pedagogy and politics are not separate of each other, rather that all aspects of life were seen as inherently political as expressed in the catchy formula 'the private is political.'

Monika Seifert, one of the founders of the group in Frankfurt explained: “Traditional kindergarten is in specific ways oriented towards making children conform. It is understood as a place where the child shall learn to abandon the own wants and needs, to the benefit of others. Those others however are not the other children but rather adults who due to their abstract programs and through their power are able to eliminate all spontaneous activities of the children.” (Seifert 1969/1977, p. 11) At the same time she argues that a pure individual engagement is simply not sufficient. “Every organisation that counters existing social institutions widens the basis of the anti-authoritarian movement, creates within the old society germ cells of the new one. They are an absolute need for a revolution to ever be possible. In this sense the apparently private interests of parents meet with a social necessity.” (Seifert 1969/1977, p. 15)

The educational aims of the group were theoretically influenced by psychoanalysis and critical theory. In Alexander Sutherland Neill's Summerhill school they found an inspiring practical model, although they criticised Neill for a supposed a-political stance. (Seifert 1969/1977, p. 15; see also Baader 2008, p. 279 ff.). Alternative models of pre-school education sprouted in many cities in West-Germany in the years after 1968.[60] They were mostly located in temporary accommodation in rented premises, empty shops, warehouses. This led to them being named 'kinderladen' (Laden = shop), a term which soon became a trademark name for anti-authoritarian kindergarten. However only few groups found the energy to also attempt the establishment of a school.

Instrumental in this regard was the group in Frankfurt. Initially negotiations with the local school authorities led to the establishment of a model project in 1970 with the first generation of kinderladen-children in a local mainstream primary school. The conceptual elements that guided this model was based on reform-pedagogic ideas, e. g.: cooperation, collectivity and solidarity instead of competition amongst children; abandoning of the traditional practice of regular examination and individual marking of children's performances in written and oral tests; teaching at the speed required by the children's learning; no homework; integration of social aspects (conflict resolution) in the classroom practice. Michael Hartlaub and Renate Stubenrauch retrospectively note on these elements of the model project that in theoretical terms they were an “old hat” already even in mainstream education, however their practical implementation was yet to be realised. (Hartlaub/Stubenrauch 1977, p. 52)

The plan to continue the model project after 1972 with a second group could not be realised due to resistance from within the state's school that hosted the first group and due to increasing political pressure on the school authorities. Parents of children from the anti-authoritarian kinderladen consequently went “on strike” and did not send their children to school at all but rather educated them at home. Under German law this was, and still is, illegal and an offence. Parents who home educate their children are threatened with substantial fines and imprisonment. (for an overview on the legal situation of home educators in Germany, see: Reimer 2010).

[60] These groups were mainly established in locations where a close proximity to universities was a given: Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Münster, Freiburg, Darmstadt, to name but a few. Over a period of forty years a significant sector within the German pre-school landscape has developed from these early organisational attempts. In many places the self-organised groups nowadays are an essential part of the basic social services.

After another attempt to establish a new model project in cooperation with local school authorities also failed in 1973 eventually the focus was shifted to establishing a free school. From 1974 on this project was realised without approval of the school authorities.[61] It took the free school Frankfurt twelve years of legal battle before it eventually secured the status of a recognised private school.

A part of the adult group that had been engaged with the model projects in Frankfurt came to Hannover in 1971/72. They followed up the ideas of establishing a model project school in Hannover, too. In contrast to the political resistance that the group in Frankfurt experienced, the group in Hannover found immediate support from the side of the minister for education (Kultusminister) and within a couple of weeks they could secure the status of a recognised school starting their work in 1972. The Glockseeschule in Hannover thus is commonly regarded as the oldest free alternative school in Germany. (van Dick 1979, pp. 187 – 192).

The number of free alternative schools increased only slowly over the first twenty years. In 1992 there were 18 schools organised in the national federation of free alternative schools (BFAS). Manfred Borchert in his overview points to the constant political struggle in which many of these schools found themselves in their attempts to gain legal recognition. The school in Frankfurt was not the only one that operated over years in a legal grey zone constantly under threat of closure through the school authorities depending on political opportunities.[62] (Borchert 1992, p. 18)

Since then the number of free alternative schools has increased faster and in 2013 there are 87 schools registered as members of the BFAS. The orientation on psychoanalysis and critical theory as prevalent in the early models of free alternative schools has subsequently been supplemented by a variety of approaches. In 2013 the foundational philosophies of the schools organised in the BFAS includes diverse ideas. School concepts are influenced by e. g.: Maria Montessori,[63] Elise and Celestine Freinet, Rebbeca and Mauricio Wild, A. S. Neill, or the Sudbury Valley Schools.

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61 It is an interesting side note that of the 36 members of the project group that set up the free school 20 were teachers or educators themselves. (Seifert/Nagel 1977, p. 90) This ratio is not unusual for the members of alternative educational institutions in Germany. It indicates a deep dissatisfaction that can be part of the professional existence of adults in education.

62 Manfred Borchert reports of schools operating illegally: Free School Berlin (2 years), Free School Kreuzberg (11 years), Free School Bremen (8 years until closure), Free School Würzburg (4 years until closure), Free School Cologne (2 years), Free School Stuttgart (8 years), Free School Freiburg (3 years), Free School Wuppertal (6 years). His figures are from 1992. Some of these schools have secured legal status by now.

63 But only a minority of the more than 400 German Montessori-Schools are organised in the BFAS. (see: http://www.montessori-deutschland.de/einrichtungen.html)

3.3.
Principles of Free Alternative Schools

The common ground on which these schools define themselves are the eight theses of their educational principles:

1. "The present and future problems of society (environmental problems, wars, poverty, etc.) can only be solved democratically by individuals who are able to live according to the principles of personal responsibility and democracy. Alternative schools seek to offer children, teachers and parents the opportunity to practice self-regulation and democracy again and again in everyday life. This is the most important political dimension of alternative schools.

2. Alternative schools are schools in which childhood is understood as an equally respected phase of life with the rights of self-determination, happiness and contentment, rather than simply a training period for adulthood.
3. Alternative schools create a space in which children can satisfy their own needs, such as the needs for freedom of movement, spontaneous self-expression, independent time management and intimate friendships.
4. Alternative schools renounce the use of coercion for disciplining children. Rules and restrictions are created through group processes of conflict resolution, addressing both conflicts between children and conflicts between adults and children. These rules, however, can be changed by the group at any time.
5. Educational subject matter is discovered naturally through the child's own experiences and determined in cooperation with the teachers. The selection of subject matter is a continuous process that involves the experiential background of children and teachers. The complexity of learning is taken into account through varied and flexible forms of learning that involve play as well as the everyday life and social environment of the school.
6. Alternative schools do more than simply impart knowledge to their pupils. They support emancipatory learning processes that open new and unusual paths of insight for everyone involved. In this way, such schools can help to lay the groundwork for the solution of present and future problems of society.
7. Alternative schools are self-governed. The design of the self-government is a meaningful experience in democratic collaboration for parents, teachers and pupils.
8. Alternative schools are places in which every individual's attitudes and opinions can be recognised as open and changeable. In this way, they offer the chance to experience adventure and learn about life." (Borchert 1992, p. 15; BFAS 2012)

As a declaration of intent these theses are more like general statements that are to be filled by concrete practice in each school according to local understanding and interpretation. At the same time they present a type of yardstick against which the practice of a given school can be measured.

A rather good summary of practical implications of the conceptual framework of the free alternative schools can be found in Gerold Scholz's study about children learning from children. (Scholz 1996) In free alternative schools children are not grouped in classes of one and the same age. If formal groups are built at all they usually span over an age period of a couple of years. On a surface level this mirrors the multi-grade classes in small (often rural) Irish primary schools.

For children in free alternative schools Scholz notes “the organising space is not the classroom but rather the entire school.” (Scholz 1996, p. 82) This means that children in free alternative schools are not restricted to activities in one room only. They are normally free to move to any room and to any activity as they wish. This leads to an enhanced mingling of children of different age groups and sexes in all sorts of activities.

In comparison to children in mainstream schools Scholz observes that children in free alternative schools have by far more time at their disposal in which they can determine what they wish to do, what meaning to give to the activity, when to start and when to finish it. As a programmatic element this constitutes as much a freedom as a requirement for the children. “From the beginning the individual child enjoys a great space for making decisions and it is expected from the child that she or he will make these decisions in relation to her or his learning processes.” (Scholz 1996, p. 82)

Free alternative schools are not simply following a different didactic concept. In fact the free alternative schools are depicted as working on the principle of mathetic instead of didactic. The concept of mathetic has its roots in Johann Amos Comenius' work. Mathetic is the science of learning as opposed to didactic, the science of teaching. The notion of mathetic was made popular again by Harmut van Hentig. In his expert testimony in the court deliberations on the Free School Frankfurt he described the practice of the school as “not having a didactic, but rather a mathetic.” (von Hentig in: Hartlaub 2004, p. 21)

Free alternative schools do not follow a set curriculum, seemingly timeless and fixed. Such a concept is simply absent. For the structuring of learning processes this leads to a different definition of the role of the children. While in mainstream schools the “concrete children with their knowledge, mentalities and interests are seen to modify the lessons (instruction), in free schools they take part from the very beginning in the planning of the activities as to what and how it will happen.” (Scholz 1996, p. 83)

The practice in free alternative schools is based on a model of intergenerational relationships that is kept open by the old generation. It is understood as experiment, that is: subject to negotiation between adults and children. Thus there is a constant process of change in the activities also. (Scholz 1996, p. 83)

For free alternative schools Gerold Scholz then states that teachers, children and parents change their school by their actions. Reciprocal demands, expectations, requests are brought into negotiations continuously. There is a constant debate going on, who has the right to define a situation in a certain way, and which definition is the valid one at any given time. Scholz thus creates the notion of “schools of negotiation” for the free alternative schools. (Scholz 1996, p. 84)

In furtherance to Gerold Scholz it would be worth following the idea of change in mainstream schools, too. Considering the contributions on rituals in schools as put forward by the Berlin ritual studies it would make sense to speak of practice in mainstream schools as similarly in constant change. However such change would have to be seen as in a relationship of constant tension with the overarching curriculum. Actors, children and teachers alike, in mainstream schools thus could be seen as in a position of constantly negotiating their practice against the principles of the curriculum.[64]

Taking Catherine Bell's ideas about ritualisations as situational strategic interventions in negotiations of power relations one has to extend the idea of negotiation. In this sense free alternative schools can not claim to have a monopoly on negotiations. It would rather follow that negotiations of definitions of situations, the way "reality is articulated for the cognitive endorsement of all" (Bell 1992, p. 131) are an ongoing process in all schools.

What however differs is the way negotiations take place and the position from which the partners in negotiations intervene, particularly where negotiations between adults and children are concerned. Put in simple terms one may say that the notion of "schools of negotiation" suggests that in free alternative schools these negotiations are taken seriously by all involved and all involved are taken seriously in the negotiations – irrespective of age.

According to Gerold Scholz in free alternative schools the limits of negotiation of children's interests are themselves negotiable.[65] Children thus also develop a consciousness of themselves as a status group with certain rights in the school. This in turn leads to traditionalisation/establishment of a set of norms/values amongst children that are not under adult control. These norms/values build the moral-normative frame for new children starting in a free alternative school. (Scholz 1996, p. 84)

What Gerold Scholz says about the children establishing themselves in negotiations as a 'status group' and accordingly establishing a moral-normative frame for newcomers (that is: children's culture) is certainly correct – but is is not exclusive to free alternative schools. The difference can't be seen in that there is a moral-normative framework amongst the children. It is in the relationship between the moral-normative framework of children and the moral-normative framework of adults. Gerold Scholz captures this in his remarks that children in the free alternative schools necessarily need to consider the functionality of their children's culture "against a horizon without adults. They are individually responsible for the functioning of their living together because the adults will mostly not interfere in conflicts amongst children." (Scholz 1996, pp. 85/86)

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[64] Peter Woods in his ethnographic study of a secondary school takes up the motif of negotiation, too. He depicts negotiation as one of a number of survival strategies of teachers addressing threats to "physical, mental and nervous safety and well-being, but also his continuance in professional life, his future prospects, his professional identity, his way of life, his status, his self-esteem." (Woods 1979, p. 145) Negotiation involves techniques of "management of manipulation of personal and group relationships" and "appeal." Having recourse to Bernstein, Peter Woods also refers to "ritual and routine" as another survival strategy. (Woods 1979, pp. 146 ff.)
Elsewhere he also states that "school life is a continuous process of *negotiation* and bargaining. This is particularly evident with regard to *rules*." (Woods 1979, p. 242)

[65] This is debatable. In this absolute manner the statement is problematic. At the end of the day, they are also schools with certain outside obligations. Gerold Scholz himself acknowledges this when he states "The free school is first of all another institution with an obligation to attend." (Scholz 1996, p. 82) The fact that adults are necessarily present in the school is also not up for negotiation. This is a simple requirement laid on the institution from outside. However anything within the institution is potentially up for negotiation.

Characteristic for free alternative schools however is that the children's culture is not normally a subculture in the interstices of the institution. It is in itself openly negotiable, just as much as the moral-normative framework of adults is negotiable, too. Gerold Scholz rightly points to the history of a school, as in: each free alternative school has it's own history of establishing it's own relationship between adult's and children's moral-normative framework.

The apparent freedom in free alternative schools can however be quite puzzling for children who are not used to it. The older a new entrant in a free alternative school is and the longer she or he was exposed to mainstream education with it's far narrower scope of negotiability the more likely such a newcomer will have, and potentially also create, problems within the school. This phenomenon is known since the early days of free schools. A. S. Neill reports about repeated experiences of children coming to Summerhill school with a repertoire of experiences from home and other schools that makes it difficult for them to cope with the balance of freedom and responsibility towards the school community. (Neill 1982, p. 52)

The concrete practice of free alternative schools should not be understood as if it would be the same in each of these schools. Differences are found amongst them e. g. in the ways how days, weeks are structured, how children enter and leave activities, what solutions are found for conflicts.[66] Over the 40 years of their history there have been a variety of specific approaches influential in different schools. The umbrella of BFAS and the eight theses as quoted above obviously cover a diverse enough landscape of educational concepts. This can be seen in the relevant references made by the schools in their concept papers (mission statements). As noted already school concepts are influenced by a spectrum of models ranging from Montessori to Sudbury Valley. It would be a fascinating project to write a history of the free alternative schools in terms of the various points of reference as they developed over time.[67]

Literature about free alternative schools most often hinges on the pedagogical concepts, the absence of a formal curriculum, the idea of self-regulation, the idea of freedom of children to decide what, when, where and with whom they wish to do. This is more than understandable because it is exactly what the free alternative schools put out as their main focus. However in descriptions of life in free schools there is always already included the assumption, rarely outspoken though, that this life is first and foremost established and guaranteed in its permanence on institutional level by adults.

[66] In his article from 1995 Michael Maas raises the point that in the course of their practice free alternative schools came to a position that reconciles mathetic and didactic. He points to examples of free alternative schools in which after a number of years of complete freedom of choice of activities for children a more formal approach with time-tabled activities and prepared lessons was introduced. In this context it is also necessary to see that each of the free alternative schools is established at a particular historical time and space. Therefore the overall discourse on education plays a role in the concrete formulation of school concepts (and visions of the founding group). The most recent development in Germany sees an increased interest in schools modelled along the Sudbury Valley school where there is no formal element of lesson structuring at all.

[67] Some examples: The “Free School Frankfurt” started in 1974, reference points: psychoanalytic pedagogy and critical theory; the “Comenius-Schule Darmstadt” started in 1986, reference points: religious socialism, Freinet, Petersen; the “Freie Schule Leipzig” started in 1990, reference points: open learning, Tolstoi, Freinet, Holt, Gribble, Wild; the “Aktive Schule Frankfurt” started in 2004, reference points: non-directive pedagogy, Montessori, Hengstenberg, Pikler, Wild; the “Neue Schule Hamburg” started 2007, reference points: Sudbury Valley.

To run a free alternative school it needs an organisational framework. Apart of the formal aspects stemming from legal requirements[68] which are clearly to be fulfilled by adults the day to day running of the school is also guaranteed by adults. Teachers are substantial part of the free alternative schools. However the role of teachers in free alternative schools differs from that in mainstream schools. In fact in many free alternative schools the actual term 'teacher' is not used, but rather consciously replaced by terms like 'Lernbegleiter' (literal: 'learning-companion', connoting a mentoring relationship), 'Teamer' (connoting the membership of the adult as part of the 'pedagogical team'), 'pedagogue' or 'Bezugsperson' (literal: 'Relation-Person'). The squabble with the terminology indicates a substantial difficulty inherent in the free alternative schools. Their attempt to transcend the dimensions of traditional schooling leads to a redefinition of roles also for the adults.

The demands on teachers in free alternative schools are different to those in mainstream schools. “Not always do I find the calmness to face these demands. With my school my habits have also changed. Eventually I am the same person during working hours as I am at home: teacher, mentor, educator, coach, housewife, cleaner, carrier of furniture, and I am a likeable, stern, just, unjust, reliable, insecure, interesting, boring, elegant, scruffy, pleasant, grumpy, old, and not old WOMEN.” (Stubenrauch 1992, p. 38) Or, in the words of Christine Pietsch, teacher in the Free school Mauerpark, Berlin: “What is nice in this school is that one is not restricted to the traditional role of teacher of German, mathematics or English, but rather one's personal passions as part of one's one person are brought in also. Here one can be 'human' and act authentic together with children, colleagues and parents (...)” (Freies Lernen in Berlin e.V. 2011, p. 85)

What is depicted here as experience from teaching in the free alternative schools can be generalised as the demand for the teacher to be ready to enter into a relationship with children (and other adults) that allows for more intense engagement than would be normal for mainstream schools. This includes also an understanding of the teacher as a learner her/himself. Yet this learning differs from a 'continuous professional development' that aims on perfecting teaching skills. “Real conflicts include libidinal and aggressive body contacts as much as aggressive behaviour that runs counter to the traditional rules of school learning. Teachers are not normally prepared for these. (…) Problems in school, at home and between home and school are similarly understood as a field of learning as are grammar or fractions. Learning is not the learning of children only. It is similarly the learning of teachers and parents, to deal with the questions that self-regulated learning of children in the school community brings up.” (Konzept Freie Schule Frankfurt, in: Seifert/Nagel 1977, pp. 112/113)[69]

Free alternative schools are inherently indebted to the idea of radical democracy. This may have become clear already in the brief on their historical roots. It also resounds in the description of their culture of negotiation as mentioned by Gerold Scholz.

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[68] E. g. the establishment of a juridical person, in Germany mainly in form of 'eingetragener Verein' ('registered association'), with legal representatives. The comparison in Irish law would be a registered company limited by guarantee.

[69] The everyday demands on teachers in free alternative schools can be quite high. The intensity of relationships can be overwhelming. Adding to this there is the position on the fringes of the regular system that accounts for a certain pressure to actually show that what is done in free alternative schools is as good or even better than what is done in state's schools. Franz Wellendorf remembers from his time as supervisor with the Glockseeschule in Hannover: “And of course they wanted to do everything especially well, better than the state. And they were very, very committed. They sat in the school for hours and hours and worked, prepared and planned and so on. And for some teachers that was simply too much. (…) Time again there were teachers who got sick and could not work any more, could not work well, were absent, came back, and so on. It was an enormous internal and external demand.” (Wellendorf 2011)

The idea of radical democracy as overarching principle also leads to the absence of formal hierarchies amongst adults in many of the free alternative schools. There is no principal, no ranking of pedagogical staff despite the fact that they may come with different qualifications into the job.[70]

Last, but not least, the free alternative schools in Germany clearly draw a demarcation line with mainstream schools in that there are no tests, marks, certificates issued by teachers to assess the children. This does not mean that there is no feedback given to children about their learning efforts. These however are not set against the other children, they are not in form of ranking, marking schemes etc. but rather on a purely individual basis.

Herbert Nagel has rightly pointed out that assessment in schools is a second-order problem. In his opinion the first problem is the equation and definition of "school knowledge" as "generally valid knowledge" and the exclusion of knowledge that is alien to the curriculum from entering legitimately into classroom activities in mainstream schools. (Nagel 1977, p. 122) Nevertheless the point that there are no exams, tests, marking schemes, certificates sets free alternative schools off from mainstream schools. As a counterpoint this is particularly important in the context of the German school system.

3.4.
German and Irish mainstream schools

"In international comparison the German school system is highly selective. (…) The first selective measure is already implemented before children start school: enrolment of a child can be deferred for a year, if the child's overall development seems insufficient. Children in school can be made to repeat a class if their school performance is weak. Children whose learning abilities are too far away from the norm can be excluded completely from mainstream schooling. At the age of 10 – 12 years (…) an obligatory selection takes place into school types that are supposed to represent the abilities of the children. This is also a predetermination of the – hierarchically ordered – final qualification."[71] (Bellenberg/Hovestedt/Klemm 2004, p. 4)

[70] Some schools actually do have formal hierarchies amongst staff. That's why I have chosen to formulate this cautiously and not as an absolute claim. The introduction of formal hierarchies in a system that is indebted to the ideas of radical democracy creates problems. It would be a worthwhile topic for research to trace back the reasons that normally lead to such a development and the knock-on effects from it, particularly in a longer term perspective. While my study on the development of the kinderläden (Hamm 2005) touches on this aspect in depicting the fields of tension in a process of professionalisation and institutionalisation of the initiative-based projects, a more concentrated attention to be given to the idea of hierarchies (formal and informal) would be highly interesting.

[71] I am highlighting the selective features of the German school system here because they play a particular role in the motivation of parents to send their children to free alternative schools, and of teachers to get involved in free alternative schools. The discussion of the selective character of the school system is a constant topic in Germany. Particularly the attempts to overcome the selective character of school by establishing comprehensive schools as alternatives on secondary school level within the system to counter the traditional three tier system of Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium has contributed significantly to these debates.

Children in primary schools are subject to a constant assessment of their school performances. For this purpose written tests are carried out on a regular basis. In the state of Hessen[72] for example the school law requires that in 3rd class in German and mathematics up to six tests and up to three 'learning-controls' are to be carried out. (In Berlin a child in 5th class has to write 3 tests every year in German, mathematics, English[73], science.)

These tests are marked in accordance to a scheme of six grades with marks ranging from 1 (the best) to 6 (the worst). Two certificates are issued to children during each school year, one after half the year is over, the second one at the end of the year. The written tests count for half the marks in a given subject, the second half is made up of continuous assessment of oral contributions during class. Depending on the results in the end-of-year certificate a child can be made to repeat a year. Besides subject specific performance there is also an assessment of the “Arbeits- und Sozialverhalten”, meaning: a child's “behaviour in work” and “social behaviour” are also subject to the assessment of the teacher.

There are tendencies within the various states of Germany to reform the marking schemes and replace marks with written reports in which a more general feedback on the child's performance in school, developments in the child's learning, interests or social is provided. In Hessen the certificate at the end of year one is made out as a written report on “the level of performance in the subjects/strands, and also on the development of learning, the behaviour at work and learning, on particular abilities and weaknesses, on social behaviour, on the desire to learn and the cooperation” of children. (HKWM 2011, § 14.2) In Berlin for the first two years a written report is issued.[74]

It would be a massive piece of work in itself to attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the various details of the marking schemes in all 16 German states and the dynamics of the debates surrounding this topic in the context of school reform. What I wish to point out here is simply that mainstream schooling in Germany is heavily dominated by an ideology of abstract performance. It is this 'Leistungsprinzip', the principle of performance, on which the school assessments are constructed. In concrete terms that means that there is constant pressure on children in school from day one to perform. They are aware (and where they are not, they are made aware very fast by the procedures in school) that they are constantly assessed and judged against each other by the teacher. (for a brief summary on assessment in German primary schools see also: INTO 2010, p. 49)

Despite efforts in Ireland to increase the value placed on assessment and to standardize the practice within and across schools (see e.g. INTO 2010) it is still a fair comment to say that the focus on assessment in Irish primary schools is most definitely not as strong as in their German mainstream counterparts.

For the purpose of my study it will suffice to point to two more differences between the Irish and the German mainstream primary schools. The first is the fact that there are still a larger number of small (mostly rural) schools in Ireland in which there are less than 50 children enrolled. 19.5 % of all primary schools (618 out of 3165) fall into this category. (DES 2012, p. 31) As a comparison, in 2009/2010 only 72 of 1155 school (6.23 %) in Hessen had less than 52 children enrolled. (Hessischer Rechnungshof 2012, p. 258)

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[72] The interviews with teachers of German mainstream schools in my study took place in Hessen.

[73] Or whatever other language the child learns as a 'first foreign language'

[74] There is also the option provided by Berlin school law that the parents assembly of a given class in a school decides that written reports are to be issued instead of marked certificates during the 3rd and 4th year of primary school. This is not an individual right of a family (parent) however. It needs the majority of the parents of the class to agree to it.

The second and most obvious difference concerns the patronage system. The uniqueness of the Irish system of denominational patronage is widely known. Just recently the advisory group of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector has highlighted the fact again that such a system is “unique among developed countries” and that “there is now a mis-match between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society.” (DES 2012, p. 1) In spite of it's apparent mis-match however the system still prevails.

Primary schools in Germany are in general under state's control. The ultimate authority lies with the governments of the 16 states. In Hessen school authority is invested in agencies on a level of the Landkreise (comparable to county level in Ireland). These agencies decide on appointments of principals, they oversee the schools and they are the superior authority in all questions relating to the actual running of the school. (Hessisches Schulgesetz §§ 89, 93) There is no direct involvement of church authorities in the running of state's primary schools in Germany.[75]

Obviously the idea of denominational patronage has repercussions on the school ethos. In chapter six we will see soon how certain aspects of teacher's reflection processes on rituals and ritualisations are also influenced by it.

As for shared features between Irish and German mainstream primary schools the legal framework on which they are built establishes a strict hierarchical order amongst the adults, that is principal, teachers, support staff within the school. This distinguishes them from the radical democratic model as mainly followed in the free alternative schools.

In both mainstream systems then the guiding idea for the classroom practice is the delivery of a curriculum with a set time allocated to a range of subjects/strands to a class of children of the same age. In both systems it is the teacher who ultimately decides how time and space are structured, which activities are allowed at a given time, which are excluded.

In the words of Sheila Drudy and Kathleen Lynch: “The teacher has power and authority over many aspects of pupils' lives. Knowledge, behaviour, speech, and clothing – all come within the sphere of her or his control.” (Drudy/Lynch 1993, p. 102) One should add to this list also the teachers control over physical movement of children. In psychoanalytic terms this idea has been expressed by Franz Wellendorf in a German context. “The 'artificial special milieu' of school (…) has a few characteristics that allow for controlling the interpretation and the expression of instinctual impulses[76] in the scenic arrangement. For the pupils there are created 'uniform conditions for satisfying their drives and interests' so that they are as close as possible under the teachers control.” (Wellendorf 1979, p. 202)

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75 There is a small number of private primary schools that are run by the protestant or the catholic church. The legal status of these schools equals the one of the free alternative schools. In 2004 there were 115 protestant primary schools (0.68 %) and in 2009/10 there were 77 catholic primary schools (approx. 0.50 %) in Germany. (figures from: EKD 2008, p. 48; www.katholische-schulen.de)

76 The German term used by Franz Wellendorf is *Triebimpuls*, in my translation I follow the use of the term *instinctual impulse* as introduced in Strachey’s translation of Sigmund Freud’s *Zwangshandlung und Religionsausübung* (1907), in: Sigmund Freud, *The origins of religion,* London 1990, p. 38
Laplanche/Pontalis in *The language of psychoanalysis* (London 2006, p. 222) erroneously locate the first use of the term by Freud in *Instincts and their vicissitudes* from 1915.
see also the summarizing remarks in relation to the use of terms instinct, drive, instinct impulse made by Michéle Porte: http://www.enotes.com/psychoanalysis-encyclopedia/drive-instinct
http://www.enotes.com/psychoanalysis-encyclopedia/instinctual-impulse

The observation that viewing the school situation in “terms of … [teachers'] ... control over pupils brings power to the centre of analysis” (Drudy/Lynch 1993, p. 102) is very much in line with the trajectory of my own study. Whereby it should also be understood that a view of relationships in terms of power residing on one side only is too narrow and does not correspond with the practice in schools either. With Denscombe (1985, 129 – 135), Drudy/Lynch note on this quite correctly that “while these aspects of teacher authority are legitimated by the school and by society, the establishment of the teacher's authority does not come about automatically but must be established through the use of classroom management skills, and also through processes such as negotiation.” (Drudy/Lynch 1993, 102).[77]

In total what makes the free alternative schools the preferred setting for a comparison with mainstream schools in the course of my study is their abandoning of the didactic principle and the idea of a set curriculum, their conceptual approach to the relationships in the daily practice, their indebtedness to the concept of self-regulation, their conceptual overcoming of the division of learning and living, and their rootedness in ideas of radical democracy.[78]

We will see soon how the differences and commonalities in the conceptual orientation prevalent in the three school types also translates into a ritual culture that spans over different thematic areas. I will give an account of the findings in this regard from my study in section 6. 3.

As one more step before reporting on the actual results in the empirical part I will explain the research design and the methods employed in the following chapter.

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[77] Which brings us back to the motif of negotiation and consequently raises the question about the character of this negotiation. In turn that opens the route into the realm of ritualisation as situational strategic intervention in negotiations of power relations.

[78] I am far from suggesting that all schools that are organised in the BFAS live up to the same standards in relation to these various elements in their practice. Within the free alternative schools there has always been debates about the correct interpretation of the principles on which they are built. This is an ongoing process and with each new school established there is a new contribution made in the overall debate. For a discussion of the dilution of principles and the tendency to clean out the critical attitude see e. g. Münte-Goussar (2001, pp. 25 - 31)

4. Research design – methods employed

Martyn Denscombe in his “research guide for small-scale research projects” states that: “In practice, good social research is a matter of ‘horses for courses’, where approaches are selected because they are appropriate for specific types of investigation and specific kinds of problems. They are chosen as ‘fit for purpose’. The crucial thing for good research is that the choices are reasonable and that they are made explicit as part of any research report.” (Denscombe 2007, p. 3) In this chapter I will address this requirement by explaining the choices made in the research design and the methods employed.

4.1.
Choices

4.1.1.
Anchoring point: Research questions

The research questions developed in the initial considerations provided the necessary anchoring point for making decisions about the strategy chosen for my research project. These questions were already stated in the outline at the beginning. They shall be repeated here:

1. Which are the currently used/preferred reflection settings for teachers in primary schools?
2. Are rituals reflected upon by teachers?
If yes: 3. which rituals are reflected upon?
4. … in which settings?
5. Can the process of reflection be described?
6. Can typical patterns be identified in the professional reflection processes of teachers in primary schools concerning rituals/ritualisations?
7. If typical patterns can be identified, how do such patterns relate to the settings in which the reflection takes place?
8. If such patterns are identifiable, are they similar for distinct backgrounds; or are there significant differences?
9. If there are significant differences, how can they be explained?
But also: if there are no significant differences, how is this to be explained given the diverse background and potentially different settings of reflection?
10. Does critical reflection on rituals take place?
11. Are there obstacles in relation to critical reflection on rituals/ritualisations taking place in professional reflection processes of primary school teachers?
12. If there are obstacles in relation to critical reflection on rituals/ritualisations:
a) how are these obstacles related to the intrinsic characteristics of rituals/ritualisations?
b) how are these obstacles related to the settings in which the reflection processes take place?
c) are they similar in different backgrounds/or not?
d) and how can this be explained?

The design of my research project was anchored in these questions. I will briefly list the particular methods chosen and explain the reasoning for the choices. Their implementation in practice will be explained in separate sections.

4.1.2.
Methods employed

The methods chosen for gathering data for my study comprised of

- a questionnaire;
- a series of semi-structured interviews;
- 'memory-work' workshops.

Using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews can be seen as quite standard applications within social research. 'Memory-work' may require an explanatory comment at this stage. It denotes a method of collective inquiry developed by feminist researchers in the 1980's. In 'memory-work' researcher and researched collaborate in investigating a given topic according to a set of procedures surrounding the analysis of self-generated texts. I will briefly come back on the method at the end of this section. There will be a complete chapter devoted to 'memory-work' at a later stage in which the method will also be outlined in detail (see chapter eight).

In choosing the three different methods I tried to maximise the potential outcome of my research in light of structural limitations. The study had to be planned and conducted entirely at my own expense. There was no institutional apparatus available to tap into, for example in form of students who might help gathering data in field studies. There was a time-limit simply due to the fact that while conducting the study I had to put on a hold my normal occupation, furthermore support in form of institutional supervision was available only for a limited period. The choice of methods took these limitations into account. Each of the methods was chosen for its fit for gathering data addressing particular aspects of the study.

Questionnaire

Obviously it makes a difference whether a reflection process takes place during a fifteen minute yard break with a crowd of children around, or in a two-hour meeting after school in a quiet meeting room. Also the number and the institutional role of participants will have a bearing on reflection processes. A meeting of two or three teachers who all teach the same age group of children in a school will offer different opportunities than a meeting of 25 members of staff who are working in different roles (special needs assistants, resource teachers, class teachers, principal).

In the literature on reflection I could not find an overview on the actual reflection settings used by primary school teachers. Thus one element that I deemed helpful was to find out what settings teachers in the three fields actually use for their professional reflection processes and the time frames for the teachers' reflection processes in various settings. This was meant to provide a description of the actual framework in which rituals/ritualisations could be reflected upon by the teachers.

To address this issue I decided to employ a questionnaire that would inquire into the actual practice of the teachers. The immediate aim was to compile a simple statistical overview of the reflection settings used and the time frames available in these settings for reflection. This overview would be useful in at least two ways. First, it would give an indication on a purely general plane as to the status that reflection in teacher practice actually gains, i. e. beyond the declarations of intent as for example in the code of conduct of the teaching council how much time, space, attention is actually given to reflection. Second, it would allow for a point of reference for the results from the interview-analysis. I will give an account of the questionnaire design, distribution in section 4.2. The results of the survey will form the basis of chapter five.

Interview series

Where literature on rituals in school was based on empirical data it has strongly relied on case studies of particular schools (McLaren 1986, Henry 1993, Bushnell 1999) or classes in schools (Wagner-Willi 2005, Kellermann 2008, Xiao 2008). The main method used for data collection in these studies is ethnographic field study. For these projects this made good sense because their main focus was to gather information about the actual rituals, hence the observation of the activities deemed to be ritual put the researcher into a position to report from a first hand experience.

For my own project such an approach was not feasible. It might have been possible to find a cooperating school in each of the three school types open to allow for participation in team meetings and other formal reflection settings over a longer period of time. However the entire area of informal reflection settings would have been difficult to access. Also the organisational aspects of such an undertaking would have been enormous. The practical problems of commuting to Germany on a regular basis of at least fortnightly frequency made such an endeavour already completely unrealistic.[79] Furthermore the research questions aimed at deciphering typical patterns in reflection processes. To do so it was more appropriate to spread the gathering of data over a wider area of sources which also ensured greater comparability.

Thus I decided to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews in each of the three school types for gathering the data necessary to address questions regarding the inclusion of rituals/ritualisations in the reflection of teachers. The semi-structured nature of the interview guaranteed scope for the interview partners to address the issues at hand from their own position and background. And yet in this manner it was possible to collect a body of material that was open to comparative analysis as one element of my study. In terms of organisation the interviews were also manageable even on the basis of the limitations as stated above.

The concrete steps in planning, organising, conducting and analysing the interviews will be explained below in section 4.3.

[79] Rituals are but one aspect of school practice. When, with whom in what setting they become a topic for reflection can not be planned in advance for a given school year. It may even be a case that over the course of a school year, there are no reflections on rituals at all going on in a school. From the view of a researcher to be at the right spot at the right time is an impossible task.

Memory-work

One of the aims of my study was to ascertain if there are potential problem areas for critical reflection inherent to rituals/ritualisations and to develop suggestions for their increased inclusion in processes of critical reflection. Addressing this aim I found it useful to include an element of practice-research in my study that could provide an insight in the practical implications of critical reflection on rituals/ritualisations. For this purpose I decided to engage with the method of memory-work which was developed by feminist researchers during the 1980's. (Haug 1990, 1992, 1999)

Memory-work is a form of narrative inquiry which uses scenes (short stories) written by the participants in workshops as the material for reflection and research. The role of the researcher in the workshops is to introduce the method of memory-work to the participants, to facilitate and to monitor the progress of the reflection process. The role of the participants is that of co-researchers of their own practice.[80]

The application of memory-work in an Irish context was a novelty which added an aspect to this part of my study that promised to contribute to discussions of method in social research on a plane beyond the specifics of my own project. The presentation made at the conference on 'New agendas in social movement studies' in Maynooth in November 2011 gives witness of this contribution (Hamm 2011b). As mentioned already, in chapter eight I am going to attend in great detail to memory-work as a method and to its application in the course of my research.

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As a whole the strategy for the research project thus included three different methods. The questionnaire provided the necessary information for attending to the first research question concerning the currently used reflection settings of teachers. The interviews built the basis for addressing issues of inclusion of rituals in reflection, typical patterns in such reflection processes, critical reflection and obstacles thereof. The memory-work groups were a practical implementation of reflection on rituals in which the question of accessibility of the phenomena for critical reflection was tested out.

From the presentation of the results in the empirical part of my text it will be obvious how each of the three methods contributes to the overall findings in its own way. Together they provided a combination that could deliver sufficient empirical backing for a profound engagement with the topic of my research.

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[80] In this sense, memory-work as a method follows the approach of Critical Psychology. “Objectivity, or the validity of empirical claims, is tested in the process of a critical practice. Empirical claims are about the action possibilities of subjects. A practice that expands the real scope of action delivers experience about objective action possibilities beyond the immediately recognisable. Since the relevant life conditions of humans are societal, the direction of expansion of action possibilities is also the direction towards generalizing action possibilities. Generalization, thus, is not viewed exclusively epistemologically, but also, and very closely related, *ontologically* as a *‘generalizing action potence’*, contrary to a *‘restrictive action potence’*, i.e., defensive forms of maintaining a status quo of a relative action potence (...). Generality is thus achieved, not by standardizing experience into some average, but by creating, communicating, and using common action possibilities, and by suggesting relevant aspects of the subjective situations of the people involved as typical, to be tested, enriched, and revised by people to whom the research is relevant.” (Nissen 2000, pp. 153 ff.)

I will now turn to a more detailed explication of the implementation of the questionnaire (section 4.2.) and of the interview series (section 4.3.). As mentioned already the method of memory-work will be separately attended to in chapter eight.

4.2.
Questionnaire

For the purpose of gathering data for a compilation on the commonly used reflection settings a questionnaire was designed that was made available to teachers in Ireland and Germany. I will attend to development and design first, then moving on to distribution and collection.

4.2.1.
Development and Design

A specifically designed questionnaire was planned to be distributed to primary school teachers. The questionnaire was considered to concentrate on the reflection settings and the current integration of rituals/ritualisations in the reflection processes. Trial versions of the questionnaire were presented to five teachers (one of them a teaching principal). Their feedback was valuable for the process of developing the final version of the questionnaire. On the basis of this feedback some crucial adjustments were made. There were three trial versions necessary before the final content of the questionnaire was established. From each version to the next certain questions were dropped, clarified or elements of language were simplified.

Máiréad Dunne, John Pryor and Paul Yates highlighted that “the single point of contact with respondents through the questionnaire text places important emphasis on issues of communication especially in terms of clarity, transparency and the avoidance of ambiguity.” (Dunne/Pryor/Yates 2005, p. 44) Questions in the trial versions relating to the complex of rituals proved to be problematic. There were too many uncertainties with the term 'ritual'. It would have required a considerable amount of explanation and definition to clarify the use of the term. Including these explanations would have accounted for an amount of reading requested from potential respondents that was seen as detrimental to their being ready to actually fill in the questionnaire. Consequently these questions were left out of the final version. Questions regarding the general areas from which reflection topics derived (didactics, organization, pedagogy, relationships) were similarly found requiring too much explanation as was deemed to be practical for inclusion in the questionnaire. Thus they were also removed.

The questions that were included in the final version of the questionnaire comprised two areas:
a) Information was requested about age, gender, length of service, contractual agreements, religious orientation, professional role, numbers of children in class and school, numbers of staff, school patronage and school environment – providing a personal and a school profile;
b) Information was requested about the reflection settings used by the respondents. Staff meetings, staff planning days, meetings with colleagues, meetings with principal, meetings with parents, meetings with pupils and professional support/counselling were offered as possible alternatives.[81]

[81] In discussion with the five teachers who revised the trial versions these were found to be the most common

In case a respondent wished to expand the list space was provided for further inclusion of other settings. For all settings five questions were asked concerning the frequency and duration of reflection and concerning the respondents' estimation of intensity, productivity and satisfaction which they gain from reflection. Extra space for general feedback/comments was also provided.

In the questionnaire the term reflection was operationally defined as: "Engage in discussion about situations that are over, examine your own actions/practice in these situations to gain a better understanding of your own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations." This definition excluded the concept of reflection-in-action (Schön, see section 2.2.). It was however inclusive of classifications in relation to the processual scale of reflection as depicted by Griffiths/Tann in terms of "review, research, retheorise" (see section 2.4.). It is clear that a reflection process in an informal meeting of a few minutes duration with parents after school differs in scale from a reflection process with the entire staff in an ongoing engagement facilitated by an external tutor. The definition of reflection made no reference to qualifying categories in terms of functional or orientational character of reflection so that the broadest range of processes could be subsumed under it.

Parallel to the English version a German version was also developed. All English texts, questions, explanations, etc. were translated so that the content in both versions was similar. All adjustments were always made in both versions.

The lay-out of the questionnaire was overhauled repeatedly. The final version was printed as a brochure in A-5-format.[82] The booklet contained 16 pages. Print was black/white. Visually it was kept in a simple form with reoccurring lay-out elements throughout (frames, all headings highlighted). All text was printed in a font size 16 which accounted for good readability. (See appendix 2 for a sample pages of the questionnaire.) From the trial applications it was clear that the questionnaire could be completed in 10 – 15 minutes which was seen as a realistic time span for a teacher to actually consider filling it in.

4.2.2.
Distribution and collection

<u>Personal distribution</u>

500 questionnaires were distributed in Ireland and another 500 in Germany.

In Ireland I visited 63 schools in counties Dublin, Kildare, Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo personally to deliver the questionnaire. The schools were selected to represent a mix of urban, suburban, rural backgrounds and of various sizes. I always asked to speak briefly to the principal. I briefly explained the background of the survey and also presented a short description of the context in form of a letter. Of the 63 schools four were multi-denominational schools and four were under protestant patronage. The other 55 schools were under catholic patronage.

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reflection settings used by teachers, albeit not all teachers would have used all of them. In the German version professional support/counselling was described as "Fachberatung/Supervision" - in section 5.4.7. the concept of reflective supervision as practiced in German educational institutions will be explained.

[82] A total of 12 lay-out versions were developed before arriving at the final document.

In seven schools the questionnaires were rejected.[83] In five of these cases the principal argued that there is already too much asked from their teachers and that they don't want to put another burden on them. In one case the principal had reservations about the question regarding religious affiliation in the personal profile and therefore did not wish to pass on the questionnaire.

With all 56 schools where the questionnaire was accepted I arranged a date for a second visit for me to collect those questionnaires that were completed by teachers. Usually the second date was approx. 2 weeks after my initial visit.

I left in each school an exact number of questionnaires so that all members of staff, teachers, special needs assistants, principal, resource teachers and learning support teachers could get one. I left a large envelope in each school in which the individual teachers' responses could be gathered and stored in the school for me to collect them.

As an inlet in each of the questionnaire-booklets I included a small envelope that was pre-addressed to me. Teachers therefore had the option after completing the questionnaire to either hand it back to the principal who would put it into the large envelope for me to personally collect it or also to send it directly to me.

500 questionnaires were distributed in Germany in the same manner as in Ireland. I visited 46 mainstream primary schools personally. In 32 schools the questionnaire was accepted. The schools were located in the area between the rivers Rhein, Main and Neckar in the south of the state of Hessen. This area for distribution was seen to offer the advantage of including rural areas of the Landkreise (counties) Darmstadt-Dieburg, Gross-Gerau, but also the cities of Frankfurt and Darmstadt and their suburban belts.

Although there are separate school laws in the 16 states in Germany, the conditions of work for teachers are largely similar. In the school laws the working conditions of teachers are regulated, too. Differences in this regard exist in relation to the actual contact time (Stundendeputat) that teachers are supposed to spend in the classroom. Depending on their age, primary school teachers in Hessen spend 29 or 28 'hours' in the classroom, whereby an 'hour' in this context depicts a lesson unit of 45 minutes. Effectively therefore the contact time for teachers in Hessen is about 21.75 hours (21 respectively). In most of the other states this figure is fixed at 21 hours. Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt require 20.25 hours class contact. The figure however has to also be seen in relation to the overall working hours for public servants (as teachers are, too) which in Hessen is fixed at 42 hours while in most of the other states including Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt it is fixed at 40 hours (see: KMK 2011, pp. 2 – 11). In relation to reflection settings there is a general obligation in all states for teachers to take part in so-called conferences. In a number of states (incl. Hessen) there is further an obligatory annual meeting with the principal.[84] Apart from these there are no further regulations found in German school laws that would put an onus on teachers to engage in a certain reflection setting. Concentrating on the state of Hessen therefore did not pose a disadvantage that could have led to a bias in the collected data.

[83] Of the seven schools one was a protestant school in an urban environment, one was a multi-denominational school also in an urban environment. The other five were catholic schools, three or them rural and two urban schools.

[84] Conferences and obligatory meetings with principals will be considered in chapter five in the sections relating to staff meetings and meetings with principal.

From Irish teachers I received 95 responses which accounts for a response rate of 19 %. In Germany I received 46 responses, a response rate of just over 9 %. On a general level the response rates are in the area that would be commonly expected of questionnaires that are received 'cold' by potential respondents. Denscombe notes that “any social researcher will be lucky to get as many as 20 per cent of the questionnaires returned.” (Denscombe 2007, p. 9)[85]

A distribution with personal visit to school, talk to principal, second visit for collection was not feasible for the Free alternative schools due to their geographical spread. Those schools were instead contacted per e-mail and telephone and made aware of an online version of the questionnaire.

Online survey

The questionnaire was published as an online-survey, too. Access was made possible on basis of providing an e-mail contact to which an automatic response was sent with an access-key.

Parallel to the distribution of the printed version I contacted 38 primary schools in one Irish county per e-mail informing them about the online-survey. Neither did I receive any response to these 38 e-mails nor was there any entry into the online-survey.

I also contacted schools in Germany per e-mail making them aware of the online-survey. Messages were sent

- to 70 primary schools in the State of Hessen
- to 86 alternative schools nationwide in Germany.

As already explained the Free alternative schools were contacted per telephone and thus the e-mail was follow up. I spoke to the contact person of 61 of the schools directly. In all cases but one the contact person had passed on the message to the staff of the school. As a result of this highly time-consuming procedure three entries were registered for the online-survey. From the state run schools there was no entry registered at all. This form of approaching teachers therefore proved to be unsuccessful.

Thus the personally distributed and collected questionnaires provided the material from which the information about currently used reflection settings is derived. For the free alternative schools information about reflection settings used was as included in the interview series.

I will come back on the questionnaire in relation to aspects of validation in section 4.4. The results of the data analysis are presented in chapter five.

[85] With a distribution as done here it is not clear if in fact all questionnaires are handed out to teachers. The figures for the response rate are based on the total figure of questionnaires as handed over as bulk to principals or school secretaries. Obviously I have no control over the passing on of the material to teachers. In this matter I rely on the cooperation of the school administration.

4.3.
Interviews

Conducting interviews with teachers was meant to collect descriptions of concrete reflection processes on rituals as they are experienced by the teachers in their school practice. These descriptions would provide the material for analysis to address the research questions concerning the inclusion of rituals in reflection processes: are they reflected upon at all; if yes: how and with whom; what patterns are detectable; does critical reflection happen; where are problem areas regarding critical reflection on rituals.

The best format for the interviews in my study was the semi-structured interview which is “neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire.” (Kvale 2011, p. 11) Other interview formats of interviews would have been less fitting for the intended purpose. Conducting a standardized interview would have required a clear categorisation on my side of a set of phenomena that were yet to be detected in the way as they are experienced by the interview partners. The individual descriptions of the reflection processes was seen as essential to the data gathered in the interview series. Therefore giving room for narratives of personal experiences of the teachers was an important aspect in planning the interviews. However a purely narrative or biographical interview in which the interviewee was to develop a topic for a long period of time and the interviewer remains largely in the role of listener would have easily led away from the focus of the research project. (see also: Nohl 2008, pp. 19/20) The semi-structured interview however finds itself in position between the other formats, one that was well-suited for the purposes of my research.

An interview is first and foremost a conversation, in my case a conversation between two people. At the same time it is “actually more than a casual conversation.” (Denscombe 2007, p. 173). Taking part in an interview for the interviewee includes agreeing for her or his words to be used by the researcher. Martyn Denscombe points to the consent of the interviewee and to the fact that the conversation is actually recorded: “The point is (...) the interview talk is 'on record' and 'for the record'.” The conversation in the interview follows an agenda which is set by the researcher. (Denscombe 2007, p. 174) The interviewee implicitly agrees to this when she or he enters into the concrete interview situation.

Even if interviewer and interviewee intend to create a conversation that is solely focussed on the thematic aspects of the interview there is always a dynamic dimension developing when the two partners meet. As any other social situation there is also an interactional dynamic developing during the interview.[86] (Kvale 2011, p. 57) This needs to be kept in mind when designing a script of the interview.

The semi-structured interview follows a script which is the same for all interviews. This guarantees for comparability and aggregation of results. At the same time it allows for individual experiences to come to the fore and to be followed up in the actual interview situation.

[86] This is very much common sense. I actually applies to ALL situations in which people meet. As far as specific settings are concerned (e.g. reporting to a superior at work, interrogating a suspect of a crime, confessing to a priest in the confessional box, topical discussions in a university seminar) there is always a certain set of unwritten rules and role expectations connected to them. And yet, in all these situations the concrete dynamic between those involved in the conversation runs parallel and influences the actual exchange of words.

Dunne, Pryor and Yates emphasize that “interviewers are advised to show a caring and concerned attitude within a well-planned encouraging format. Far from the dangers of bias and the researcher 'going native', the more conversational and open interview format escapes the alienation of respondents in the classical interview form and endeavours to produce greater trust and more truthful responses.”[87] (Dunne/Pryor/Yates 2005, p. 33)

4.3.1.
Setting the stage – Interview script

As I was planning for an interaction with persons whom I did not know[88] I was aware that it would be important to find a good start for the conversation. Steiner Kvale refers to the importance of setting the stage for the interview. “The first minutes of an interview are decisive. The interviewees will want to have a grasp of the interviewer before they allow themselves to talk freely and expose their experiences and feelings to a stranger.” (Kvale 2011, p. 55) Setting the stage for me did not start at the point of entering a room and meeting the interview-partner. It included the preliminary contacts. I will explain what that meant in the course of my study in section 4.3.2.; first I will attend to the actual interview meeting and to the interview script.

In looking for a good start for the actual interview interaction I introduced the situation with an explanation of the research project and an outline of the interview structure. I asked for the consent for recording the interview. I always explained about the transcription of the interviews and that all names of persons and locations would be anonymised. I invited the teachers to ask whatever further questions they had in relation to the interview. This was also a means of addressing the specific power-relation that is part of an interview situation. More on this will be said at the end of this section.

Before starting to record the conversation I gave the interview partner a hand-out on which the script for the interview was printed. The purpose of this was two-fold. The teachers held in hands a script with the succession of topical questions during the interview which allowed for a greater degree of transparency upfront.[89] At the same time it helped to focus the conversation in cases where interview partners were to drift away from the original question. This concerned particularly those questions in which concrete examples of reflection processes on rituals were asked for. Reference to these will be made soon again.

Obviously the semi-structured interview is a conversation that is aiming at unravelling a certain body of information. It is focussing on a set topic, in my case: reflection processes on rituals. From earlier conversations with colleagues in the educational sector I was acutely aware that rituals are not easily spoken about. Thus I felt it would be helpful to allow for a conversation during the interview situation to develop from safe grounds to the more uncertain one's surrounding the complex of rituals.

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87 In this passage they refer to Seale (1998).

88 Of the 34 interview partners I knew four from earlier contacts.

89 Hand-outs are used in job interviews to inform the candidate (interviewee) about the actual interview process. (see e. g. US Dep. Of State 2005, p. 12; also: www.ehow.com/how_5079770_conduct-perfect-interview.html)

To allow for the conversation to develop from safe grounds I decided to ask the interview partners first about themselves and their schools. This included questions similar to the personal profile and the school profile in the questionnaire. These questions were easy to answer. They did not pose any intellectual challenge and had no controversial potential. Thus they were ideal conversation openers. They allowed the interview partners to expand on their own situation if they wanted to do so. In some cases teachers were happy enough to very briefly answer each of the questions and not go into any further detail. In other cases this led to considerable narration. This period of the interview was meant to prepare the ground for the further conversation. I did not push for more information in the first case, neither did I censor in the second.

The second part of the script concentrated on reflection settings. I presented the definition of reflection that was used in the questionnaire. There was a page included in the hand-out which was given to the teachers on which this definition was printed. The teachers were given time to read the definition. Also stated on the page was the focus on reflection with others in professional contexts as a guideline for the interview.

The actual questions in the second part of the interview mirrored those that were included in the questionnaire. Starting point was always the question whether the teachers engage in discussion about situations that are over and examine their own actions/practice in these situations to gain a better understanding of their own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations? This question was asked in relation to staff meetings, other meetings with colleagues, professional support, meetings with parents, meetings with principal, meetings with pupils, staff planning days, other settings.

This part of the interview was to provide vital points of reference in relation to the concrete reflection processes to be addressed in the third part. The actual information relating to the reflection settings was also meant to be a check on the data gathered in the questionnaires in the fields of German mainstream and Irish primary schools. It added a qualitative dimension to the pure statistical compilation of frequencies and duration of reflection settings used by teachers. For the free alternative schools it was crucial to include these questions so that a comparison with the other two school types would be possible.

The third part of the interview concentrated on concrete experiences with reflection on rituals or ritualisations. For this purpose there were included in the hand-out three pages on which questions referring to such experiences were asked. The question on the first page was worded: "In any of the settings that you use for professional reflection are there or have there been topics (activities, behaviour) discussed that were named 'ritual' of 'ritualisation'? Examples?"

The interview partners were given time to read the question and were asked if any examples came to their mind that would fit this description. The aim in posing the question in this manner was to find out if rituals are actually discussed *as rituals*. I anticipated that this might not be the case in all instances, but obviously I could not be sure of this before testing it out. I also expected that in a number of interviews the teacher would ask me for a definition of ritual. Where this happened I was going to give the question back to the teacher asking her or him for their definition of ritual. I was not going to censor the definition of the teachers. As was shown in chapter one there is no set definition for rituals available, not even in the scientific field of ritual studies. Thus I reassured the teachers that there was no right or wrong definition of ritual and whatever definition they had was completely fine in the course of the interview. We will later see how these definitions differ according to national backgrounds (see section: 6.2.).

At the same time I did not want to present a definition of ritual myself. Where a teacher requested this I explained that I would wish to avoid putting their thoughts on the matter onto a pre-judged trail and rather have them talk on basis of their own opinions without me hampering these thoughts. Instead I offered to explain my own take on the phenomenon of ritual at the end of the interview.

In a number of cases this led to a discussion of the phenomena identifiable as rituals in schools with the teachers after the voice-recorder was switched off. These conversations were quite valuable in their own right. In them the power asymmetry inherent in the instrumental dialogue of the interview situation could be countered to some extent in that it allowed the teachers to also address questions which for them came up during the interview. (see: Kvale 2011, pp. 14/15) I will return to the issue of power asymmetry soon again.

For those instances during the actual interviews in which a teacher would not find an example of a reflection process in which the relevant activities were discussed under the rubric ritual I included another page in the hand-out on which the question was worded differently: "In any of the settings that you use for professional reflection are there or have there been topics (activities, behaviour) discussed that in your understanding are 'ritual' or 'ritualisation' – but in the discussion these terms were not used? Examples?"

And for those cases in which a teacher would not find examples on the basis of this question either a third variation was available on a last page in the hand-out: "In case you have no examples for A) or B), let us try to collect the topics that you reflected upon over the last period of time. If possible we will try to identify topics that could be interpreted as 'ritual' or 'ritualisation'."

In 33 of the 34 interviews the teachers found examples either for the first or the second question (A or B). Thus the last variation was used in only one of the interviews.

If a teacher had an example – in fact many of them had more than one – he or she was asked then to reconstruct the discussion/reflection as detailed as possible. From my side there was a number of questions prepared that could be used to provide a scaffolding for the teacher in the attempt to reconstruct the reflection process. These questions were:

- In which setting, who took part?
- Who brought the topic up?
- Why, what was the problem?
- Which arguments were put forward?
- Who said what in the course of the discussion?
- How did the discussion end?
- Was there a result, if yes: which?
- What consequences had the reflection?
- Where you satisfied with the discussion, the result?

The questions evolved on the basis of the research questions as stated above (see section 4.1.1.). They took into account the possibility that different settings, as well as different compositions of participants might account for different patterns in the reflection processes. Addressing the arguments used in the reflection process was seen as a chance to gather information about the scale and orientation as applied in the reflection process. The points at which discussion ends were of interest in relation to potential obstacles in particular where a teacher would report about a process of critical reflection. Looking for the original trigger and consequences of a reflection process acknowledged the fact that reflection is embedded in, and can not be understood without reference to a continuum of practice as depicted e. g. by the models presented in chapter two (Rodgers, Korthagen).

I made use of these questions in those cases where during an interview a teacher was stuck for remembering aspects of an example that she or he had brought up, or also in cases where a teacher went off too far from the example in her or his narration.

This part of the interview was seen to be the one that could potentially create some anxiety for the interview partners. The character of rituals as connected to social order, norms and value systems was expected to account for a possibility for teachers in the actual interview situations to try and discuss with me the particular value system that was at the heart of the ritual. This was especially the case where teachers would delve into arguments that came up in reflection on rituals. In this regard I was preparing myself to abstain from entering into discussion of the respective value systems that were reflected by teachers.

In designing the interview script I thus tried to balance between the thematic and the dynamic dimensions of the interview (Kvale 2011, p. 57). I was also aware that each interview is a new situation with a new partner for conversation. In this regard the script was understood to be a guideline. Steinar Kvale also points out that it depends on the actual study to what extent it is feasible for an interviewer "to stick to the guide and how much to follow up the interviewees' answers and the new directions they may open up." (Kvale 2011, p. 57)

For the part of the interview that referred to the reflection settings I followed up such directions as potentially opened up by the interview partners as long as a connection to the overall idea of reflection processes was observable. As described this part preceded the one which referred to specific examples of reflection on rituals. In the latter one I brought back the conversation as much as possible to concrete experiences by also using the set of scaffolding questions. My aim was to get as detailed as possible descriptions of those reflection processes on rituals that the teachers were able to report. For documentary purposes I include a copy of the hand-out in appendix 3.

Before moving on to the next section I wish to come back on the issue of power asymmetry mentioned above. Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale in an article from 2005 also put forward suggestions that the trend to increased inclusion of qualitative interviewing in social research may in fact be "reflecting and reinforcing social forms of domination in Western consumer societies." (Brinkmann/Kvale 2005, p. 158) They point particularly to "some often-neglected power characteristics of the interview situation." (Brinkmann/Kvale 2005, p. 164) The actual interview dialogue is defined by the interviewer's research project and knowledge interest, the dialogue is instrumental, it can be manipulative. After the interview there is a monopoly of interpretation on the side of the researcher.

For Brinkmann and Kvale "it still appears warranted to characterize qualitative research as saturated with more concealed forms of power than quantitative and experimental research. Interviewing may involve what has been called commodification of the skills of 'doing rapport,' where the researcher even has to engage in the unethical affair of 'faking friendship' in order to obtain knowledge (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002)." (Brinkmann/Kvale 2005, p. 165) This is obviously an ethical problem. Brinkman/Kvale thus maintain that researchers need to "situate their means of knowledge production in power relations and the wider cultural situation." (Brinkmann/Kvale 2005, p. 165)

In the structuring of the interview script with the three different parts as described I took into account this “wider cultural situation.” On the one hand the teachers were obviously quite willing to engage in the interview situation with me, otherwise they would not have reacted to the request for interview partners. On the other hand I had to anticipate that there would be what I would see as a 'healthy suspicion' on their side. They could not know what would come towards them, what questions exactly they would be asked, what sort of communication to expect. And yet I had to expect that they have some sort of expectation, possibly formed by earlier experiences in which they took part in interviews, or also from conducting interviews themselves. The “wider cultural situation” would necessarily come into play in these expectations. The assumptions of the teachers of what a 'proper interview' is, what the role of an interviewee is etc. would be inevitably formed in the context of an overall public discourse of the nature of science, and in particular social sciences.

Addressing the teachers expectations in the form of offering that they could ask whatever question they had in relation to my research before even recording conversation was a step to allow for a degree of balancing of the power relation that is established in the interview situation. At the same time I made no attempt to conceal my interest in gathering data in the interview for clearly laid out purposes. In this sense the interview situation was constructed as a conversation that was dominated by exactly this interest, that is: to use the material in the context of my study. However, I made clear that this was a temporary situation and that I would be quite willing to answer all questions of the interview partners at the end of the conversation before parting. As stated already, in a number of cases this was actually taken up and led to interesting discussions after finishing the recording, mostly initiated by the teachers asking me questions about my own stance on rituals, ritualisations.[90]

4.3.2.
Setting the stage – before even meeting

I mentioned earlier that setting the stage for the interview does not start at the time of entering the room and meeting the interview partner. It is connected to the general preparation for a given interview date. I wish to briefly describe this process here.

In all cases I spoke to the interview partners in advance via telephone. In this conversation we arranged for a date and place to meet. I also provided as much information about my research project as was requested. At any rate the interview partners knew about the general line of inquiry, the interest in gathering data about reflection processes on rituals. I did not, however, discuss definitions of rituals with the teachers on the phone. Where questions in this direction were asked of me I put this on a hold until we were going to meet in person. In this way I avoided influencing the teachers in a manner that could have censored their perspectives before even meeting me.

[90] Obviously the interview partners were aware that the study includes a comparative element. Frequently the national differences in relation to ritual activities in Irish and German schools came up. In some cases these discussions circulated around the idea of rituals as indicators of pedagogical discourse and its connectedness to long-term political developments. Another topic that was touched on a couple of times was the confusion around the term ritual and the question which activity could be rightly deemed ritual, or not. One teacher from a German mainstream school revealed at the end of the interview that he had written a longer essay on ritual, rules and regulation. Another one from a free alternative school told me that she had written an assignment on rituals during her teacher training. She subsequently sent me a copy of the work.

Nevertheless I paid great attention to the preliminary arrangements. In all cases I also confirmed the date one or two days in advance of our meeting. Besides establishing a level of trust on the side of the interview partner this does two more things. The first is that it focuses the interview partners on the upcoming date, thus bringing to their minds those aspects of their practice which they would associate with the general topic of the interview. The second is purely practical, by making sure that the date is not forgotten one avoids travelling to an interview in vain. This was particularly important in relation to the interviews in Germany as they involved rather long travel distances. (see also: Denscombe 2011, p. 175)

One aspect that was always touched on in the telephone conversation was the actual length of the interview. From two trial runs with local teachers with whom I was friendly I could say that the expected length of the interview was approximately 75 minutes. When meeting the teachers in person one of the things to do was to re-confirm the time frame for the conversation. In some cases teachers were available for only 60 minutes. In other cases they had no particular time at which the interview was supposed to end. For me it was crucial however to have a clear arrangement with the interview partner about how long we would be talking to each other. Only by having this clarified upfront was it possible to monitor the flow of the conversation in a way that allowed for all three parts of the interview being addressed. Also, making a clear arrangement as to the length of the interview was going to reassure the interview partner that their time would not be stretched unduly.

4.3.3.
Sample size

I had used semi-structured interviews in an earlier study on the process of professionalisation and institutionalisation of alternative childcare settings (Hamm 2005). Based on this experience I assumed that a sample size of 20 – 30 interviews was to gather sufficient information to address the research questions as stated above. This expectation is in line with findings of Mark Mason who notes that “(...) researchers have tried to suggest some kind of guidelines for qualitative sample sizes. CHARMAZ (2006, p.114) for example suggests that '25 (participants are) adequate for smaller projects'; according to RITCHIE et al. (2003, p.84) qualitative samples often 'lie under 50'; while GREEN and THOROGOOD (2009 [2004], p.120) state that 'the experience of most qualitative researchers (emphasis added) is that in interview studies little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people'.” (Mason 2010)

Finding interview partners was a matter of spreading information about the interviews. In case of the Irish teachers this was relatively easy. I could use the contacts which I had to numerous primary schools all over the country through my nominal occupation in sports promotion. I used these contacts, mostly to principals, to distribute my request for interview partners. Six of the nine interviews with Irish teachers were arranged on this basis. Another two were arranged by me contacting the respective teacher directly with my request. One interview partner was found via a notice that was placed in the INTO-periodical.

To find interview partners in German mainstream schools I also used personal contacts with people in the education sector and in sport in Germany who passed on my request to schools and teachers in their own surroundings. Seven of the eleven interview partners were found in this manner. The other four teachers reacted to a message which I posted via e-mail to all primary schools in the Rhein-Main-Neckar area.

In the free alternative schools the information about the interview series was distributed via BFAS, the national organisation of free alternative schools, in their newsletter. It was also sent via e-mail to the schools. This led to arrangements with ten teachers for an interview. In furtherance I contacted a number of schools directly via telephone. This was to make sure that the spectrum of schools represented by the teachers in the interview series would do justice to the variety of concepts followed by the free alternative schools. Therefore another four interviews were arranged on this basis.

Steinar Kvale has highlighted that "in common interview studies, the amount of interviews tends to be around 15 $\pm$ 10. This number may be due to a combination of the time and resources available for the investigation and a law of diminishing returns. A general impression from current interview studies is that many would have profited from having fewer interviews in the study, and by taking more time to prepare the interviews and to analyse them. Perhaps as a defensive overreaction, some qualitative interview studies appear to be designed on a quantitative presupposition – the more interviews, the more scientific." (Kvale 2011, p. 44)

In my own project it was the case that in the series of interviews with Irish teachers there was in fact a stage of "diminishing return" reached already after six interviews. Themes developed in the interviews repeated each other. I decided to yet include another three interviews in the study simply because I did not trust the low number of references. Nevertheless in the themes that came to the fore in the three extra interviews no new dimensions were developed either. In chapter six I am going to describe at length the various themes that came up in the interviews.

In the case of the German mainstream schools and the Free alternative schools slightly more differentiated responses were generated. However after ten interviews a point was reached here, too, where the themes repeated each other. A specific aspect came into play in relation to the free alternative schools in form of interviews held with different teachers of the same school. In total five such interviews were held (referring to two schools). These interviews proved to be a valuable source of information in relation to the reliability of the interviews. Reporting about their experiences from different angles the teachers of the same schools nevertheless developed similar themes which provided a reassurance for me that the actual data collected could be seen as a trustworthy source.

4.3.4.
Transcription and Analysis

From the outset it was clear that I would not be in a position to employ external help for processing the data collection, questionnaires, interviews and memory-work alike. Without a budget and with no institutional apparatus behind me I was left to my own devices. In relation to the transcription of the interviews I therefore had to make a decision to what extent I would actually transcribe the recorded conversations.

I found that for my own purposes a transcription of the entire interview was best suited. This may in fact be more a reflection of my personal working style than it was a necessity based on the envisaged mode of analysis.

Extracting the information about reflection settings used (participants, frequency, duration, the early part in the interview) was seen as a rather simple form of content analysis. I also planned on using what Kvale describes as "bricolage, an eclectic combination of multiple forms of analysis, and a theoretically informed reading of the interviews as a significant mode of analysis." (Kvale 2011, p. 104) Yet it was clear that I would not engage in a detailed linguistic or conversation analysis. My focus was on the interpretation of meaning of what was said in the interviews to answer the research questions. I will come back to the interview analysis soon.

In theory it may have been possible to work with partly transcribed interviews. However I found it technically much easier to work with the complete transcription. The printed text of the full interview enabled me to gain a full overview of the conversation, the topics mentioned and themes developed.[91] Thus I decided to transcribe each interview in full before processing it any further. A welcome side-effect of transcribing the entire interview was that the actual transcription could also be forwarded to the interview partners for verification.

The fact that I was interviewer, transcriber and analyser all-in-one made the transcription easier. In listening to the original recordings I was obviously aware of the actual interview situation. Conversational breaks, certain aspects of use of language and interaction (irony, hesitation) that I vividly remembered may have been lost on a third party listening to a recording. The actual transcriptions gave a verbatim report of the conversation. However I did not apply transcription conventions as would be necessary for a detailed linguistic conversational analysis (see: Kvale 2011, p. 96). I recorded breaks in the flow of speech. Interruptions and overlaps were included in a rough form. In this regard the actual print-out of the transcription remained in a rather accessible and readable style.

As mentioned already I approached the analysis of the interviews with an open concept of "bricolage" of which Kvale states: "In contrast to systematic analytic modes such as categorization and conversation analysis, bricolage implies a free interplay of techniques during the analysis. The researcher may here read the interviews through and get an overall impression, then go back to specific interesting passages, perhaps count statements indicating different attitudes to a phenomenon, cast parts of the interview into a narrative, work out metaphors to capture key understandings, attempt to visualize findings in flow diagrams, and so on." (Kvale 2011, p. 115)

In attending to the interviews I went through a number of successive steps. They shall be described here.

Step 1

In all cases I read the full transcript in one go before attending to details. This first scanning helped me to get an impression of topical coherence in the texts. There were numerous situations during the interviews in which a topic was not followed stringently at a given point in the conversation but was picked up at a later stage. Reading the whole document in one helped detecting these inner-conversational references in the transcripts.

[91] I find myself in line with Martyn Denscombe here, who states: "The process of transcription is certainly laborious. However, it is also a very valuable part of the research, because it brings the researcher 'close to the data'. The process brings the talk to life again, and is a real asset when it comes to using interviews for qualitative data. Added to this, the end-product of the process provides the researcher with a form of data that is far easier to analyse than the audio recording in its original state." (Denscombe 2007, p. 196)

Step 2

In a second reading I extracted the information regarding personal and school profile and the information about the reflection settings used. The latter was done in a table format. As described above the interview followed a script that left a good bit of room for the teachers to also expand on their own ideas about reflection, about the general nature of topics coming up in various settings or also on the status that reflection has in their school as part of the overall work schedule. I extracted passages from the transcriptions that were explanatory in relation to specific aspects in the experiences of the teachers with reflection. This included also those parts in which the teacher referred to interpersonal relationships or interactional experiences in relation to reflection.
While extracting these passages I included my own thoughts which came up when reading them.

Step 3

Next I extracted from the interviews all those passages that dealt directly with rituals. There were three broad categories in which these passages could be sorted:
- definitions of rituals (personal theories)
- examples of rituals
- examples of reflection processes on rituals

For the examples of reflection processes I also marked the different aspects of the description given by the teachers. This concerned the activity that was understood as ritual and became a topic for reflection, the process (description) of reflection, the arguments put forward in this process, the solution found (if any).
Again I included my initial thoughts on the matters raised.

Step 4

I compiled the data regarding the reflection settings used for all three school types in an overview. This was done by aggregating the available information into a table format (see appendix 4 for a sample).This documentation provided a point of reference for reporting on the reflection settings used in the various school types that can be found in chapter five.

Step 5

I listed the entire collection of activities mentioned as rituals in schools and sorted them in three columns of a table, one for each school type. Then I pooled them according to thematic coherence. This compilation built the basis for the results reported in section 6.3.

Step 6

I compiled the various definitions and references to the personal theories of teachers for a comparison. The result of the review of this compilation can be found in section 6.2.

Step 7

I listed the reflection processes reported by the teachers, again this was done in form of three columns, one for each school type. At the same time the processes were sorted in thematic order (horizontally), thus depicting overlaps in relation to the ritual activities reflected upon in the various school types. (see appendix 5)

Step 8

In this step all examples were paraphrased first. Then I tried to classify the reflection processes according to the categories of processual scale, functional and orientational character. Nearly all examples fitted the category of 'review' (Griffiths/Tann), nearly all of them were concerned with 'content' (Mezirow), and there was hardly any sign of critical reflection (Brookfield). This in itself could be deemed a result of my investigation. However as a result this seemed remarkably shallow. It certainly did not do justice to the richness of the material provided so freely by the teachers in their interviews.

Step 9

Unsatisfied with the mediocre results I turned back to the theoretical basis that guided my research. I engaged in a back-and-forth movement of re-reading the theoretical contributions on reflection, those on rituals, and the examples extracted from the interviews. I found that applying the categories of processual scale, functional and orientational character as plain as they came from the theoretical considerations was ignoring the essentially social character of the reflection processes. In fact what I found at this stage was a possible analogy between aspects depicted by Catherine Bell in relation to ritualisation and the processes that went on in the reflections reported by the teachers. At the core of both seemed to be processes of negotiation of legitimacy; legitimacy that is of certain ways to define reality and certain ways to act on these definitions. Consequently I decided to do a second run through the compilation of reflection processes.

The feedback loop described here also led to a review of the description of the theoretical contributions on reflection. Ultimately the empirical material drove the research beyond the realms of the classifications provided in them. Taking the subjective experiences as reported by the teachers serious also meant that at this stage I substantially rephrased what eventually became chapter two. With an enhanced view, taking into account the character of the reflection processes as social acts, I then turned back to the interview material.

Step 10

By screening all reported reflection processes for the negotiations that are going on and comparing the character of these negotiations I found that the negotiations could be depicted in a number of rubrics. By going back to each individual reflection process as reported I could identify these rubrics from the material, e. g. negotiation of harmonised practice, or negotiation of demarcation lines.
The conclusions derived from these considerations are comprehensively presented in sections 6.4. to 6.10. For reasons of transparency I also include an example of the notes that went along with the shaping of the conclusions (see appendix 6).

Systematically following these steps I arrived at a point where it was possible to answer the research questions about the inclusion of rituals in professional reflection of teachers, and about typical patterns in the reflection processes.

> Step 11
>
> This last step referred to the research questions about critical reflection. In another scan of the examples reported by the teachers I filtered out those in which there was evidence of critical questioning. The concept of critical reflection and critical questions will be picked up in detail in chapter seven. There will also be a presentation of the results of the analysis referred to here.

Steinar Kvales has depicted interview investigations as "a linear progression through seven stages from the original ideas to the final report." (Kvale 2011, p. 36) These stages comprise of thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting.[92] After reporting on the rationale for employing semi-structured interviews, design, transcription and analysis of the interviews attention shall be given to the notion of verification. For him verifying means to "ascertain the validity, reliability and generalizability of the interview findings." (Kvale 2011, p. 36) In the next section I will address the aspects of validity and reliability. The idea of generalizability will be taken up in chapter nine.

4.4. Validity, Reliability

Concepts like reliability and validity have their origins in positivist conceptions from quantitative research. As is clear from the above in my own research design there are three different methods employed of which the questionnaire fits the concept of quantitative research while the interviews as applied and memory work are qualitative research methods.

Establishing validity of quantitative research "should include efforts to ensure that, as far as possible:
• the data have been recorded accurately and precisely;
• the data are appropriate for the purposes of the investigation (we must
feel assured that we are measuring the right thing);
• the explanations derived from the analysis are correct." (Denscombe 2007, 282)

Denscombe highlights the importance of checking the data for their correct entry in the respective compilations. In my case there were two checks exercised on each of the data compilations referring to the Irish primary schools and the German mainstream schools respectively. After the second check the compiled files were in accord with the original sources and no errors could be detected. Data analysis using SPSS was based on these files.

[92] I would hold that for any researcher to approach an interview investigation with such a model of linear progression can have peculiar effects. On the one hand it may lead to a rather stringent work process, leaving the researcher in a position of reassured self-confidence. Particularly where research is done in following a set methodical procedure this may ease up the work process. On the other hand such reassured self-confidence may also lead to a lack of sensitivity towards potential uncertainties that is essential for discovering new ways to see things.

The appropriateness of the data collection was not in question due to the straight forward design of the questions asked of respondents and the simple categories applied. The explanations from the analysis as presented in chapter five are derived by also referring to information from the interview series on the use of certain reflection settings. The inclusion of this material was seen as a check on the validity of the conclusions that could be drawn from the statistical aggregation of the questionnaire responses.

Obviously the interview investigation is clearly associated with a qualitative research approach. As a result of the nature of qualitative research such concepts as validity and reliability can be problematic in this area. This problem is also acknowledged by Martyn Denscombe. “It is not feasible, for instance, to check the quality of research and its findings by replicating the research in the same way that scientists might repeat an experiment. The first reason for this is that it is virtually impossible to replicate a social setting. Time inevitably changes things and the prospects of assembling equivalent people in similar settings in a social environment that has not changed are, to say the least, slim. The second reason is that the researcher tends to be intimately involved in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, so closely involved that the prospects of some other researcher being able to produce identical data and arrive at identical conclusions are equally slim.” (Denscombe 2007, pp. 296/297)

In spite of suggestions to abandon conventional ways of judging credibility of research at all he follows Seale et. al. (1999) in advocating a more 'subtle' or pragmatic approach that draws on the insights of postscientific conceptions of social research and yet hold on to scientific aims as conventionally conceived. On this basis he reckons that there are in fact ways that qualitative research can prove to be credible. He suggests that researchers take steps “that can help with the task of persuading readers of the research that the data are *reasonably likely* to be accurate and appropriate.” Such steps should offer “reassurances that the qualitative data have been produced and checked in accord with good practice. It is on this basis that judgements can be made about the credibility of the data. ” (Denscombe 2007, p. 297)

Denscombe notes that a key benefit of qualitative research is its grounding in extensive fieldwork and empirical data. It involves “relatively long times spent 'on location' conducting field work” and builds on “detailed scrutiny of the text or visual images involved.” As such it is based on a solid foundation which adds to its credibility.

In this sense it becomes essential in qualitative research to demonstrate the scope of data collection and analysis. Hence the request made by Denscombe for an audit trail to be included in the presentation of a research project. “As a check on reliability this calls for an explicit account of the methods, analysis and decision making and ‘the provision of a fully reflexive account of procedures and methods, showing the readers in as much detail as possible the lines of enquiry that led to particular conclusions’ (Seale et al. 1999, 157). In effect, the research process must be open for audit.” (Denscombe 2007, p. 298) In my own case supplying documentation of the various steps that took place in the course of my research project and the detailed description of the methods employed in this chapter, and in chapter eight regarding memory work, is part of such an audit trail.

Reliability of the data bases derived from the interviews in the transcription was sought by sending the transcribed interviews to the interview partners for verification as mentioned above. However of particular concern for me in relation to an adequate audit trail is to provide extensive coverage also in relation to the development of the findings from the interview analysis. For this purpose there will be numerous examples given in sections 6.5. to 6.8. of the anchoring of the analysis and interpretation in the actual statements in the interviews.

Steinar Kvales interpretation of validity of interview investigations (Kvale 2011, p. 123) draws on the notion of validity as quality of craftsmanship. Validity concerns issues of checking, questioning and theorizing throughout an interview investigation: “Ideally, the quality of the craftsmanship in checking, questioning and theorizing interview findings leads to knowledge claims that are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to speak, carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art.” (Kvale 2011, p. 124) Checking in his terms refers to the examining of sources of invalidity. Such sources could be found in the processes of gathering data (the actual interview situation), representing data (transcription) and analysing data. Section 4.3. above included a thorough report on these processes. The aspect of questioning as an issue of validity of an interview study put forward by Steinar Kvale refers to the importance of having a clear line of inquiry laid out *before* even entering into the interview stage. “(...) the content and purpose of the study precede questions of method. The questions of 'what' and 'why' need to be answered before the question of 'how' to validate.” Thus the considerate design of the research according to a solid anchoring in the relevant research questions as described in section 4.1. delivers the potential to also “ascertaining validity – that is, whether an investigation investigates what it seeks to investigate.” (Kvale 2011, p. 124)

Eventually for Kvale “to validate is to theorize.” This refers to the need to have a theoretical conception of what is investigated. In my case the theoretical conception was laid out in chapters 1 and 2. However, “pursuing the methodological issues of validation generates theoretical and epistemological questions about the nature of the phenomena investigated.” (Kvale 2011, p. 124) An example of this can be seen in the shift in perspective that took place for me in the analysis of the interviews in relation to the classification of reflection processes. The unrest over the unsatisfactory mediocre results found at first in the interviews triggered a re-engagement with the theoretical basis referring to the concepts of reflection. This led to a review of the theoretical tools as provided by the literature on reflection. In consequence I developed an enhanced understanding of professional reflection processes of teachers that takes into account the essentially social character of these processes. This aspect will be elaborated comprehensively in chapter six. There it will also be shown how applying this understanding offers a new way to look at these reflection processes.

*

After having explicated the research design, the methods chosen, their rationale and their implementation, I will turn now to the empirical part. To start with, in chapter five the focus will be on the settings used by teachers in the three different school types when they reflect on rituals.

5. Reflection settings

5.1.
Introduction

It is common sense that the setting in which it takes place will have an influence on the actual reflection. Who takes part, how long are meetings, how often do they happen, what is the formal framework – these factors may have a bearing on what is going on when teachers reflect with others.

What then are the currently used/preferred reflection settings for teachers in primary schools?
For answering this question I will use the data collected via the questionnaire and via the interviews with teachers in mainstream schools in Ireland and Germany and with teachers of the free alternative schools.

Where statistical data is aggregated in the following chapter it is meant to provide a snapshot of distributions. In some cases in the following passages I will however also refer to comments made in the interview series. By doing so the quantitative statements are partly put into a qualitative context.

The presentation as regards the reflection settings used in the three different school types is split in two main sections. In the first part I will attend to the results available for the mainstream schools in Ireland and Germany. For both of these data is available from the questionnaire and from the interviews. Therefore it is possible to display them in the same manner, also using charts. A short interlude will sum up the main aspects as found in this section. For the free alternative schools I rely on the information gathered in the interviews. These results are then presented separately in a second section. At the end of this chapter I will also compare the results available for all three school types and attend to the conceptual idea of reflection as social act.

5.2.
Reflection settings used in German and Irish mainstream primary schools

In this section I am going to present and compare the results of the survey on reflection settings as carried out with teachers in German and Irish mainstream primary schools. When referring to percentages in the following passages I am aware of the potential perception of blurring results that are based on rather low figures in small-scale research. (Denscombe 2007, p. 28) Using percentages here is however necessary to allow for a comparison between the two sets of data.

5.2.1.
Distribution of gender, age, and of reflection settings used

In Ireland 78.7 % (n=74) of the respondents were female teachers. This is a slightly lower percentage than 84.99 % of the overall female population amongst teachers as reported by Eurostat for 2010. In Germany the female respondents accounted for 88.4 % (n=38) of the answers which is very close to the 85.55 % of female teachers in primary schools recorded by Eurostat for 2010.

In both countries responses of younger teachers under 30 were over-represented at the expense of teachers over 50. The shift in the German responses is stronger than the one in the Irish responses. However age of the respondents was not found to be a significant influence factor in relation to the reflection settings used.

		Germany total valid responses for age: 38				Ireland total valid responses for age: 80		
		Frequency	Percentage	Eurostat		Frequency	Percentage	Eurostat
Under 30		10	26.3 %	7.44 %		24	30.0 %	22.80 %
30 – 39		8	21.0 %	21.76 %		26	32.5 %	30.78 %
40 – 49		4	10.5 %	22.97 %		13	16.3 %	19.37 %
Over 50		16	42.1 %	57.67 %		17	22.2 %	25.36 %

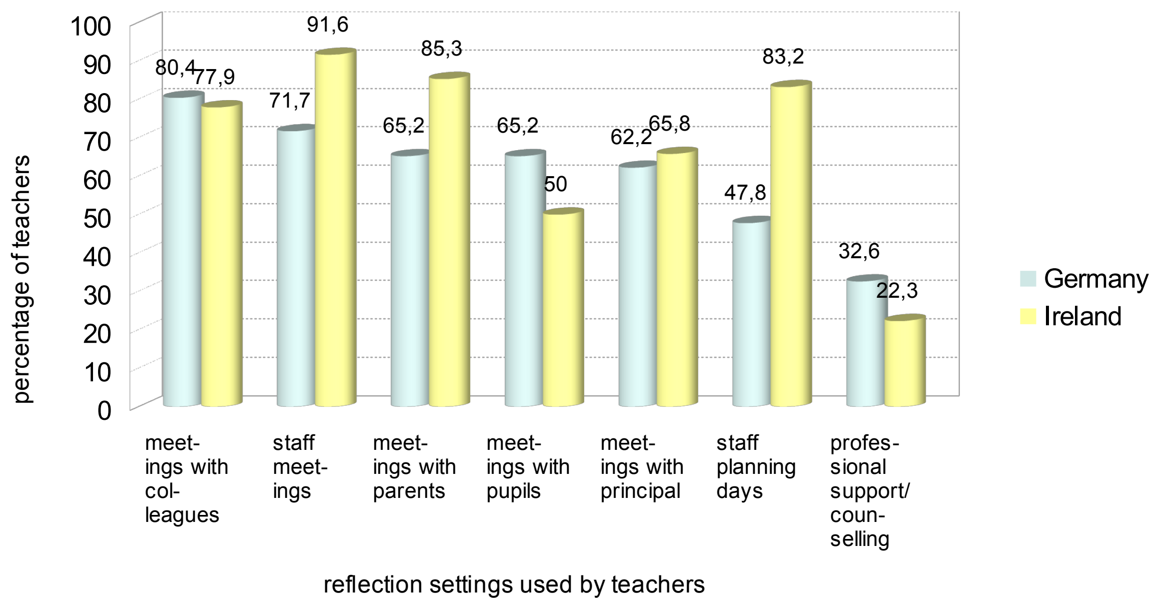
Amongst teachers in German mainstream schools the highest ranked reflection setting were the meetings with colleagues that are not staff meetings. In Irish primary schools the staff meetings topped the list.

Do you discuss situations that are over, to examine your own actions/practice in them, gain a better understanding of your own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations?								
		Germany				Ireland		
		Total valid answers				Total valid answers		
			percentage	frequency			percentage	frequency
Meetings with colleagues		46	80.4 %	37		95	77.9 %	74
Staff meetings		46	71.7 %	33		95	91.6 %	87
Meetings with parents		46	65.2 %	30		95	85.3 %	81
Meetings with pupils		46	65.2 %	30		95	50.0 %	47
Meetings with principal		45	62.2 %	28		73[93]	65.8 %	48
Staff planning days		46	47.8 %	22		94	83.2 %	79
Professional support/ counselling		46	32.6 %	15		94	22.3 %	21
Other settings[94]		46	15.2 %	7		95	11.6 %	

The table can also be visualised in form of a chart depicting the reflection settings used by teachers in Irish and German mainstream primary schools (expressed in percentages).

93 Of the 95 questionnaires 22 were answered by principals (teaching, or administrative).

94 These included: college/university context (1), meeting colleagues outside school setting (2), continuing professional development (1), not specified (3)



I will attend to the various reflections settings in the order as suggested by the German results.

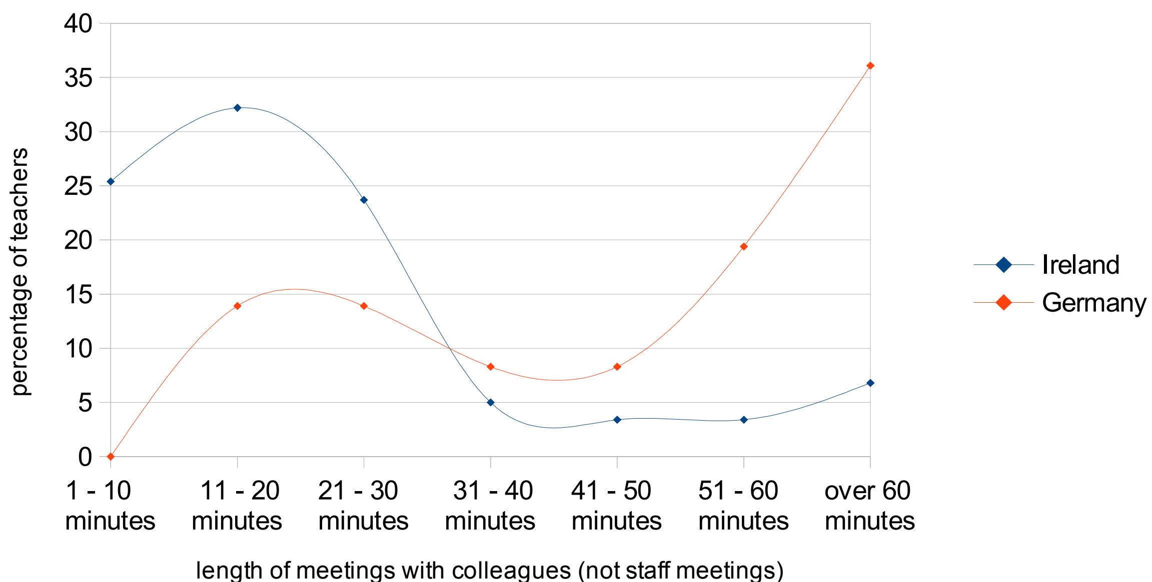
5.2.2.
Meetings with colleagues (not staff meetings)

Meetings with colleagues were distinguished in the questionnaire from staff meetings because participation in the latter is obligatory for teachers and cannot be negotiated. This is different for other meetings with colleagues. Teachers in fact have the power to enter into these meetings or not. There was no distinction made in the questionnaire between formal and informal meetings with colleagues. Even were meetings are formally arranged with a set time or agenda these arrangements are based on the mutual agreement of the participating teachers.

The frequency of meetings with colleagues is reported differently between the Irish and the German teachers. What sticks out here is the significantly lower percentage of teachers in German schools who refer to daily meetings with colleagues as a reflection setting.

Frequency of meetings with colleagues (not staff meetings)				
	Germany		Ireland	
	Percentage	*n =*	Percentage	*n =*
daily	10.8 %	*4*	28.4 %	*21*
weekly	40.5 %	*15*	31.1 %	*23*
fortnightly	16.2 %	*6*	2.7 %	*2*
monthly	10.8 %	*4*	8.1 %	*6*
bi-monthly	5.4 %	*2*	1.4 %	*1*
termly	0	*0*	5.4 %	*4*
undefined / conditional	8.1 %	*3*	10.8 %	*8*
undefined / unconditional	8.1 %	*3*	12.2 %	*9*

A result that corresponds to this finding is also the reported duration of meetings with colleagues (expressed in percentages):



What those two results suggest is that meetings with colleagues in which reflection happens are more likely to happen in greater time-intervals and also more likely to take longer for German mainstream primary teachers.

To understand this result it makes sense to take into account also the interview series from where it is clear that there is a certain bandwidth in speaking about meetings with colleagues. On the Irish side one teacher spoke of weekly informal meetings of at least an hour with a colleague after school which is also understood to be the most important reflection setting for this teacher. Three of the nine Irish interviewees mentioned meetings of parallel class teachers who teach the same age group.

However all but one of the Irish interview partners also included short informal exchanges as reflection settings. This is not the case for the German teachers. Only four of the eleven interview partners in German mainstream primary schools found that informal exchanges during school hours were to be understood as reflection. Two others mentioned informal contacts with one particular colleague that takes place after school via e-mail or on the phone. Another five did not include any informal meetings in their list of reflection settings.

What featured quite prominently in the interviews with the German mainstream primary teachers were parallel class meetings (nine out of eleven). These meetings were reported in the interviews as taking place weekly, every second week, monthly or every six weeks. In all cases however the duration of these meetings was at least one hour.

5.2.3. Staff meetings

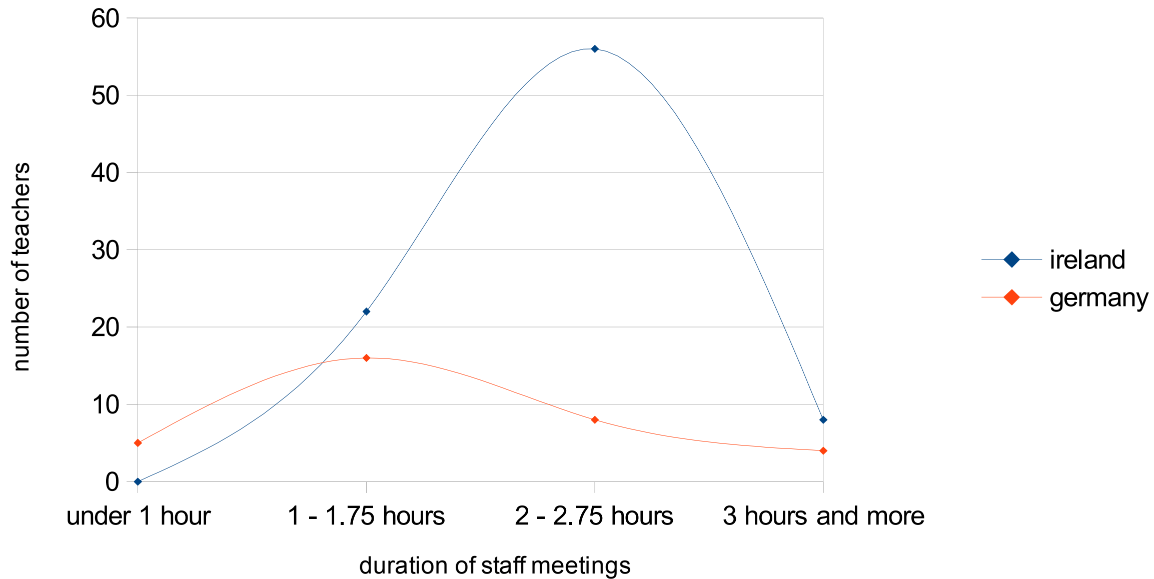
While 91 % (n = 87) of the Irish teachers saw staff meetings as a reflection setting, only 71 % (n = 33) of their German counterparts did so for their own practice.

In German schools staff meets regularly for so called conferences[95]. These are formal meetings that are scheduled by the principal and attendance is obligatory. While in principle a conference can deal with any topic it is often the case that formal announcements and organisational questions dominate the agenda. One of the German mainstream teachers commented on this: *"I am waiting for the day to come where it will truly be about children and people as such. It is always about lists, rules, orders or target setting."* Consequently she regards staff conferences as *"95 % not reflection."* (RS 09)

A difference that needs to be kept in mind in this regard is that many of the Irish mainstream primary schools are smaller than their German counterparts. With the size of the school grows the number of classes and the number of staff. With larger numbers of staff there is more need for overarching coordination and consequently in staff meetings there tend to be a lot of announcements and discussion on matters that are not perceived as directly related to the actual teaching practice.

Reported frequency and duration of staff meetings varied. In both countries the length of staff meetings was stated in a range from 1 hour to more than 3 hours with a shift towards longer meetings on the Irish side.

[95] I do not distinguish here between the German "Konferenz" und "Dienstbesprechung" - both are subsumed under the translation "conference."



Irish teachers responded that staff meetings were held monthly, bi-monthly or once a term[96] while their German colleagues reported higher frequencies also.

How often do staff meetings take place?				
		Germany		Ireland
Weekly		14		0
Every 2/3 weeks		5		0
Monthly		8		54
Bi-monthly		1		5
Once a term		3		27
If needed		2		0

As we have seen earlier, reflection can be simply understood as an intermediate process that bridges from one act to another. As reflection-on-action in Griffiths/Tann's terms it includes observation, analysis, evaluation and planning. On this sheer processual model the exchange of opinions, suggestions, appreciations on topics of the "packed agendas" of staff meetings can be understood as reflection. It remains however mostly in the safe areas of reflection on "the nuts and bolts" (Brookfield, see above) of school practice.

The interviews held with teachers from mainstream schools in both countries suggest that this is very much the case. Quite frequently in the German interviews a distinction is made between 'pedagogical' and 'organisational' topics. Two of the teachers from German mainstream schools stated explicitly that staff conferences are not a reflection setting. The same two teachers however reported on parallel class meetings and on sectional staff meetings which are explicitly reserved for reflection purposes. In their case there is a clear demarcation line between the organisational and the pedagogical areas of work as to address them in different settings.

96 The school year is usually understood to consist of three terms: September to Christmas, January to Easter, Easter to the summer holidays.

One of the two German teachers described how in her school 'pedagogical' meetings are held on a weekly basis for four hours[97]. These are sectional meetings of teachers of two grades. The meetings are structured in a set manner with a brainstorming process at the start to collect topics. From this collection then one of the topics is put up for discussion in the next meeting. In each of the meetings therefore a topic that was chosen a week earlier is discussed. This allows for all members of staff to prepare over a week for this discussion. An arrangement of this duration however is absolutely exceptional for German mainstream schools and for Irish primary schools.

The common standard is rather that agendas for staff meetings are of a mixed nature. This can easily lead to frustration for those teachers who wish for a more profound reflection like the teacher waiting for the day when it is *“truly about children and people as such.”* However the majority of teachers in the mainstream schools in Ireland and Germany still state that, in their view, staff meetings are a reflection setting. Most of them also assign a rather high intensity and productivity to reflection that goes on in these meetings and they are mostly rather satisfied with it, too. This can be expressed in the mean values:

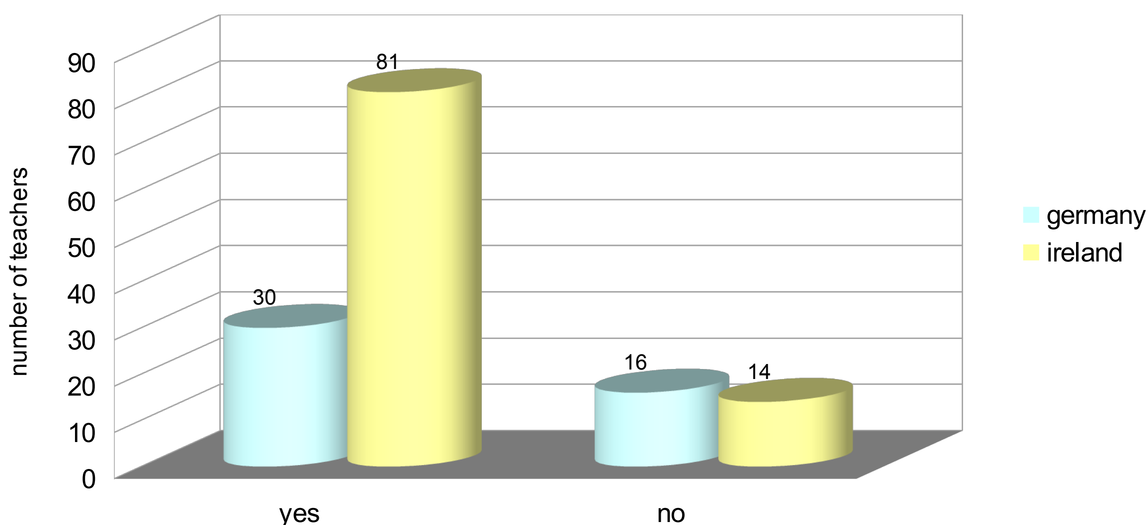
Mean values for staff meetings rating scale 1 to 5				
		Germany		Ireland
Intensity		3.69		3.25
Productivity		3.66		3.52
Satisfaction		3.81		3.48

5.2.4. Meetings with parents

Meetings with parents are second in the list of the most frequently used reflection settings as stated by the 85.3 % of the Irish teachers. In the German questionnaire meetings with parents ranged in third position (together with meetings with pupils) with 65.2 % of teachers maintaining that this is a reflection setting they use.

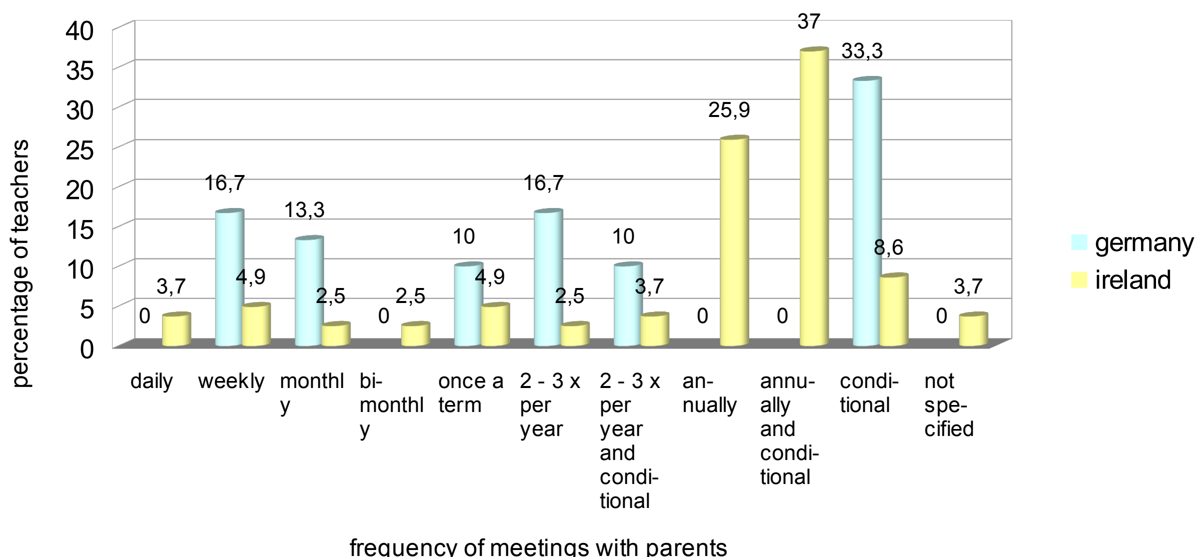
In this case the visualisation of the difference between the two countries is more explicit when the actual number of cases is taken into account.

[97] There are also fortnightly staff conferences in this school. The conferences then are reserved for 'organisational matters.'

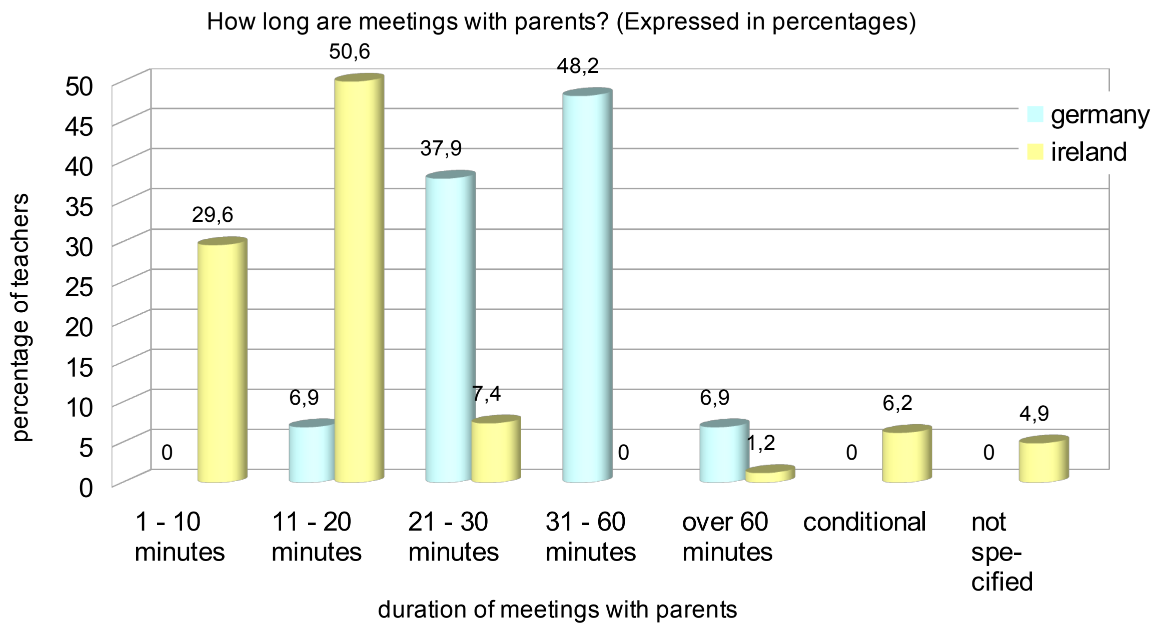


In the German mainstream school for every two teachers who hold that they do reflect on their own practice with parents there is at least one who says s/he doesn't.

As for the frequency of meetings with parents there is a variety of options stated by teachers in both countries. For the Irish mainstream teachers the most likely scenario is that these meetings take place once a year or on a conditional basis. An annual frequency for meetings with parents is completely absent from the German results, instead conditional meetings are the most mentioned.



A stark difference is obvious in terms of duration of meetings with parents. While 80 per cent of the meetings with parents for Irish teachers are not longer than 20 minutes, on the German side meetings with parents to 85 per cent last between 20 and 60 minutes.



These results need to be understood against the background of the two school types. In German schools it is common practice to have meetings with the assembly of all parents of a class at least once, more likely two or three times a year. These meetings are usually an hour long, sometimes longer. From the perspective of teachers it is possible to see these also as a reflection setting.[98]

German teachers would also meet parents of individual children. The high number of answers emphasizing the conditional character of meetings with parents can be read as an acknowledgement of the fact that teachers get in contact with parents in cases where they feel a need to address an issue arising from their practice.

Conditional meetings range similarly highly amongst Irish teachers. From the interviews with the Irish teachers it is also understood that it is a frequent view that informal chats with parents, e.g. in a situation when children are collected after school, are seen as reflection settings. Apart of those the annual parent-teacher meetings that are organised in Irish primary schools are the setting mostly referred to by Irish teachers in the questionnaire. These meetings fit quite neatly in a pattern of school rituals themselves[99]. Jorunn Midtsundstadt has made available a brief presentation on a research project carried out in Norway about “school-home-conference” meetings in which she refers to them as “ritual as different to reflexive communication”. (Midtsundstadt 2006, pp. 130 - 133)

This is also a hint on the question how much of what happens in parent-teacher meetings in Irish primary schools should actually be understood as reflection, and particularly reflection on the teacher's practice. The responses in the questionnaire cannot give a clear picture on that. By taking a look at the interviews with teachers it becomes clear that there is in fact a spectrum of experiences behind the simple figures.

[98] For an account of a parent-teacher meeting from a parent's perspective that takes ritual theory into consideration, see: Hamm 2011a

[99] See also the scene on parent-teacher meetings in the chapter on memory-work (section 8.4.4.)

On the one end of the spectrum an Irish teacher reports that she arranges to meet the parents of each child individually at the beginning of the school year. During the school year then there are a further two parent-teacher meetings. This teacher approaches parent-teacher meetings with the understanding that they are a chance for discussion of reciprocal expectations. (IE 09)

The other end is mirrored when another teacher states that parents are also *"called in as a last resort, really. Let's say if it's behavioural, if it's an issue in the school yard, or if it's, well more so if a child is having difficulties maybe with a subject or whatever. Those are the situations maybe when you'd, let's say, call a parent in. Aahm, yes, we call parents in also to help us with transport to whatever, you know, there'll be that aspect of things as well. But in reflection on let's say, maybe, well you know, where we're going with the history curriculum or how we should maybe approach the Irish or whatever, I suppose in general there isn't really, there wouldn't be a whole pile of communication with parents in relation to that, not really."* (IE 08)

This does not mean that there is no communication between teachers and parents. In many schools there is in fact a lot of communication. However this communication is far from being symmetric. The one-up position is clearly on the side of the school as represented by the teacher.

From the position of a teacher however, this can still be seen as a chance to reflect, albeit incidentally:

"Q - O.K., again coming back to the idea of reflection. You have parent-teacher meetings, I presume that the initial purpose of parent-teacher meetings is not to reflect on your practice?
A - No. No. It's to inform parents.
Q - So, does it still happen?
A - Does reflection happen?
Q - Hmhm.
A - Yes, in that sometimes you get information from parents that causes you to reflect on your practice. They tell you of something that interests the child or that terrifies the child. And you know then that your practice has to, you know, work around that difficulty the child has. Or, so definitely having lines of communication open helps reflection. Because otherwise you're working in a vacuum. So, it would be incidental, but it would involve reflection." (IE 02)

These experiences are echoed in quite similar fashion also by German mainstream teachers in their interviews. Communication between teachers and parents is obviously hampered very easily. A German mainstream teacher describes reflection with parents as a rare thing. It should happen, but doesn't. Relationships to/with parents remain hierarchical although she herself doesn't want it.

"Q – Are there processes of reflection with parents?
A – That is very rare, because, sometimes it may happen. But then it is always very concretely about the child, of course. (...) But it is rare because we have a clientele, well, I think, I would find it actually normal that there would be a reflection process in every conversation with parents.
Q – Where there is a feedback for you?
A – Yes, of course. I try to think how to say it, that, in fact it isn't like that. I always find myself in a role where I am sitting in front of people who say nothing. That brings me into a role where I am telling them or I ask them. That in essence is not a dialogue, or I, I don't get it into a dialogue. It remains within a type of hierarchy. It is very rare that this dissolves." (RS 04)

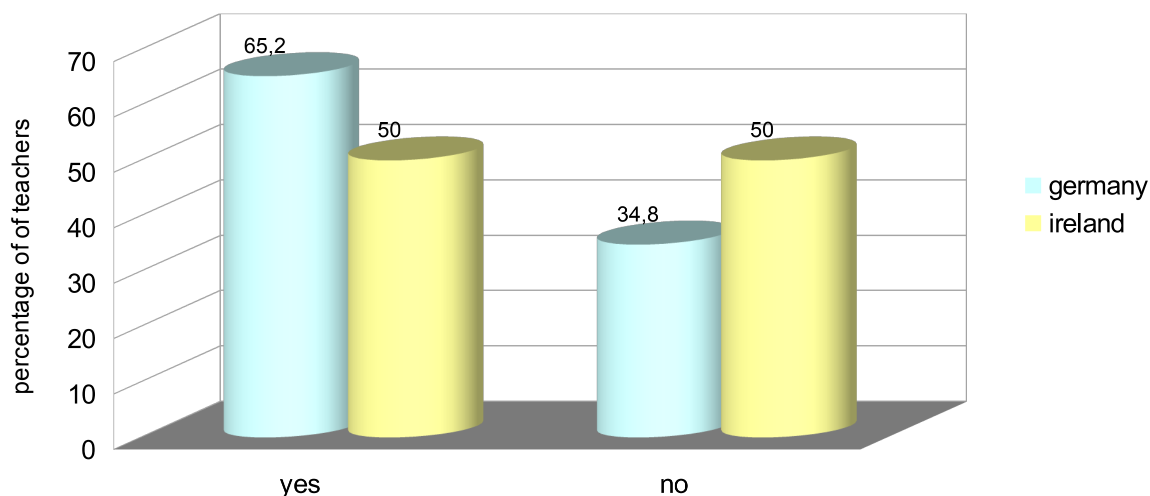
Interestingly the same teacher reports of her experience where she felt that it worked for her at the beginning of her teaching career with a generation of kinderladen-parents.

“Q – Did you experience it at all?
A – Yes, sure, with the parents of the kinderladen-children. At the time, this was my first year of teaching, that was incredibly strong and I thought: 'Yes, that's how it should be.' They hustled me quite a bit, and I have learned a lot from it. Afterwards, afterwards only very occasionally.” (RS 04)

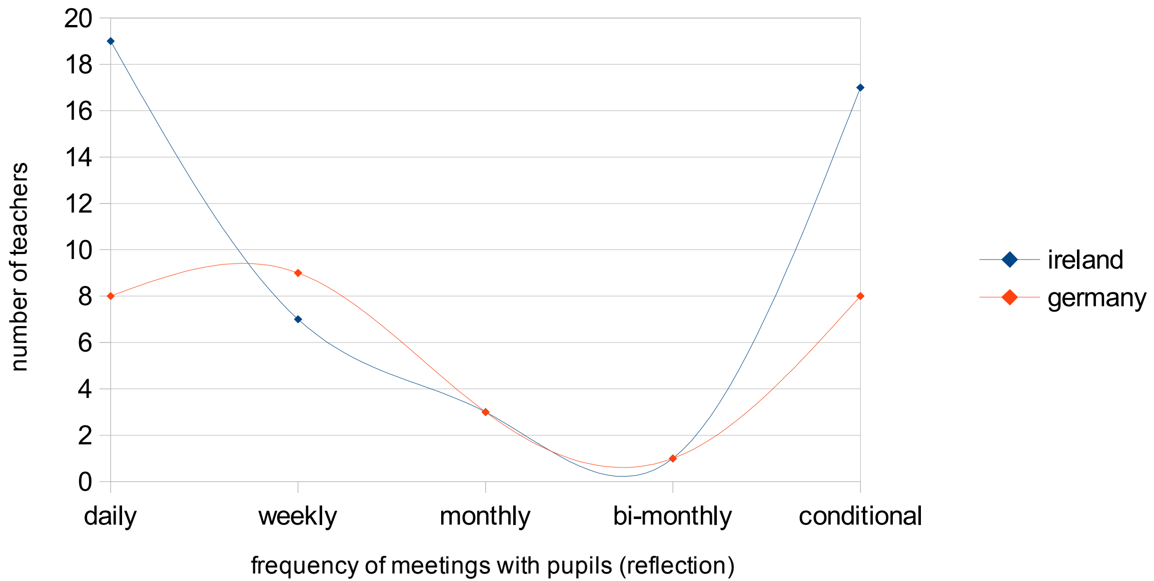
There will be more to say about the role of parents in schools when we come to the free alternative schools. At this point it may suffice to note that a majority of teachers in mainstream schools in Ireland and in Germany think that in meetings with parents reflection happens. Differences are obvious in terms of frequencies and duration of meetings as pointed out above.

5.2.5.
Meetings with pupils

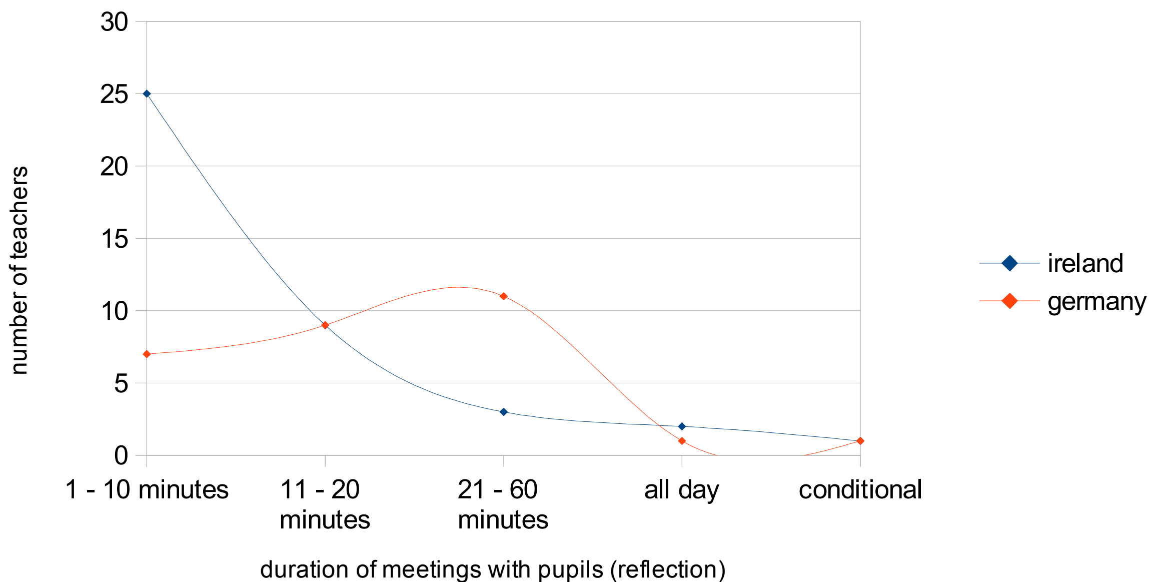
Two thirds of teachers in German mainstream primary schools were of the opinion that pupils are partners for reflection processes for them. This was a higher proportion than in the Irish primary schools where only half of the teachers shared this opinion.



Differences in the frequencies of meetings with children that are understood by teachers as reflection settings were observable in relation to the daily meetings. Apart of that the overall trend was similar in both countries.



The duration of reflection with pupils however varied stronger in that the two curves didn't merge and there was a higher number of teachers in Germany who reported of meetings of 20 – 60 minutes length.



Three teachers answered that in their opinion children are partners for reflection all day. An answer like that is based on the assumption that feedback of the children equates to reflection for the teacher. One of the Irish teachers in the interviews put it like that:

"A - Meetings with the children would be, as I work with the children. As the class teachers working with the child and praising the child or seeing can they motivate the child in a different way or whatever. That would be ongoing, it would be several times a day.
(...)
Q - So you basically get information, feedback from the children on the type of work that you did.
A - Yes, yes, and know what they enjoy and what, what works well for them, you know, really what motivates them. And that's observation as well.
Q - And you'd classify that under the term reflection for yourself?
A – Yes." (IE 02)

Two of the Irish teachers in the interviews stated that they discuss issues as they arise as part of SPHE[100] or otherwise during class times. Two others reported of a more formal framework in the shape of circle-time. These discussions could be about classroom rules or school rules, about ongoing issues where there are conflicts amongst the children or about activities in relation to certain subjects (projects, excursions). Circle-time is also a specific format referred to by German teachers in their interviews. We will come across the practice of circle-time later again as it is one of the most prominent examples for rituals in primary schools. (see section 6.3.1.)

At any rate what is clear from the questionnaire and also from the interviews is that a significant number of teachers actually identified children as partners for their reflection processes despite the fact that a "discussion about a situation that is over" with a six year old child in first class takes different shape than a discussion with a forty-five year old colleague.

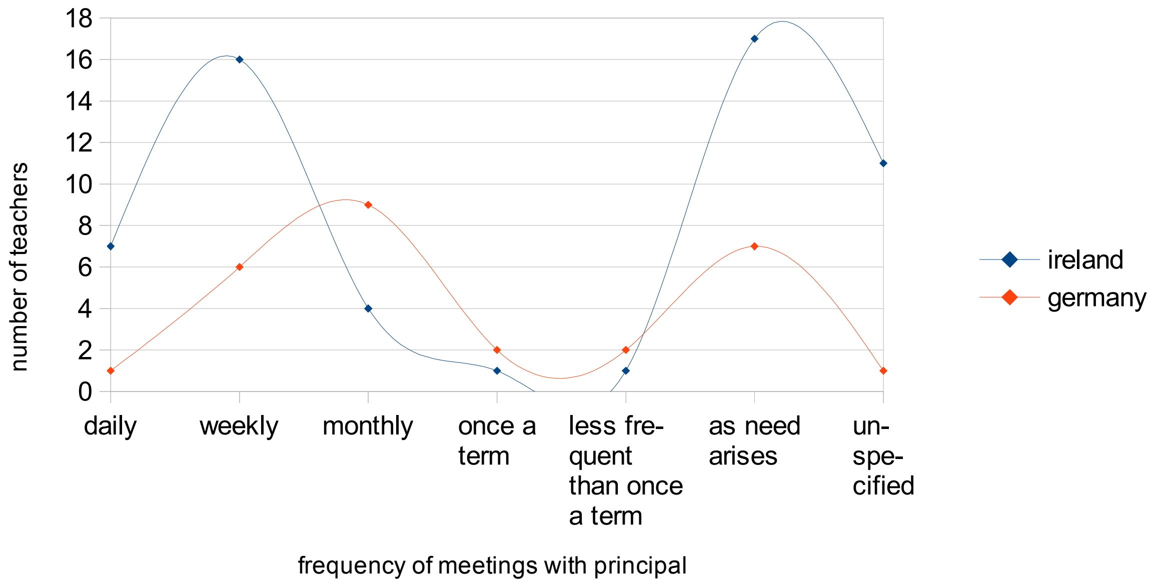
The problem here is similar to the one that arises if a conversation with a parent at home time is depicted as reflection, thereby using the same term as in describing a discussion over two hours with a parallel class team. The differences in scale, function (or orientation) are only expressible with additional terminology. While this may be available in academic parlance, this is not the case on everyday level. Hence the subsumption of a great variety of processes under the term reflection. The common denominator here is the bridging process from action to renewed action.

5.2.6.
Meetings with principal

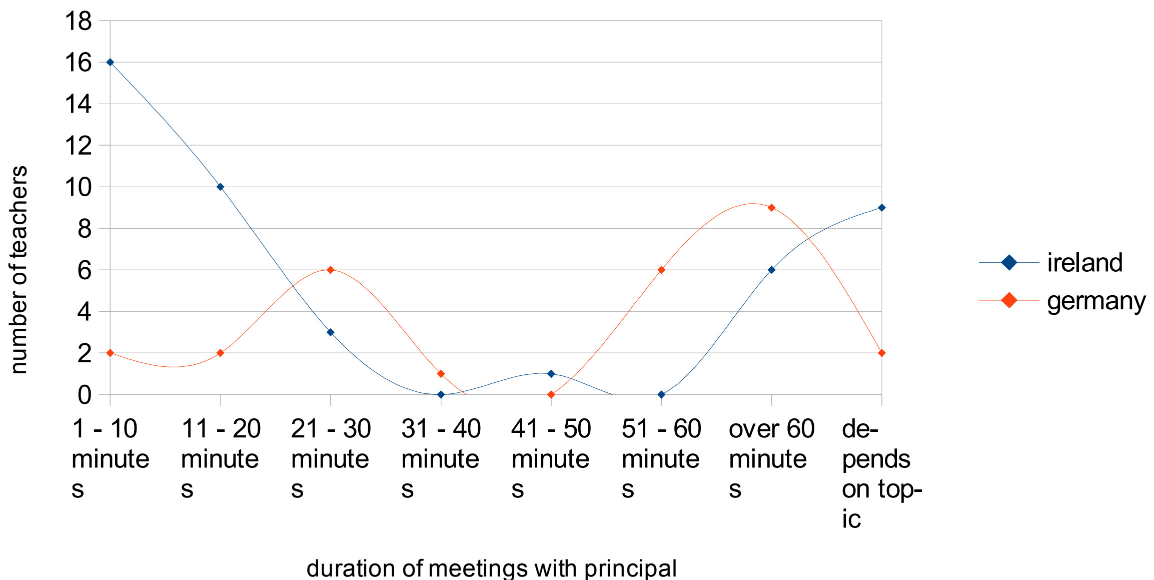
There was only a very small difference in the overall percentage of teachers in Irish and German mainstream primary schools who used meetings with their principal as a reflection setting. On the Irish side 65.8 % said that this is the case, of the German teachers 62.2 % confirmed this also.

Irish teachers were more likely to have meetings with their principal on a daily or weekly basis while monthly frequencies are more prevalent for German teachers. In both cases it is also clear that meetings were often arranged on a conditional basis when a need arises.

[100] One of the strands of the curriculum: Social Personal and Health Education



In relation to the length of meetings with the principal there is a shift observable in that the German teachers reported more frequently of meetings to last longer than reported by their Irish colleagues.



As stated above the questionnaire distribution on the German side took place in the state of Hessen. For teachers in Hessen it is a statutory part of their work to have an annual meeting with their principal. These meetings are called “Jahresgespräch.” They are supposed to lead to a review of the teachers practice and to a target setting for the teachers’ future practice. In this way these meetings fit quite well into the definition of reflection. “Jahresgespräche” are not done and over within a few minutes. They require sufficient time, usually around an hour.

Considering this it is in fact a surprise that meetings with the principal were not represented at a higher ratio in the responses of teachers to the questionnaire.

This becomes understandable however if the double character of these meetings is taken into account. While at the one side they can offer an opportunity for reflection, on the other side they are also formal meetings between a superior and inferior member of staff. They have been heavily criticised by the teachers union who sees in them a "milestone on the path to transform school according to principles of business administration. (...) It is embedded in a hierarchical system where targets are set top down regardless of taking into account if the necessary resources are actually available on the ground. It comes along in a cooperative camouflage and sneaks in on topics like everyday time constraints and the lack of opportunities for meaningful communication." (GEW 2006, p. 11)

In the interviews with German mainstream teachers reference is made to the annual meetings with the principal, too. Interestingly enough some of the teachers actually report that these meetings don't happen on an annual basis at all. As one of them puts it: *"Yes, then it is the case that we once had, aahm, these annual meetings, where there was, what do you call it, I believe with children this is called learning review, and aahm, yes, there it was about these annual meetings where one more or less reflected with the principal on: what did I like, what not, and that, well, but when they come again? [laughs] I mean, the principal has a lot to do herself."* (RS 01)

Two others who feel that the meetings are a reflection setting for them report that they take place every two years. Yet there is also the example of another teacher who values the meetings with the principal as reflection setting and explains that in her case they are arranged twice every year.

Teachers thus may individually feel comfortable with the annual meetings or not. Either way the double character of these meetings remains a factor that is to be considered in understanding that not all teachers see them as a reflection setting.

An equivalent to the annual statutory meetings is missing in Irish schools. Here it is up to the teachers (or principal) to arrange for meeting for reflection purposes without having a binding commitment stemming from work related rules or regulations. Hence these meetings take place as it suits the teachers (or principals).

In the interviews with Irish teachers four of them stated that they do not reflect in meetings with the principal. One of them reported of adverse relationships with the principal whom she identified as constantly putting obstacles in the way of initiatives from teachers. Only one teacher stated clearly that she engages in discussions with the principal on various topics in relation to her teaching practice.

5.2.7. Staff planning days

Staff planning days were a regular feature in Irish primary schools up to the school year 2010/11. For purposes of school planning, or particularly also for in-service tuition on the introduction of the (new) curriculum (after 1999) schools could close for two days. Children stayed at home, teachers were obliged to take part in these days.

With the Croke Park agreement these extra two days of school closure have been jettisoned. The central purpose of the arrangements under the Croke Park agreement was "to provide for certain essential activities to take place outside class/tuition time. Key objective is to maximise class/tuition time. The essential activities are: school planning, continuous professional development, induction, pre and post school supervision, policy development, staff meetings, nationally planned in-service, school arranged in-service." (INTO 2011b)

The questionnaire was distributed and collected in Ireland before the implementation of the Croke Park agreement. Out of 95 respondents 79 found that in staff planning days they discussed situations that are over, to examine their own actions/practice in them, gain a better understanding of their own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations. Sixteen of the respondents felt, that for them no reflection took place in staff planning days.

With the interviews conducted after the implementation of the Croke Park agreement it comes as no surprise that of the interviewed teachers all but one do not list staff planning days as a setting in which they reflect. Irrespective of the quality of the actual discussion processes in staff planning days it is simply a feature that in this format is not available any more for teachers in Irish primary schools.

The equivalent of staff planning days in German mainstream schools are what is called 'pedagogical day.' These are days where the children are not in school and staff discusses a particular topic. Topics as mentioned in the interview series included competence standards, school profile, public relations, homework, school internal curriculum, teaching English in primary school, evaluation, aggression. One teacher reported also about a staff planning day that dealt with rituals in school. In some cases external tutors or guest speakers are invited to take part in the staff planning days.

Considering that all German mainstream teachers in the interviews stated that there are staff planning days in their schools and that they also reckoned these are a reflection setting for them the real surprise is that in the questionnaire just under half of the respondents (22 of 46) listed staff planning days as a reflection setting. In this case it cannot be fully ruled out that there was a problem with the translation and not all teachers may have equated the term used ('Teamplanungstage') with 'pedagogical days'. On the other hand, no respondent included in the questionnaire the 'pedagogical day' under 'other settings' either which would suggest that the translation was not the problem but rather teachers who responded did in fact not see these days as a reflection setting.

5.2.8.
Professional support/counselling

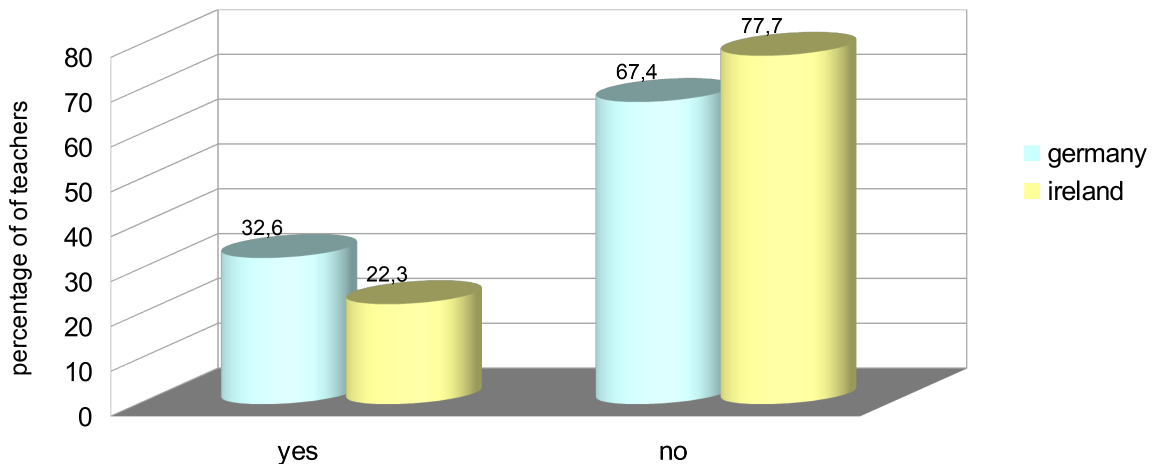
In Ireland in 2010, in a major programme of rationalisation, many support services were discontinued and a new multi-disciplinary Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) was established. With effect from 1 September 2010, support for school development planning was part of the remit of the PDST. Before that there were a number of programmes and agencies operating as support for schools.[101]

[101] E. g.: Primary Professional Development Services (PPDS), School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI), Maths Recovery, Reading Recovery (see also: https://sites.google.com/a/pdst.ie/pdst/home)

Teachers in Ireland can also avail of the services of the National Educational Psychological Service. NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and they are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development.

Obviously teachers are also free to use the services of independent counsellors, psychotherapists or personal coaches.

Professional support/counselling ranged at the bottom of the list of reflection settings used by Irish primary school teachers with a rate of 22.3 % (n = 21). The results of the German questionnaire also showed that professional support/counselling of the listed reflection settings was the least frequently used one amongst respondents, albeit the ratio of 32.6 % (n = 15) was higher than in Ireland.



The overall numbers of respondents who provided information on frequencies and duration in relation to professional support/counselling was rather low in both countries (Ireland, n = 17; Germany, n = 15). In this case it does not make sense to include a distribution of frequency and length of professional support/counselling in form of a chart. As can be expected meetings with/for professional support/counselling overall where reported as lasting longer than in many other reflection settings.

Length of professional support/counselling				
		Germany		Ireland
20 - 30 minutes		1		2
31 - 60 minutes		2		6
61 - 90 minutes		6		2
91 - 120 minutes		3		2
3 hours		2		1
full day		1		0
5 days / summer course, in-service		0		2
varies / conditional		0		2

When teachers of Irish schools in the interviews referred to professional support/counselling as a reflection setting they spoke of a) school psychologists, speech therapists with whom the teacher discussed special needs requirements, or b) members of the PDST who visited the schools to support teachers in implementing specific curricular programs.

German mainstream teachers in the interviews mentioned meetings with school social workers, school psychologist, but also reflective supervision[102] and 'open meetings' with guest speakers who were invited regularly to the schools.

5.3.
Interlude
Comments on comparison of German and Irish mainstream schools

As mentioned above the data collection via the questionnaire in Ireland took place before the Croke Park agreement came into effect. As a part of the deal between public sector unions and the Irish government teachers were supposed to work an extra 36 hours annually. “The purpose of the Croke Park agreement is to provide a block of 36 hours to be allocated to non-class contact activities which would previously have necessitated a school closure / half day. Accordingly, such closures on a teaching day are no longer allowed (...)” (INTO 2011a)

It is not clear how exactly the Croke Park agreement will influence the reflective culture in Irish schools in a long term perspective. Statements of teachers in the interview series indicate that there is a chance for an increase of time given to reflection, however this cannot be sufficiently represented in the context of my study. If there was further interest in this matter it would need to be monitored on a basis of updated surveys in a few years.[103]

[102] The concept of reflective supervision will be attended to in more detail in section 5.4.7.

[103] In the context or re-negotiations of the Croke Park agreement the Department of Education and Skills has conveyed a survey with all schools in Ireland at the beginning of the school year 2012/13; see: (http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Re-use-of-Public-Sector-Information/Use-of-additional-hours-provided-under-the-Public-Service-Croke-Park-Agreement-%E2%80%93-Completion-of-Online-Survey.pdf). The aim was to find out how schools had made use of the 36 non-class hours. There were seven categories listed: School Planning and Policy Development, Staff Meetings, Parent-teacher Meetings, Induction, Approved School-arranged-in-service, Nationally-mandated-in-service (CPD), Appropriate Further Education Activities; plus 'other'. Although requested by me, the results of this survey were unfortunately not available to be included in my study.

For now we may note in a brief summary that staff meetings in Irish mainstream schools were reported to happen less frequently than in their German counterparts but to last longer. We will also see soon how accumulated times of staff meetings in the two types of mainstream schools compare to those of free alternative schools.

For meetings with colleagues that are not staff meetings the relation between frequency and duration is turned the opposite way. German teachers reported such meetings with less frequency but with longer duration. That this is also an indicator of more formal settings in which these meetings happen is supported by the absence of informal meetings (corridor talk) in the reflection settings for half of the interview partners from German mainstream schools.

Irish teachers who see parents as partners for reflection are more likely to meet them less frequently than their German colleagues. At the same time these meetings are likely to be shorter on the Irish side with 80 % of them not extending 15 – 20 minutes.

Where teachers see pupils as partners for reflection the meetings with children in which reflection happens are more likely to be slightly longer in German mainstream schools, but slightly more frequent in Irish schools.

For both settings, meetings with parents and meetings with children, questions are to be asked about the actual nature of the communication processes that are deemed reflection by the teachers. Status and role definitions are likely factors to influence these processes in a manner that can be clearly felt as problematic also by teachers. On this background it is actually surprising that the ratios of teachers in both countries who see meetings with parents as a reflection setting are as high (IE = 85.3 %; D – 65,2 %)

Meetings of teachers with the principal for reflection purposes happen slightly less frequently in German mainstream schools than in Ireland. These meetings are however shorter in duration in Ireland. The annual “Jahresgespräche” as a statutory element are obviously not seen as a reflection setting by the majority of German mainstream teachers.

While staff planning days are an obsolete feature for now in Irish schools, they were yet a prominent reflection setting as long as they were available. The rather low ratio of teachers in German mainstream schools who refer to staff planning days as reflection setting is surprising and may be a result of a translation problem.

Professional support/counselling ranges at the bottom of the pile of the reflection settings in both school types. The reason for this is not exactly clear from the data available. A number of factors may play a role in this. One interview partner in Ireland for example reported a long 'waiting list' with the PDST which indicates a lack of availability of particular services. Organisational factors like perceived time constraints can play a role in this as can lack of funds, and last not least the organisational culture of these schools.

5.4.
Reflection settings in Free Alternative Schools

In this section, I am going to attend to the results of the 14 interviews with teachers from 11 different free alternative schools regarding the reflection settings used in these schools. I will however also refer to the results of the Irish and German mainstream schools wherever such a reference makes sense as a comparison.

5.4.1.
Meetings with colleagues (not staff meetings)

As mentioned above the teachers of mainstream schools who responded to the questionnaire in Ireland and Germany included under this heading informal exchange on a daily basis (corridor talk, lunch-break, brief exchanges before school) as well as more organised meetings with a set time, space and possibly agenda. Both varieties were also represented in the interviews with teachers from free alternative schools.

It is clear that informal exchanges in the interstices of time-tables and work schedules play a role in all three school types in relation to bringing up topics for reflection. We have however seen already that between the mainstream schools in Ireland and Germany there is a difference about how much the teachers in these schools referred to such exchanges as reflection.

Equally for teachers in free alternative schools informal exchange did not play as prominent a role as a reflection setting as it is the case particularly for the Irish teachers. They were mentioned by teachers of seven of the eleven schools as a possibility for reflection to happen. Their importance was however not specifically highlighted by any of those teachers.

A kind of intermittent form of meeting was reported by one teacher in whose school there is a daily lunch-break and all staff members are meeting in the school office for 30 – 60 minutes. "*What I mean is that all staff members meet in the school office and the children are not directly supervised. And when we sit together there having a cup of tea these informal conversations happen. They are about private matters. But there are always school matters touched also.*" (FS 03) These school matters are then brought into more formal settings where reflection takes on a different form, more concentrated and focussed.

For the more organised meetings: In seven of the free alternative schools the teachers reported of sectional meetings in which only a part of the staff takes part. These meetings were organised usually between those teachers who work with the same age group.

The free alternative schools are relatively small schools. There were only two schools of the eleven where the enrolment figures are above 100, and in both of these schools this figure included primary and secondary school. Enrolment figures of the other schools ranged between 25 and 89.

In addition to the low number of children it is also a conceptual element common to the free alternative schools that where formal groups of children are built, they are usually “multi-grade” groups of two, three or more years together. In two schools for example the age grouping was: 3 – 6 years; 6 – 9 years; 9 – 12 years. This grouping is similar to small Irish schools. However it is based on the conscious decision for “multi-grade” groups. They are seen as an advantage in terms of peer relations, peer learning and social learning. Teachers (mentors, teamers, pedagogues, relation-persons) then are usually allocated to a certain age group.

In all free alternative schools there were always at least two adults, often three or four adults working together with one age group. Sectional meetings thus refers to meetings that are organised between these adults.

In the free alternative schools the sectional meetings are an important addition to the staff meetings in which all staff members come together. The frequency of these sectional meetings is usually weekly with a duration of 45 minutes to 2 hours. In one case the meetings happen 2 – 3 times a week as long as needed, in another one monthly for 2 hours.

Amongst German mainstream teachers meetings with their parallel class teachers were the most important reflection setting. For many Irish teachers parallel class meetings play a minor role. Only three Irish interview partners stated that they are using parallel class meetings at all.

5.4.2.
Staff meetings

All teachers of free alternative schools classified staff meetings as reflection setting. Considering their frequency and duration one can say that staff meetings played an immensely important role in the running of free alternative schools. In ten of the eleven schools staff meetings were on a weekly basis, only in one school they happened monthly. The shortest duration of the weekly meetings was stated as 90 minutes, five schools had meetings of 2 hours length, in two cases the meetings were 3 hours long, in one it was four hours and in another one it was 4.5 hours.

In the combination of frequency and duration of staff meetings there is a clear difference between the free alternative schools and the other two school types.

Once a staff meeting is considered to be a reflection setting – which as we have seen is already not the case with 29 % for the German mainstream teachers – it is obvious that teachers in free alternative schools have a multiple of the time available in staff meetings in comparison to their colleagues in Irish or German mainstream schools.

As a simple arithmetic operation, if the accumulated time of staff meetings is considered for a given school year[104], figures add up significantly for the teachers of the free alternative schools. In the following table are also included the figures of accumulated time for sectional meetings as in larger schools these can take the function of a reflection setting instead of a staff meeting.

[104] The school year in the 16 German states is normally 39 weeks long. The school year in Ireland is normally 36.5 weeks (183 days) long for primary schools. In the calculation I used 37 weeks as a common multiplicator.

Not for all interview partners figures for staff meetings or sectional meetings are available. The meetings may still happen, but what happens during these meetings the teachers don't classify as reflection.

Accumulated time of staff meetings (annually)					
Free alternative schools		Irish mainstream schools		German mainstream schools	
Staff meetings	Sectional meeting	Staff meetings	Sectional meeting	Staff meetings	Sectional meeting
FS 12 – 55.5 hrs	27.75 hrs	IE 05 – 9 hrs	n/a	RS 01 – 27.75 hrs	37 hrs
FS 03 – 74 hrs	a/n	IE 03 – 10 hrs	n/a	RS 10 – 37 hrs	n/a
FS 06 – 74 hrs	a/n	IE 02 – 18 hrs	18.5 hrs	RS 07 – 18.5 hrs	37 hrs
FS 08 – 74 hrs	37 hrs	IE 06 – 18 hrs	a/n	RS 03 – 37 hrs	27.75 hrs
FS 07 – 74 hrs	74 hrs	IE 07 - 22.5 hrs	4.5 hrs	RS 06 – n/a	6 hrs
FS 02 – 83.5 hrs	a/n	IE 04 – 27.75 hrs	18.5 hrs	RS 05 – n/a	18.5 hrs
FS 13 – 111 hrs	N/a	IE 01 – 37 hrs	a/n	RS 02 – n/a	37 hrs
FS 04 – 129.5 hrs	N/a	IE 08 – 37 hrs	n/a	RS 08 – nts	37 hrs
FS 01 – 148 hrs	n/a	IE 09 – n/a	n/a	RS 09 – n/a	37 hrs
FS 14 – 166.5 hrs	n/a			RS 04 – nts	148 hrs
FS 05 – nts	55.5 hrs			RS 11 – n/a	n/a

Legend:
n/a – not applicable, these are not referred to as reflection settings by the respective teachers
a/n – as needed, the length of meetings depends on topic
nts – no time stated, in the interview the teacher did not state how long the meetings are

The compilation as presented in the last table may be based on a rather low number of cases. However it still gives a rather reliable indicator of trends in comparing the three different school types.

The difference in time is obvious. Only in one of the German mainstream schools (RS 04) are the accumulated hours equivalent to the higher results of the free alternative schools. The majority of the German mainstream schools don't even reach the lowest figure of a free alternative school. The figures for the Irish schools are also such that the highest result is yet to reach the lowest figure of the free alternative schools.

5.4.3.
Meetings with parents

Teachers of nine of the eleven free alternative schools saw parents as partners for reflection. The frequency of these meetings ranged from weekly (2) over fortnightly (3) to every 6 weeks (1). Other teachers mentioned meetings are arranged as needed. Parents also play a role as reflection partners in discussions in context of annual seminars, conventions or similar events. The role of parents in free alternative schools is often very different to the role that parents play in a mainstream school. Free alternative schools rely heavily on a group of determined parents to actually start up at all. Where parents are members of the association that runs the school they are effectively co-owners of the school. Parents often take on active roles on various organisational levels.

There is a pattern to the internal developments in alternative educational institutions. In an earlier work I have described how the processes of professionalisation and institutionalisation influence the role and status of members within the social system of kinderläden. (Hamm 2005) The same dynamic applies to free alternative schools.

For the first number of years in these institutions parents often play a very decisive and important role in many aspects of the running of the school. They hire staff, monitor finances, manage school premises, but also influence the conceptual discussion and thereby make definite claims as to the concrete daily activities and particular the overall atmosphere in the schools. With the departure of founding members and also with the growth of a school the decision making powers can change in favour of the staff.[105] It is a matter then of the local circumstances how exactly the positions between parents and staff are defined.

In schools where parents still play a strong role in the organisation of the school teachers can feel uneasy about their own position. The relationship of teacher and parent/s is one that is not like in state's schools defined along institutional boundaries that keep parents well at bay. Parents approach teachers in free alternative schools mostly with a great sense of self-assurance.

One of the teachers in the interviews highlights the effects stemming from the positions from which she meets parents in her job in the free alternative school compared to her former employment in a state's school. Particularly the idea of being employed by the parents plays a role here:

"Well, parents were always for me in professional, involved in my reflection. That was the case earlier, too, always in meeting parents, where we developed thoughts and had exchange and looked at how things are at home, how are things at school, who does what and so. Here this is a different situation (...) I find it difficult at times. Because, they are my employers (...) and they are parents, yes, and that makes, that they are also employers makes it difficult at times, you see, because it makes me unfree also at times.
I sometimes felt, the situation here now is like 'we ought to make it', you know, as if we are on a probe, the new ones [laughs], and I can be let go, they can fire me. That was not the case before[106], you know. And I realise that has an effect, definitely." (FS 06)

Parents who send their children to a free alternative school have made a very conscious decision to do so. They are usually not only familiar with educational theory in general but often have a concrete interest in the upholding or development of the pedagogical concepts of the schools. For teachers this means that there is always a chance that parents will push for a discussion of the daily practice of the schools in light of observations they make.

"We have plenary assemblies [assembly of staff and parents; RH] *on specific topics. That is, staff of the school may say, we need to, or we would like to discuss what is going in the age group of the young ones. It can also be that parents bring up a topic. They may say: 'you claim to work on the mathetic principle, but we don't see that in your practice, we need to discuss this.' Both is possible."* (FS 03)

[105] The formulation "can change" is a rather euphemistic way to express what actually happens on interpersonal level for such change to come into effect. "... we have fought our case, in massive struggles … until we were in the position to decide who will be employed to work with us, yes, not with the parents, but with us." (Interview Gabi Asal 1996; Archiv Beniro e. V., Langen) For an impression of the dimension of such struggles see also: Rödler (1984).

[106] "before" refers to an earlier job in a state's school

Teachers in free alternative schools can also tap into the resources that parents offer via their talents or knowledge. In terms of reflection processes this has a concrete effect in the sense that it increases the potential of changing perspective. And it can have significant effects on the daily practice. One example that also relates to the idea of rituals:

"(...) when the class had to leave our school after four years (...) I have, aahm, the initiative actually came from this mother, together with her we thought about, can we create a ritual to mark this departure in a dignified way and make it nice. At the time we have discussed it explicitly in these terms. And we have together, the two of us, and also with the children, thought about, aahm, how is that, what all is needed, what is important for us, what elements should it have, how should it be. And we have you could say in advance developed together, and then also did it in that way." (FS 08)

From the perspective of teachers in free alternative schools it is rather unthinkable to assume that parents may be *"called in as a last resort"* (IE 08) or that in meetings with parents the teachers find themselves *"sitting in front of people who say nothing"* (RS 04).

In relation to reflection processes such an observation highlights the restricted informative value of a purely statistical approach. Where the aim is to understand reflection processes of teachers the numerical representation of reflection processes in terms of frequencies and duration therefore need to be seen as indicators always in need of qualitative specifications.

In the context of my own topic this will come into play in the passages where I deal with concrete reflection processes on rituals and ritualisations. On a general plane however the differences that are prevalent between mainstream schools and the free alternative schools would also be a highly valuable field for further studies with a focus on the actual quality of reflection processes.

5.4.4.
Meetings with pupils

In ten of the eleven free alternative schools teachers reported that they see pupils as partners for reflection processes. Teachers of six schools found that for them regular meetings with children on a daily (circle-time) or a weekly basis (school meeting) were a reflection setting. Another four teachers stated that for them reflection with children happened on an ongoing basis in informal manner.

Similar to the difference in status that parents have in free alternative schools compared to state's schools it is a logical consequence of the conceptual framework of these schools that children also enjoy a different status than in mainstream schools. In the description of the three school types I have already pointed to this aspect in chapter three by stating: The practice in free alternative schools is based on a model of intergenerational relationships that is kept open by the old generation. It is understood as experiment, that is: subject to negotiation between adults and children. Thus there is a constant process of change in the activities also. (Scholz 1996, p. 83)

Essential for free alternative schools is the attention given to the explicit culture of discussion and radical democratic decision making. In this culture children are included. For such a culture to become real in many of the schools formal settings in which discussion and decision making takes place are established. From the perspective of a teacher the meetings in these formal settings can be a reflection opportunity, too.

It is worth pointing out that for a teacher to discuss (reflect upon) the actual teaching of a topic/subject could be part of a group discussion with those children who take part in the activity. It would rarely be part of a discussion in a school meeting. Topics in these meetings may include discussions on certain activities (school tours, excursions, events to be organised etc.) but often are more concerned with regulating relationships within the school, hence: negotiations about acceptable standards of behaviour, use of spaces (rooms), discussions about rules etc.

"So someone makes a proposal [… in the school meeting; RH ...] *you should be able to play computer games all the time. We don't vote on it immediately. That gets then to the morning circles for a week for consideration. And that's where I'd say that reflection happens with the students, where we within the morning circles in that week, we look at, yeah, what the rule has been, how the rule works, how well it works, what doesn't work in it, whether the proposal solves those problems, ahm, whether it's responsible to take on the new proposal, what might be problematic in it, whether we want to develop an alternative proposal to it before the vote. That kind of thing. So it's like a space, that it's like the school meeting is presented with an issue and then we take that to the morning circles for reflection of, on that issue and how do we want to go about it."* (FS 09)

5.4.5.
Meetings with principal

As a reflection setting this does not play a significant role in free alternative schools. As explained above these schools are indebted to the idea of radical democracy. Hierarchies are kept as flat as possible. For formal reasons there may be a person who is declared "team-leader" vis-a-vis agencies of the state or the general public. Internally this however does not play a role in most cases either.

Only one teacher referred to meetings with a so-called "leaders-team" (three staff members) as a reflection setting. For this teacher it was the first year of teaching at all and meetings with the "leaders-team" had a mentoring function, too. In this regard they clearly included reflection on the teacher's practice in the context of the free alternative school.

5.4.6.
Staff planning days

In most free alternative schools staff planning days are an important reflection setting as documented by teachers of nine schools in their interviews. The number of days reported remarkably extends the maximum of two days as granted in German mainstream schools.

The figures from the interviews with teachers in free alternative schools are:

2 x per year: 1
4 x per year: 2
5 x per year: 1
6 x per year: 1
7 x per year: 2
9 x per year: 1
19 x per year: 1

Notably in five cases these days take place during holiday times, particularly concerning the last week of the summer holidays. Often these days are reserved for longer discussions on the school concept, but they also play a role for concrete planning of activities for a school year. Not all staff planning days are however during holidays. There are cases where staff planning days are organised during the school year. On such days often parents jump in and take care of the groups in the school on the day while teachers retreat for the day for discussion.

Staff planning days are also referred to by teachers of free alternative schools as "pedagogical days" or as "team days". Where they are held during the school year the topics can be ongoing developments that are monitored. Coming back to the nomenclature provided by literature on reflection this can be depicted in terms of Griffiths/Tann's processual category of "research": including a systematic observation and rigorous analyses.

Two teachers in their interviews also mentioned meetings to take place once a year over a weekend in which the whole school community, teachers, parents, children can take part. These have the character of an annual convention. In them all aspects of the school life can become a topic.

5.4.7.
Professional support/counselling

External support plays a role in a variety of ways for reflection of teachers in free alternative schools. In two cases, teachers report of experts on specific topics being invited for discussion in either team-meetings or staff planning days. In another case the team of the school availed of the service of an outside person to engage in team-building exercises on a monthly basis. These examples resemble the way how professional support comes into play in the mainstream schools.

However there is a particular aspect of professional support/counselling prevalent in free alternative schools that is completely unknown to Irish teachers and is only marginally used by German mainstream teachers. In ten of the eleven schools teachers take part on a regular basis in reflective supervision. This was mentioned in passing already as a reflection setting above and shall be explained a bit better here now.

In an English speaking context "supervision has been defined with words like surveillance, regulation, and administration. At the same time, it has been associated with words like guidance instruction, and leadership. (...) In many school systems, for practical purposes, supervision has been closely connected to assessing the performance of teachers. " (Snow-Gerono 2008, p. 5)

In a German context it is common to speak of supervision as a concept of counselling that has also been described as reflection under guidance (Becker 1999). I will however use the term *reflective supervision* when I speak of supervision in the context of Germans mainstream and free alternative schools.

Reflective supervision enjoys some dissemination within health related professions also in the English speaking world. Here a distinction is made between administrative supervision which is concerned with the oversight of rules, regulations, policies, procedures, clinical supervision which is case-focused, but not necessarily taking into account the practitioner's shares/interventions, and reflective supervision in which attention is paid to all relationships (practitioner - supervisor; practitioner - parent; practitioner - child; parent - child). (MACMH 2012)

In educational fields in Ireland reflective supervision however is a rather unknown feature. The view that this is not unique to Ireland is supported by Robert Emde in his article on reflective supervision where he concludes that reflective supervision is rather uncommon in early childhood settings in America, too. (Emde 2009, p. 668)

Reflective supervision in Germany is offered as a service by specially trained professionals. To become a certified supervisor one has to complete a postgraduate course with one of forty providers nationwide. Supervisors who work with free alternative schools are normally free-lance professionals.[107]

The concept of reflective supervision aims at a process of recognising, understanding and learning about perspectives for professional practice. There are different organisational formats in which reflective supervision is practised: individual sessions between a client and the supervisor; group supervision whereby a group is built of practitioners from a specific field of work but not normally all working in the same institution; team supervision whereby the team of an institution takes part.

Peer supervision is used as a term when there is no supervisor present. It resembles concepts of peer review groups in an English speaking context.[108] "Kollegiale Beratung" (aka: intervision)[109] is a specific way of peer supervision whereby the process is strictly structured and follows a number of clearly defined steps. Essential for peer supervision and intervision is that there are no hierarchical relationships amongst the participants. (Becker 1999)

Reflective supervision relies on voluntary participation. During reflective supervision questions, problems, conflicts and cases of the concrete experience of the participants are reflected upon. (DGSV 2010) The teachers of the free alternative schools refer in their interviews to two different approaches.

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[107] There are also certified supervisors who are employed in various capacities by e. g. school psychological services, community social services or other states agencies. Acquiring a certification as supervisor can be an add-on to existing professional qualifications (for social workers, psychologists, teachers) that may open an alternative career path within (or outside) institutions.

[108] For an Irish example of peer review guidelines see: Walsh/Moore (2011)

[109] There is no exact translation for the term "Kollegiale Beratung" from German to English. In a German context it is sometimes also referred to as intervision. The differences between intervision and supervision are that there is no group leader in intervision. A rotational system of chairing and steering meetings amongst participants is an essential methodological element of intervision. One can say that intervision is a form of collective counseling. (see also: Schmidt 2002, p. 43)

The first is usually called case supervision. Here the participants discuss a case of a particular child as presented by one of the participants at the beginning of the session. The second is called team supervision, here now referring not only to the composition of the group but also to the topical direction that the session takes. Topics are usually connected to internal dynamics amongst members of the team. In both cases however the institutional conditions for the professional practice is taken into account as well as the emotions of participants and interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

In Germany reflective supervision as an instrument for reflection is sometimes also promoted as a means for mainstream schools. However the hierarchical organisation of the administration of mainstream schools seems to be a grave hindrance for reflective supervision to take root in this sector. This is mirrored in the quote of Jürgen Mietz, himself a member of the school psychological service in Duisburg: "Fred Kofman and Peter M. Senge (...) have mentioned characteristics of learning organisations. Interestingly these are characteristics that are at the core of supervisory work and which via supervision could find their way into everyday practice of the organisation. These include: slowing down, accepting of the other, interest in analysing and processing of systemic consequences of interventions, dealing with different values. Furthermore supervision offers the chance to combine individuality with the demands of the organisation. Supervision turns the case of the learning organisation (or what is likely to be meant by it) from the head down to the feet. Whoever speaks of a learning organisation without speaking of the subjects risks the suspicion of manipulation. Supervision thus finds itself in a contradictory field of tension between the basis and the elites. It is – like the subjects – called for and is needed, but similarly avoided and fended off, because it questions central processes of regulation. In this sense supervision is political throughout and touches on questions of democratic culture." (Mietz 2000)

In the context of free alternative schools with their flat hierarchies reflective supervision is an instrument that is highly regarded as an approach for reflection processes that are inclusive of the diverse influence factors that all can play a role for professional practice. Although concepts of reflective supervision are often strongly informed by theories of psychoanalytic descent, it is not to be seen as a therapeutic process, but rather aiming at increased professional capacity.

A basic idea that is quite common to reflective supervision is that solutions are not offered by a supervisor. They are found by the participants in their own reflective engagement with the topic. The supervisor functions merely as a tour guide through the labyrinth of one's own thoughts, feelings, wishes. The dimensions essential to reflective supervision identified by Robert Emde, namely "sharing and learning, emotional support and vulnerability, system sensitivity " (Emde 2009, pp. 666 – 668), are quite in-fitting with the professional structures and pedagogical approaches familiar to the free alternative schools. On a certain level the approach of reflective supervision mirrors the mathetic principle. Therefore it is of little surprise that reflective supervision is named as an essential reflection setting by the vast majority of the teachers in their interviews. In two of the free alternative schools the instrument of intervision ("kollegiale Beratung") is also used in addition to reflective supervision.

The frequency of regular reflective supervision sessions varies from every two weeks to every two months. These sessions are 90 minutes or two hours long. In two schools there were in addition also 4 full days reserved for team-supervision. These days were usually scheduled as weekend dates.

5.4.8.
Peer evaluation

Teachers of three free alternative schools also spoke of peer evaluation networks as another reflection setting which they found very helpful for their own practice.

The peer evaluation is carried out in a network of schools (in these cases the number of cooperating schools was always four). Delegates of each school visit each of the other schools every year for a period of three days. The hosting schools provide an 'observation task' for the delegates who are supposed to then give the hosts feedback on the observed topic. The delegates obviously bring their experiences back to their own schools also.

“(...) it's amazing, and that, so you're very specifically there to evaluate the school that you are visiting. So we do a verbal feedback around at the end and then they get written feedback from every individual observer that we all receive, all of the feedback. And I felt like, for me that was a, we were there to be giving feedback to that school that we were visiting. But we received, but what I, but I felt like our school benefited significantly from what myself and my colleague experienced there and the idea that we brought back from that school.” (FS 09)

The value of such a reflection process is also highlighted by another teacher who specifically points to the fact that free alternative schools have a lot of visitors from a mainstream background. These visitors are appreciated by the free alternative schools as a way to promote the conceptual ideas of the schools on education. However the gain for the free alternative schools of these visits in terms of reflection is very limited. Here the peer evaluation network offers an opportunity for teachers from the free alternative schools to come into an exchange with others who are already informed about the conceptual foundations and with whom discussion is possible on the basis of similar practical experiences.

“They give us feedback and we reflect on the processes. And there are a lot of questions like: 'why is that done this way, and why did you do this in that situation?' And that is really, it can be in individual meetings also, you know, if one of these colleagues is present in one of your sessions. Or it is also possible that one asks directly for a peer to come to observe, like: 'I would like to have a feedback from you, can you come in?'
And it is great, you know. We have a lot, a lot of visitors. But their questions are often on a different level that is rather fruitless for us, you know, stuff like: 'If the children sit on desks, can they learn at all?' You know, and these now are people who are all working in similar settings like ourselves, aahm, they are all pros in what is going on here, if you like. And they question us on a different level. And that has been very helpful. It is fantastic.” (FS 08)

Peer evaluation networks have also been promoted for mainstream schools in Germany. (Gerriets/Möller/Giebenhain/Basel 2006; Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung 2006) However their practical spread amongst mainstream schools is certainly not at all matched in proportions as in the free alternative schools. None of the teachers from German mainstream schools, neither in the interviews nor in the questionnaire mentioned peer evaluation as a reflection setting.

5.5.
Reflection settings – comparing free alternative schools and mainstream schools

As mentioned in the interlude above, there are differences between Irish and German mainstream schools in terms of frequencies and duration of opportunities for teachers to reflect with others on their practice in various settings.

It is obvious however that measured in simply quantitative dimensions the reflection opportunities that are normally available for teachers in mainstream schools don't match at all those that are available for teachers in free alternative schools.

This was partly shown in the compilation of accumulated times for staff meetings. It can also be illustrated in a table display of accumulated times for a teacher in each of the three school types. For this purpose I pick two of the teachers of each series of interviews (Irish primary, German mainstream, Free alternative school).

Accumulated hours annually in reflection settings in school types
(based on 37 weeks/school year; a full day is calculated with 6 hours[110])
figures in *italics* refer to weekend dates

	FS 08	FS 03	IE 07	IE 02	RS 07	RS 03
Staff meetings	74 hrs	74 hrs	22.5 hrs	18.5	37 hrs	37 hrs
Sectional staff meetings (parallel class teachers)	37 hrs	weekly as needed	4.5 hrs	18	18.5 hrs	27.75 hrs
Professional support	On demand	-	18 hrs (PDST)	On demand	-	-
Reflective Supervision	12 hrs (case) *12 hrs (team)*	37 hrs	-	-	-	-
Meetings with principal	-	-	On demand	-	1 hr (Jahres-gespräch)	-
Staff planning days	*30 hrs (team)*	-	-	6 hrs	12 hrs	12 hrs
Peer evaluation	8 hrs[111]	-	-	-	-	-
Meetings with parents	*12 hrs (school plenum)*	37 hrs	-	incidental	-	3 hrs[112]
"CPD"	*12 hrs (conference participation)*	-	-	*8 hrs (courses in Education centre)*	-	-
total	187 hrs	148 hrs	45 hrs	50.5 hrs	68.5 hrs	79.75 hrs

[110] This is based on the Irish school day which runs from 9.00 h – 15.00 h. From personal experience I can say that particularly weekend seminars in free alternative schools tend to be of a longer duration. This however may be neglected for purposes of comparability.

[111] The system of peer evaluation has been explained above. The figure here is based on the assumed time that a teacher is engaged in discussion with peer evaluators. The time for observation is naturally much longer.

[112] Two parents assemblies of ca. 90 minutes duration.

The figures included in the table are those accumulated hours available for the respective teachers in settings that are based on formal arrangements, be it on basis of mutual agreement or on basis of contractual rules and regulations of working hours. Not included in the calculation are those times that teachers spend in informal meetings (corridor talk). I will come back on this soon.

What the figures in the table show is at any rate that there is a huge difference between the free alternative schools and the mainstream schools in terms of time reserved for reflection. I have not picked the more extreme cases in this regard. FS 10 for example spends an accumulated 235 hours annually in formal reflection settings while IE 03 spends a total of 10 hours and IE 05 a total of 22 hours in formal reflection settings.[113]

On viewing such figures it is tempting to ask the question: Do teachers in mainstream schools not reflect, or reflect less on their practice than teachers in free alternative schools?
I would hold that a question asked in this manner is misleading as would be any answer that remains in simply quantitative dimensions.

As we have seen concepts of reflection are manifold. The attempts to categorise reflection processes in processual manner (e. g. Griffiths/Tann) come closest to a quantitative measurement. Each and every reflection process however has always a qualitative component, that is: it is based on and refers back to concrete acts. These acts themselves are context-bound. They happen to be part of a system of acts that in itself is grounded in a way to interpret their meaning in a particular fashion.

In concrete terms in relation to the various school types one can say then that the difference is first and foremost one of interpretations and definitions of the basic activity that goes on in the institutions: education. From here the differences are comprehensible.

In free alternative schools the role of the adults vis-à-vis children is defined differently to mainstream schools, the concept of radical democracy leads to flat hierarchies, the schools become "schools of negotiation" (Scholz 1996). In this context reflection is a far more collective endeavour than in mainstream schools. To bridge from one action to another action, hence: to confirm, or else to change the course of action necessarily involves the input of a greater number of people. This may be interpreted as an obligation, or a chance, it is first of all a condition. Where decisions are made and responsibility is shared collectively it is inevitable that the participants collectively reflect on the rationale and the consequences of these decisions.

This however needs more time and effort than a reflection process of either a small number of people or even only one person. For teachers in mainstream schools it is much easier to reflect as the lonely practitioner – it matches their situation as master/mistress who is the sole responsible person for what happens in the classroom. Decisions in an environment with a strict hierarchical structure don't need a reflection process of all participants.

Thus with the principle orientation of free alternative schools as radically democratic it is a logical consequence that reflection will be more visible in these schools, simply because it potentially happens on all sorts of interaction levels between all status groups at all possible times, and particularly: on a basis of formal arrangements.

[113] The case of RS 04 in German mainstream schools is absolutely exceptional with an accumulated reflection time of 189.5 hrs.

It is in fact essential for these formal arrangements to be nurtured and well looked after so that the potential for friction within the collective is minimised and potential conflicts can be expressed and addressed as soon as they arise. Therefore it is not surprising that the times available in the various reflection settings are so different between mainstream and free alternative schools.

As mentioned already in the table on accumulated reflection times the figures for the informal meetings (corridor talk) are not included. Were this to be done, the picture would change. Teacher IE 03 for example who reported of no more than a total of 10 hours reflection time annually stated also that there is informal daily reflection during lunch-break. If that was added in the accumulated annual reflection time this teacher would come to a total of 151 hours.[114] Teacher IE 05 would accumulate 163 hours. One could further try to add together the five minute chats with colleagues in the morning before school starts or the ten minutes with parents at the school gate at home time.

I refrained from integrating these figures in the calculation as it would lead to a blurred picture. Similar informal chats as reported by the Irish teachers are happening in all schools. We remember the teacher who stated: "*And when we sit together there having a cup of tea these informal conversations happen. They are about private matters. But there are always school matters touched also.*" (FS 03) This is not different in free alternative schools from mainstream schools. If the times of the daily tea-break for teacher FS 03 were included, this teacher would come to a figure of 333 hours accumulated reflection time.

The phenomenon understood as reflection obviously defies attempts to fit it into a neat measurable scheme. Reflection as it is understood by the teachers in their professional practice can happen at any given time and in all possible settings. For the presentation of the accumulated hours as shown above drawing the line on the basis of formal arrangements then is a way to make the material accessible in a statistical manner. It is necessary to be aware of the limitations in relation to a statistical approach as applied in this chapter. It is important to also include a qualitative approach. This will be done in the following chapters.

As for a classification of the informal chats, on the basis of terminology provided by Griffiths/Tann, they would be identifiable as 'review'. To enter into a systematic observation and rigorous analysis of a situation necessarily requires a setting where this is possible and it is common sense that corridor talk will not offer this, and even the daily lunch break chat is hardly prone to do so. Given that the topic and trajectory of a discussion is known, it would be similarly possible to describe the functional character of reflection processes on the basis of terminology provided by Jack Mezirow, and also to identify their orientational character in terms of critical reflection. The terminology provided in theories of reflection however seems not yet sufficient to capture the connection between the various school types and the respective scale or orientation of reflection processes. In furtherance to my earlier statements (see section 2.11.) it becomes obvious here that the underlying construction of reflection that informs these theories stands in the way of such a specification.

Where reflection is thought of as a bridging process from act to act it is conceptualised as separate of these acts. Irrespective of a potential validity of such concepts in relation to descriptions of the mental operations of an individual they however don't do justice to the processes dealt with in this study.

[114] Based on a lunch-break of 45 minutes

A change in perspective is necessary to capture the dimension of reflection where teachers engage in discussion with others. These discussions take place in a certain social situation. The situations themselves have an influence on the reflection processes. The mainstream teacher in Germany who sits in front of people “who say nothing” may have a critical (Brookfield) orientation herself and is quite willing to engage in retheorising (Griffiths/Tann) premise reflection (Mezirow) – it won't happen for her: not here, not now. The teacher in an Irish primary school who realises that the principal is constantly putting up obstacles may be quite willing to establish a peer review group in her school for a critical (Brookfield) research (Griffiths/Tann) reflection on her teaching practice – it won't happen for her unless she fights it out with the principal.[115]

Taking up the notion of the “schools of negotiation” (Scholz) I have already indicated that free alternative schools cannot claim to have a monopoly on negotiations. It is more accurate instead to assume that negotiations of definitions of situations, the way how “reality is articulated for the cognitive endorsement of all” (Bell 1992, p. 131) are an ongoing process in all schools.[116] This is not yet saying anything about the specific form that negotiations take.

Where reflection processes in which teachers engage in discussions with others are understood as another level of negotiation the perspective changes. Reflection then is an act that connects two acts, but more: it is a social act. That is, the actors act in a social situation. Their acting in the reflective setting is as much part of defining and articulating reality in negotiation with their partners in the reflection setting. The situation shapes the act, and the act in turn shapes the situation.

In this sense one should think of reflection of teachers in their professional environment as yet another strategic activity in a system of constant negotiation of power relations. The various reflection settings then are so many arenas in which these negotiations take place.

In free alternative schools teachers report higher frequencies and durations of reflection in formally arranged settings. This however does not necessarily mean that there are more negotiations of power relations going on in these schools than in mainstream schools. What it however means is that the form of negotiations in the various school types differs.

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[115] The example with the peer review group is based on a real case in a primary school in Ireland where two teachers tried to establish such a group amongst their colleagues. The initiative was bastardised by the principal and vice-principal who discredited the teachers and created a climate of suspicion amongst staff.

[116] In this context see also Wilfred B. Martin (1975) who observed teachers in team teaching situations. He found that “a model of negotiation was found to be useful in analyzing [… the …] social structure” that resulted from the interaction in negotiation processes amongst the team members. (Martin 1975, p. 221)

6. Reflecting on rituals

6.1. Introduction

Having identified the reflection settings commonly used by teachers in the three school types the next step now will be to look at concrete reflection processes on rituals/ritualisations.

This chapter is of considerable length. Using the three interview series as a necessary empirical point of reference I will address those issues that emerged from the concrete descriptions and reports of the teachers:

- Definitions of ritual (rituals and routines)
- Ritual cultures
- Are rituals reflected upon?
- Ritual experts amongst themselves
- Reflection as a social act
- Collective negotiation
- Non-reflection
- Again: Are rituals reflected upon?

Each of these issues will be dealt with in a separate section. Where applicable sub-sections are entered.

6.2. Rituals and Routines – effects of national discourses on rituals in school

The first observation that stands out already at a first screening of the interviews with teachers in the three school types is that there is a distinction in relation to concepts of ritual. The dividing line runs along the national backgrounds. Teachers in Germany share a common understanding that the term ritual is applicable in discussions on school life. They quite readily speak of rituals as being part of their practice and of school life in general. This is not the case with teachers in Ireland. They don't normally use the term ritual when talking about activities in school.

Frigga Haug has made the point that “language is not simply a tool that we may use according to our liking. Rather, in the existing language, politics will speak through us and regulate our construction of meaning. Thus culturally a number of ready meanings lie around, so to speak; they push themselves on us (...) This happens when we less reflectively and more naively use language. Of course, the more we try not to stand out as personalities and wish to attribute normality to our experiences, the more we use these ready meanings.” (Haug 1999, p. 11)

Talking about school practice implies thinking about school practice. Talking about school practice in terms of ritual hence implies thinking about school practice in terms of rituals. To think about school practice in terms of ritual implies a conceptual idea of what ritual is, does, should be, could be, etc., in short: a theory of ritual. We saw earlier how a distinction was suggested by Griffiths/Tann into 'public' and 'personal' theories (see section 2.4.).

While it is possible to say that each individual teacher has a theory of ritual and as such this is a 'personal theory', these 'personal theories' are however not randomly formed. They are rather informed by the discourses that are prevalent in the field. The debates, discussions, practical implementations, conceptual descriptions, disseminated literature regarding rituals in education are the basis on which such 'personal theories' are built. In this sense 'personal theories' are not 'personal' only. They are as much social in origin and application as they are 'personal' in appropriation and adaptation.

The German debate on rituals in education as mentioned in chapter one is mirrored strongly in the conceptual definitions that the German teachers in the interview series had of them. We find a number of motifs in the teachers responses. The first and universal feature that all teachers associate with rituals is the idea of regularity – be it as part of a fixed schedule (time-table) or be it as a response to some particular occurrence.

Then there is the view that rituals provide structure, reliability, safety.

“Aahm, well, it is that it gives the children structure, it gives them a reliable frame. I comes again and again, every week, and the children know that.
(...)
We have quite a lot of children in our school who do not know such rituals and something reliable from home, and who are difficult in terms of their behaviour, too, and with these rituals we simply try to give them a frame. (...) And we realise more and more that the children don't have this at home any more, that there are a lot of children who are alone in the afternoon, or who do not have any communication with other children in the afternoon. And, aahm, these rituals are in some way an exercise, to some extent, this is how we have it, how we use them.” (RS 02)

“I find rituals important. In my class, a ritual is that we have circle-time quite often, or the morning-circle, or particular ways of doing things that are ritualised also. I find them important because (...) the children have a structure, and I realise again and again that it is only because of this that the children are functioning.” (RS 10)

Such views are not exclusive though to teachers in German mainstream schools. Orientation, structure, order are also present in the 'personal theories' on rituals of teachers in free alternative schools.

“Well I, I believe for, aahm, for a school as ours it is quite important that there are rituals because there is so much freedom for children, they can decide on so many things, when where and what they want to do. And therefore it needs such, such basic rituals, to have something like a keystone, to give them orientation, you know.” (FS 02)

“In special education with mentally disabled people it is a case that rituals are used, and explicitly described as a method, a means to achieve a structure, an order that is pleasant for the children, you know. Something that makes them feel safe, or also simply speeds up learning, or makes it easier because it is regularly re-occurring. And that is, that is not different in Montessori-education. (...) And that is for us, we have, the term ritual is part of how we understand our work. And in my experience it is something that gives children a pleasant order.” (FS 05)

Rituals are also seen as a means to make life easier in school.

“For me rituals are re-occurring activities (..) that I (..) have negotiated, or so. In parts I have negotiated them, or else, that I also in parts do automatically, or, that for me are rituals. And in parts I do them quite consciously, simply because it is too exhausting otherwise, the whole thing. (...) We have them in our daily schedule, such rituals, that are meant to make life easier, partly also with the purpose for example to lead to independence, so, well, all sorts of rituals.” (FS 06)

One teacher from a mainstream school explains this aspect a bit more detailed in relation to children who take on a role of performing on stage in a weekly school-assembly. The assembly is interpreted as a ritual by her. The children on stage follow a fixed script.

“Yes, you get rid of having to make decisions constantly, do I attend assembly, do I not, what will I say when on stage, what not to say, you know. (...) It is anyway so exciting to stand on stage with a microphone in front of 250 people. If the children did not have this format, but rather had to make it up themselves every time, they would not do that any more. So it has something of relief, it has something liberating.” (RS 04)

In the same sense the idea of rituals as a means to generally simplify life in a social situation is also prevalent.

“In a school, in this habitat, this rather artificial habitat where, you know, 250 people live together, and so and so many adults, it needs a sort of economy, too. (...) An economy of energy, because that is all so exhausting, you know, you are together with so many people for the whole day. There are so many sensual impressions. And I believe, aahm, it is also necessary to find certain economic rituals, and if you have them and they match this perfectly, then they can remain like that for the time being.” (RS 04)

Furthermore the motif of rituals as having a meaning is brought up.

“Q – So you do have the term as a generic term in the school?
A – Yes, yes. And it is important to us. We find rituals important (...) well, rituals as activities that are virtually re-occurring in a particular and a fixed rhythm, activities that are, contain substance, and maybe also (...) meaning, at best.” (FS 11)

Where there is a lack of meaning perceived in an activity it consequently can call the term ritual for the activity into question. In relation to the regular excursion day once a week in one of the free alternative schools the teacher in the interview concludes that it is actually not a ritual.

“Yes, I wouldn't call it a ritual, but rather (...) well, what is it then, a fixed element comes to mind, I can't find the right word, but it goes into the direction of a ritual. But, nooo, a ritual is after all, it is something sacred. [laughs]” (FS 10)

In thinking, or talking about rituals these teachers make use of 'ready meanings [that] lie around.' In the chapter on rituals I have already sketched the German debate on rituals. These 'ready meanings' are available also in form of the various articles in periodicals for teachers and their use as point of reference not the least also within teacher education. Four of the German teachers explicitly referred to experiences during their teacher training whereby they attended seminars on rituals.

There is no equivalent on the Irish side. Rituals in education are not a topic that would be represented by a coherent discussion within educational science in the English speaking world. It is not a topic in educational literature from Ireland, neither is it discussed in teacher education. Consequently when Irish teachers are asked about the use of the term rituals in relation to their practice, they unanimously state that they do not use the term.

A teacher who was on secondment for part of her career: *"The term ritual or ritualisation, and I have worked in many schools in my previous career, I have never come across the term ritual or ritualisation. You know when I would be discussing, talking staff meetings or, ahm, yes, working with staffs on topics, it didn't come into their vocabulary or it wasn't." (IE 02)*

This is confirmed also by other teachers.

"Q - In your own experience in the school, would people in the school including yourself actually talk about practice, practical activities, happenings in the school and name them ritual or ritualisation?
A - So, you're asking if I've ever heard of the word ritual being used with our, with our daily routines?
Q - Pretty much yes, does anybody use this term?
A - No. No.
Q - So in your, say in a staff meeting, or in a staff planning day, or even in your meetings with your colleague you would never use the term ritual for any of the activities that you reflect upon?
A - No, I've never heard of it been used, no." (IE 06)

Instead of rituals the Irish teachers normally refer to re-occurring activities as routines. The only area in which they would identify the use of the term ritual as fitting is where it is about religious activities.

"You see, when you say ritual I kind of think it's a, I don't know what it is, I kind of think, well you always, you have religious ritual, I kind of think it's something major, like something like, you know, like a big thing that happens. You know like, here it's religious again, Christmas comes, ritual, you know, comes once a year. That kind, I'm not thinking of everyday, you know like, I mean, there's lots of stuff we do everyday. I mean most things are done everyday, like, we call it again routine, not ritual." (IE 01)

"Q - Would you yourself use that term ritual or ritualisation? If you were talking to a colleague or a parent or to somebody else, would you use the term?
A - No, I definitely wouldn't. I don't know why, I don't know, is there near : not a negative, I don't know, I would never use that term.
Q - What would you use instead? You have described two different areas, one is the daily structure in the classroom :
A - Yes, I suppose I would call that routine.
Q - That's routines?

A - Yes, I wouldn't call it, I wouldn't call it a ritual. As regards sort of things that happen in school as regards graduations and different things that they take part in, aahm, I try to think here how to describe that (...) tradition, I suppose in some sense of that word. That they're traditions to our school. I suppose even though I'm not sure if that's quite the right word. But in our school I suppose, yes, tradition is more a word.
Q - O.K., are there religious activities happening in the school also?
A - Yes.
Q - Things like morning prayer, confirmation preparation :
A - Morning prayer, confirmation, aahm, every year, so say third class goes to mass one Friday of the month, then the next Friday fourth goes to mass, and the next Friday fifth and sixth.
Q - And would you classify that as a ritual, too, or not?
A - I, yes, I suppose it is, yes. I suppose things like that carol service that we do every christmas, actually we're quite, quite strongly involved in the church. There are quite a lot throughout the year." (IE 07)

When teachers in Ireland think of activities that in a German context would be understood as ritual, they instead think of routines, traditions, but also of habits, celebrations, repeated procedures or simply repeated behaviour all of which were mentioned as terms in the interviews. In this regard the frequency and regularity of certain activities in school is acknowledged by the Irish teachers in the use of the term routine. It is also clear that such activities can be done in an automated fashion. They become *"part and parcel"* (IE 08) of the daily activities.

If we look at which 'ready meanings lie around' thus for the Irish teachers they are not exactly the same as for the German teachers. A dissemination of a debate on rituals within Ireland similar to Germany is missing. Teachers in Ireland consequently don't talk or think about their practice in terms of ritual. They yet have their 'personal theories' of rituals. In these the Irish teachers regularly associate the term with religion, but there is also an awareness of a shortcoming in a purely religious understanding of the term.

"I suppose the difficulty lies with the use of the term ritual because it is so often associated with religious ritual. Ahm, it's rarely used outside of that. Routine is used. But there are things that are not religious, have no religious connotations, are they rituals? And, yes, I'd say they are." (IE 02)

In the interviews with the Irish teachers it is however also a regular occurrence that they accommodate for the use of the term ritual during the actual interview. While at the one side they don't use the term when talking about their practice, they are still familiar with the term as such. It is not the case that 'ritual' would be a word they have never heard. In fact during the interviews they readily apply the term to activities that they otherwise would depict as routines.

"A - O.K. It's not a term that I've used. I suppose meeting and greeting visitors or other teachers the children in any school get in to the habit of greeting the, maybe as a whole group, in some schools the whole class stands up and says 'Dia duit, tá fáilte romhat' whatever or 'Good morning, you're welcome.' Is that, I'm asking this of myself, is that a ritual? Maybe.
Q - If you think along the line of this being a ritual, what would be the reason for you to classify that as a ritual?
A - Because it's done with frequency and almost without thinking. It's an automated kind of response that when a visitor comes in the children would, I know from visiting schools that, visiting different classrooms, that would be one that would stand out. Children would stand up and say 'good morning teacher' or." (IE 02)

What stands out as obvious differences between teachers in Germany and teachers in Ireland then is first of all the apparent confidence and the familiarity with concepts and terminology of German teachers when talking about rituals in school. German teachers in speaking about ritual tap into a source of thoughts that appear to be in a certain way coherent. They consequently have a 'personal theory' of ritual that is sufficient to make them confident enough to speak about their practice in terms of ritual. This is not to say anything about the quality or stringency of these 'personal theories'. In fact these theories are “common sense theories (…) not a conscious and elaborate theory”, but rather “replicas of (...) theories that have woven their way into the fabric of everyday consciousness.” (Haug 1999)

Secondly however there is the particular line of argument that is prevalent in the German discourse where rituals are positively perceived as providing safety, reliability and structure to children and the grounding of such an idea in “children's needs”. Such a connection does not feature at all with the Irish teachers.

The proliferation of this motif in Germany is probably best illustrated by the comments of one of the teachers from a free alternative school who has personal experiences with schools in England. From her experience within the school community of the free alternative school she concludes that rituals and ritualistic activities are seen as important for teachers and parents alike.

“Ahm, and it is seen, and I feel like that is seen as very important, certainly like the parent community hold this need of ritual, this idea that the students, that the children need these rituals, these sort of ritualistic activity, that it happens at that time every day and it's done in this way (...) That I think is where I have a different, I feel like this ritualistic part that here is really much more extreme than in England. Like, the, how important that is, like it almost, to me it always seems, ahm, artificial, something. And parents absolutely and the team as well very: 'This is important, this is what the children need.' They need this rituals based thingy, these activities that happen in this way.” (FS 09)[117]

6.3. Ritual cultures in different school types

Inevitably during the interviews the teachers mentioned certain activities of which they thought they are rituals (or routines). Obviously the teachers were specifically asked for examples of reflection processes on rituals. Answering this implies that the teachers will speak about a certain activity (as ritual) that is the topic of the reflection process. However in the conversations the teachers often also refer to examples of other activities depicted as ritual particularly in the context of clarifying definitions.

From the material provided in this manner it is possible to present a comparative overview of those activities that teachers in the three different school types see as rituals. The various activities can be sorted into a number of areas according to thematic coherence.

[117] This is not to suggest that there are less or no rituals in schools in England. Similarly it does not mean that in an English speaking context, discussions about children's needs would be absent. The anchoring of the arguments for having rituals in the 'needs of children' however is a specific German phenomenon.

Activities referred to as rituals by teachers				
		FAS total IV's: 14	**RS total IV's: 12**	**IE total IV's: 9**
(Self-)Governance	morning-circle, end-of-day-circle etc. *Some teachers mentioned different 'circles'*	18 (13 of 14)	17 (12 of 12)	2
	School Assembly/Class-council	9	4	0
	juridical committee	1	0	0
	Anti-violence-committee	0	1	0
	Booklet for messages to parents	0	1	0
	Staff meeting[118]	1	1	0
Administrational	Writing annual reports	1	0	0
	Attendance check	1	1	0
	Meeting school inspector	1	0	0
Reverence	Religious activities, prayers, mass	0[119]	1	8
	National anthem at end of school day	0	0	1
Calendar celebrations	Celebrations (Summer, Christmas, Solstice ...)	8	6	1
Celebration of growth – rites of passage	First day of school	6	2	0
	Birthday	4	3	0
	Farewell celebration for school leavers	4	1	0
	Transition primary to secondary section in same school	3	0	0
Celebration of achievements	Award Ceremonies	0	0	3
Annual activities	Annual Sports Day	0	1	1
	Reading night	0	1	0
	School trips	3	0	0
	Overnight stay in school	1	0	0
	Boys/Girls-day	1	0	0
Time-tabling	Scheduled activities during regular school time (e. g. reading time, swimming lessons)	6	3	3
	Project-week	0	2	0
Internal performances	Open stage	1	0	0
	Dance performance	0	1	0
Structuring lessons	Everyday routines in lessons (e.g. diary entries, homework check)	0	7	6
Housekeeping	Tidying up (Classrooms, Yard)	2	4	0
Meals	Meals (Breakfast/Lunch)	5	3	2
Status confirmation	Welcome formulas (class greets teacher – teacher greets class)	0	5	1
Behaviour management	Non-verbal communication (e.g. 'sound-bowl', raising hand to get silence in class, rain-stick) for 'managing behaviour'	0	7	0[120]
	Chatting up children in bus	0	0	1
	'Rules for good listening' – verbal instruction, mantra	0	0	1
Symbolic gratification or punishment	Symbolic gratification/punishment (stickers, smileys, 'traffic light'-classroom-management-system, presentation of certificates)	0	7	2
Regulating group physical order	Lining up after break-time	0	4	6
	Dismissal (order of classes to go)	0	0	1
	Change of seating order in regular time intervals	0	1	1

118 This is obviously adults only – but it is perceived as a ritual by teachers

119 There was one example of a free alternative school where a ritual was reported that had a religious component (saying grace before meals). It will be mentioned in the text further below in relation to the reflection process that went on about it. In the table here it is subsumed under 'meals'.

120 One of the teachers in the Irish interview series mentioned that she does 'raise hands to get silence' – but she does not see this as a ritual, for her it is merely a technique.

There are two points of caution to be made about this overview. The first concerns the number of primary sources (interviews) that are used as the basis for it. It is possible that a survey on a bigger scale may lead to adjustments in relation to certain activities as listed above. The list of activities may also be extended if a bigger number of teachers were included in a survey. However the experience in a workshop at the national conference of the free alternative schools suggests that the list presented here is quite comprehensive already. In the workshop 28 people from different schools did a brainstorming on rituals in their schools and the collected activities at that time did not contain any activity that is not yet included above also.

The second point of caution is to repeat that the activities mentioned are *perceived* as rituals by the teachers. This is not to say that these activities *are* rituals. As shown in the chapter on rituals and ritualisations there are multiple ways to classify activities for their qualities to be ritual or not. For these teachers based on their 'personal theories' however it is appropriate to speak of them as rituals.

Therefore in some cases the ratios may not be as accurate as they would be if the number of informants was increased. In spite of these restrictions the table still proves valuable in relation to identifying general tendencies within the three school types.

School rituals as we have seen earlier make visible a certain school culture: “a set of relationships, beliefs, values, and feelings shared by those who make up a school.” (Henry 1993, p. 39) For Mary Henry culture is to be understood as “a pattern or web of meanings (…) an ecology of interconnecting parts.” (Henry 1993, p. 20)

In the chapter on rituals and ritualisations I pointed to the symbolic and expressive character of rituals. Taking rituals as indicators they are carriers of information about the norms, values, beliefs that are characteristic for the school in which they appear. It is also possible that within one school not all rituals necessarily represent the same values. This is the case even if these rituals are understood as ‘school rituals’ or ‘communicative rituals.’ In “Tanz nicht aus der Reihe” I described the stringent connection of this phenomenon with the discourse on and within the discipline of pedagogy. (Hamm 1999, p. 26)

Looking at the compilation of activities mentioned by teachers as rituals in their respective schools allows also a further consideration of the current state of affairs in the different school types. A few words on some of the various thematic areas in which rituals are located.

6.3.1.
Circle-time / (self-)governance

Circle-time is the one activity that in German schools, be they mainstream or free alternative schools, is seen as a ritual by nearly everyone (and in some cases even mentioned more than once by the same teacher depicting different 'circles'). This is not at all mirrored in Ireland. However it is important to note that circle-time in free alternative school and circle-time in a mainstream school are not necessarily the same thing.

Birgit Althans/Michael Göhlich (2004, pp. 215 – 219) have highlighted differences in the structure of communication in circle-time in different schools. The communitarian morning assembly around a large breakfast table in the Free School Frankfurt offers quite different ways of relating to each other than the circle-time in a mainstream school where the teacher determines who speaks at what time and on what topic. The most thing that circle-time in all schools has in common is the idea of the actual shape: a circle.

In my earlier study on lining-up in pairs as a ritual practice in schools I have paid extensive attention to the symbolism that lies in the various ways of ordering bodies in educational institutions. Compared to the grid-like formation of the line of pairs "we see that the circle is indeed a more modern version of body-formation. It is much closer to the propaganda of democratic society in which every citizen seemingly has the opportunity of participating in political decision-making. (...) The simultaneous appearance of different social forms (...) the seemingly contradictory aesthetic of line-of-pairs and circle-time gives evidence of the inner dynamics of the disciplinary system of pedagogy in the entire system of society." (Hamm 1999, p. 25)

The spatial distribution of bodies in a circle is also an ideological statement. The circle evokes the idea of egalitarian participation. There is no front or back, top or bottom in a circle. Circle-time stands out as *the ritual* in German schools. The message sent out on the level of appearance however does not necessarily coincide with the character of the relationships. This is particularly the case for German mainstream schools.

School meetings (assemblies) are a frequent occurrence in free alternative schools. These meetings are normally decision-making forums. Often school rules are discussed in these meetings in which children and adults take part.

For German mainstream schools 'class-council' is a propagated as a way to "develop a democratic culture" in the school. It is painted as "a time slot in which the class can discuss in a democratic and self-responsible form all those ongoing topics that are of concern for the class and the pupils. In class-council teachers and pupils are partners with equal rights." (Daublebsky/Lauble 2006, p. 7)

It is a somehow naïve construction to assume that teachers and pupils in mainstream schools are partners with equal rights. Their position from the very start of their being teacher or pupil is one that is based on a status difference. The rights of teachers to regulate the business of pupils is clearly laid out in school law. Attempts of teachers in these circumstances to establish decision making structures in their classroom that are truly democratic will always be made in contrast to the conditions on which they are actually teachers in these classrooms.

Stephan Münte-Goussar in his critical analysis of reform pedagogy points to the ambiguity inherent in applying methods like class-council within a school whose practice is based on set targets. "In general terms the aim is to renounce frontal instruction and reduce the centrality of the teacher: cutting back all those forms in which the teacher is the visible and constantly acting agent who delivers content, monitors targets, steers and organises the instructional arrangements. (…) The nature of the targets and the time-line for reaching them may be the same for everyone or it may be individualised for each child. (…) The structure of target orientation is the same in both cases. Decentralising the role of the teacher does not however touch this." (Münte-Goussar 2001, pp. 50/51) Teachers still remain in a position of responsibility for maintaining a structure of instruction that guarantees that the targets are reached.

With the exception of two cases in which teachers mention circle-time in their interviews there is no other reference made by Irish teachers to activities that could be subsumed under (self-)governance.[121] There are attempts to raise awareness of issues of children having a voice in primary school in Ireland. (see e.g. Collins 2011) A prominent approach in this line is the push for student councils to be established on primary level. Owen McLoughlin has given an exemplary account of such an initiative in a Dublin primary school. (McLoughlin 2005) However these discussion are at a stage where they only filter through very slowly into the practice of Irish national schools.[122]

6.3.2. Reverence

It is of little surprise to see religious activities being mentioned as examples of ritual activities in Irish primary schools. As we have seen in the understanding of Irish teachers of the actual notion of ritual is strongly associated with the realm of religion. Furthermore the fact that 96 % of all Irish schools are under the patronage of either the catholic (90 %) or the protestant church (6 %) suggests that religious activities are widespread in Irish primary education.[123]

German mainstream schools in contrast are under states patronage and thus separated from the church. The free alternative schools equally have no religious agenda.[124] Consequently there is no mentioning of religious activities as rituals in these schools.

6.3.3. Calendar Celebrations / Rites of passage

While religious activities are separated from the actual school practice in Germany, there are yet other activities that fulfil similar functions. In his work on the elementary forms of religious life Emile Durkheim has used the term collective effervescence for the experience of emotionally charged human inter-subjectivity. (Durkheim 1915/1926, pp. 215 ff) This emotional charge can be achieved by participating in social gatherings irrespective of their particular framing. The calendar celebrations that take place in German schools can be seen to fulfil this function. Historically carnival, winter-solstice or summer-festival may have links to religion, but their celebration in the context of German schools is normally not framed in religious terms.

[121] The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has published results of a survey in 2008 in which 49 % of participating teachers reported to use circle-time "frequently", and another 32 % reported to use it "sometimes" (NCCA 2008, p. 79). Bernie Collins in her work on circle-time in Irish primary schools has pointed to significant uncertainties in relation to these figures (Collins 2011, pp. 81 – 83). Bernie Collins is a strong advocate of circle-time. However she points cautiously to the dilemmas that teachers can face "between what some of the literature on circle time advocated, and their own beliefs or school ethos." (Collins 2011, p. 67)

[122] An indicator of the current state of affairs in this regard is the statement of Tralee Educate Together National School on their webpage in which it says: " We are proud to be the only primary school in Kerry to have a Student Council at primary level." (source: http://www.tralee-educate-together.com/student-council.html [15. 07. 2012])

[123] Source of figures: DES 2012, p. 29

[124] Cases in which links to religious motifs exist are rather exceptional in concepts of free alternative schools (see e. g. Freie Comenius Schule, Darmstadt: http://www.fcs-da.de/files/leitbild_v3a_komprimiert.pdf)

Similarly the rites of passage mentioned by the teachers as prevalent in German schools have their focal point in school itself.[125] The first day of school for German families is as big an event as Holy Communion for Irish families. (see e. g. Kellermann 2008)

6.3.4.
Time-tabling

Time-tabling of activities is seen as ritual by teachers in all three school types. This refers back to the initial definition of rituals as re-occurring activities.

Despite the fact that children in free alternative schools are generally free to choose if they wish to participate in an activity, there is normally a clear time structure in these schools, too. Certain activities are scheduled for certain times and spaces (rooms). This can include sessions in which a particular subject is dealt with, e. g. if a part-time English teacher is only available on Wednesday morning or the weekly swimming session in the local pool that can be booked only for Thursday afternoon.

When teachers mention time-tabling as a ritualistic element they however also refer to the time-structure of the school days or school week as such, e. g. lunch time, assemblies.

6.3.5.
Lesson structuring

A ritualistic structure of lessons is depicted only in mainstream schools, that is Irish and German mainstream schools alike. Teachers of free alternative schools don't refer to lesson structuring in terms of ritual.

This makes sense if one remembers that the children in free alternative schools normally choose to take part in a session, that the guiding principle is mathetic instead of didactic, that this implies that learning is an inquiry rather than an instruction (even where it happens in an interactive situation with one partner taking on a teaching role), that the groups that are together for a session are normally rather small and certainly never count 25 plus as can be the case in mainstream schools, that elements like homework and continuous assessment are alien to free alternative schools.

The formality of traditional instruction is abandoned in this environment. The term 'lesson' itself is hardly applicable for the learning activities that go on in free alternative schools. (see: Scholz 1996, pp. 114 - 159) On this basis teachers in free alternative schools don't mention activities that would be similar to those identified as lesson structuring by their counterparts in mainstream schools.

[125] In the table I have included the birthday celebrations in this section, if celebrated in school it can be interpreted as a rite that lies at the point of intersection between natural growth (calendar) and institutional status progress (passage). As a rite that refers back to the individual life history it brings the family as alternative institution back to mind, thus transcending the institutional life span and pointing to the individuality of the child as being more than just a pupil. At the same time the actual way how birthdays are celebrated in schools can counter this reminder again and turn the ritual into an affirmation of the child's status of being a pupil. (See e. g. Piper 1997, pp. 225 - 240)

6.3.6. Status confirmation / Behaviour management / Symbolic Gratification / Group order

These four areas are all not represented in the free alternative schools. The simple reason for this is that they are practically absent in these schools.

Welcome formulas are reported as rituals by teachers in German mainstream schools. This refers to various aesthetics. Practices like holding hands in a circle stand beside those where the children of a class stand up from their seats to greet the teacher with a choral 'good morning, Mrs/Mr X'. (see also example 451 below in section 6.8.3.)

As much as there are no such welcome formulas the idea of behaviour management or classroom management is also alien to free alternative schools. It clashes diametrically with a culture of negotiation where teachers can't claim authority qua status.

In mainstream schools however this area is a constant topic for teachers. The plethora of articles that is available on classroom management and behaviour management documents this quite strikingly. A simple search string like "classroom management" and "primary school" generates over half a million hits on google. A search via 'summon' brings up over 8000 articles on classroom management.[126] The bottom line in all approaches of managing behaviour (or 'classroom management' which is essentially managing behaviour in the classroom) is that there is a divide between teacher and pupil. The one manages the other, not vice versa. (see e. g. Fontana 1994)

It is also assumed that this actually works, which in fact it does with some children, but not with others.[127] "Adult-child power relations are constituted, learned and understood through the embodied restriction of movement within space and control of various elements of power, such as noise, knowledge, and access to material objects, and manipulative use of popularity and status attached to physical and mental ability. Children interact with both adults and other children. They are therefore not merely products but also producers of society." (Gore 2004, p. 59)

Techniques of managing behaviour include the use of symbolic gratification or punishment (smileys, stickers) or the regulation of movement (lining-up, seating order).[128] Teachers in mainstream school refer to these elements of their practice as rituals.

A particular aspect that is prevalent in German mainstream schools, but not (yet) in Irish primary schools is also the use of non-verbal communication. As we have seen in the chapter on rituals "ritualisation is simultaneously the avoidance of explicit speech and narrative." (Bell 1992, p. 111) Ingrid Kellermann's catalogue of potential behaviour for a teacher in disciplining rituals contained fleeting gestures, symbolic body language, specific mimic and gestures (Kellermann 2008, p. 216). The use of acoustic devices is also part of the repertoire of mainstream teachers in Germany to manage children's behaviour.

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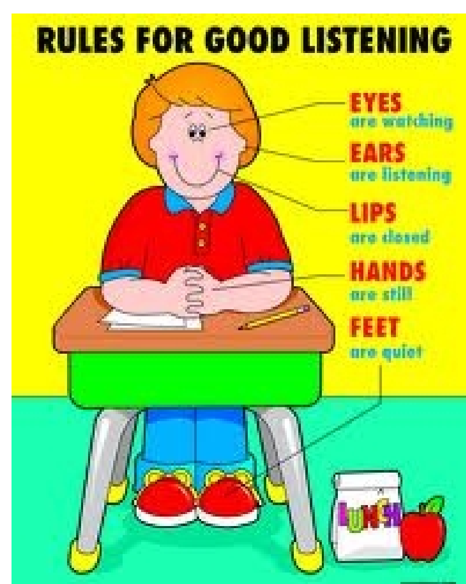
[126] Some examples of titles: "Culturally Responsive Classroom Management"; "Classroom Management – all year long"; "The secret of Classroom Management"; "Effective Classroom Management: a Teacher's Guide"; "Authoritative Classroom Management: How Control and Nurturance Work Together"; "Constructive Classroom Management"

[127] See for example the description of the 'traffic light system' (example 416) in appendix 6.

[128] The regulation oif movement is essentially an attempt of controlling the bodily expressions of others. How to legitimately use one's body in an educational environment is also at the core of discussions about teacher conduct. In the context of the discourse on child abuse/child protection this plays a significant role. (see e.g. Jones 2001, or also: Langer 2008)

"There have been two classes 6 and 7, which became more and more impatient, aggressive (…) The reason was in both cases the increase of pressure to perform, the discontinuity of rituals and abilities from primary school; classes with a pure 'normal' development in an integrated comprehensive school, where usually (...) the weaker students simply drop out mentally and find substitutes of satisfaction in aggressive behaviour (…) struggles with teachers or acts of shoplifting in the near supermarket, while the better students become individual fighters. (…) I badly needed silence in the classes. Practising silence, how to do this? (…) I decided to try out the rain-stick (…) We started the lesson in a totally different way. All students were asked to become completely silent (…) *'Now all of you, please listen and imagine a picture to what you hear,'* was the instruction and I took the little rain-stick out of my pocket. Slowly the sand fell, an everlasting, endless and fascinatingly calm sound (…) For three minutes I let the rain-stick sound, five minutes passed with the whole exercise ongoing. [Afterwards] the class remained very calm, the children put up their hands to talk, listened to and did not interrupt each other or made noise. (…) Obviously I used the topic for the art lessons and the children painted pictures about 'Silence and Calmness'." (Büttner 1996, p. 7)

It is worth noting that the requested behaviour is almost at all times to be quiet, to move slowly, to keep hands still, to look at the teacher, etc., hence: restrictive demands. In this regard Irish primary schools don't differ from the German mainstream schools. The 'rules for good listening' as shown here are a good example of this phenomenon.



The colourful display does not change the disciplining and restrictive character of the demand put on children.[129]

In the interview series a teacher referred to her applying the rules of good listening as an "attention ritual" (360): *"Sometimes I, I know some teachers at the beginning of every lesson, you know, have a, an attention ritual where they have bums on seat, you know, feet on the ground, hands are still, eyes are watching, ears are listening, brainbox is on. That's I think a little attention ritual that some teachers do. And I do it sometimes during my class."*

6.3.7.
Similarities and divisions

In comparing the three different school types according to the rituals reported by the teachers in the interview series we find similarities and divisions. Taking rituals as indicators for the norms, values, beliefs that are constitutional for a school the situation within German mainstream schools appears to be the least clear.

[129] The first time I came across this poster was in a classroom of a second class in a multi-denominational school in Ireland in 2008.

Teachers of all three school types mention time-tabling, the re-occurrence of activities at scheduled times as ritual elements in their practice.

Irish teachers identify rituals in their schools first and foremost in the area of religious activities. However in merging notions of ritual and routines they also report of elements of lesson structuring and regulating group physical order.

Teachers from free alternative schools don't mention rituals in relation to instruction (lesson structuring), regulation of bodies in space, symbolic gratification or status confirmation at all. Instead they refer to rites of passage, to calendar rites and particularly to rituals of (self-)governance.

Teachers from German mainstream schools then include in their reports calender rites, rituals relating to instruction (lesson structuring), to regulation of bodies in space, to symbolic gratification, but at the same time rituals of (self-)governance.

The collection of rituals derived for Irish primary schools and the one for free alternative schools evokes the impression of a set of activities that are rather coherent in their own contexts. Albeit coming from two completely different sides, both of these school types provide an environment in which a rather consistent system of values, norms, beliefs finds itself expressed, enacted and thereby continuously reshaped according to the dynamics of negotiations within the schools.

German mainstream schools in contrast can be depicted as an environment in which the ritual culture indicates a situation in which contradictory value systems, norms, beliefs are represented in the daily practice of the schools.

Authority, hierarchy, discipline are the topics that are addressed differently in the three situations. The ambiguity of the teacher's role in German mainstream schools in this sense is certainly higher than it is for teachers in free alternative schools or in Irish primary schools. Obviously what we find here is a momentary picture which can change over time.

6.4.
Are rituals reflected upon by teachers?

A preliminary answer is: Yes, teachers in all school types in their interviews recall examples of their own practice in which rituals are reflected.

The material collected via the interview series in the three different school types provides the source for describing and interpreting the reflection processes. In doing so I will apply the shifted perspective as suggested earlier in which reflection is seen as a social act in its own right. The participants in the reflection are understood as actors who define and articulate reality in negotiation with their partners.

All examples referred to by teachers in mainstream schools, Irish and German, are about reflection processes with colleagues. Parents and pupils don't feature as partners for reflection on rituals. In free alternative schools the majority of reflection processes reported in the interviews is also amongst colleagues, while there are some examples also of reflection processes together with pupils.[130]

As a distinction in this regard I wish to come back to Catherine Bell's notion of ritual specialists or ritual experts. (Bell 1992, pp. 130 - 140) The authority of teachers derives from their position as office holders within the educational system. They are members of the corps of staff who are collectively representing this system and are responsible for the upholding of its ethos.[131] In shaping their everyday practice they exercise the “formulation of reality.” (Bell 1992, p. 131)

Where teachers reflect upon rituals with colleagues this can be seen as negotiation of practice amongst ritual experts, and as we will see exactly this is what happens in the vast majority of all cases that teachers in the interviews report about.

Inevitably there are in all the activities referred to as rituals by the teachers also ritual participants: the pupils, or sometimes also parents. The few examples of processes that were recorded in which teachers engage with pupils in reflection are then negotiations of practice that are best described as collective negotiations. I will attend to them separately.

Eventually I will also consider cases in which teachers in their interviews refer to rituals that are in fact not reflected.

[130] There is one example also from a free alternative school in which a parent is the partner for the teacher in reflection. This example will appear further below (example 522 in section 6.5.5.)

[131] It is no accident that the government of the Federal Republic of Germany tried to shut the door for radical critics of the political system who aimed at being teachers in state's schools during the 1970's. The notorious 'Radikalenerlass' from 1972 led to 3.5 Millions of checks on the political orientation of applicants for public jobs and also to 10.000 cases in which on basis of these checks they were refused a job in the public sector, or even in cases where they had been employed they were fired. (Hofmann 2013) Amongst those who were removed from their positions on grounds of their political orientation were also many teachers. (see also: Hannah 2008) “Referred to by its critics as the 'occupational ban' (Berufsverbot), the decree excluded so-called radicals from careers in the civil service. Accusations that the ban was incompatible with the constitution’s guarantee of civil liberties seemed borne out as numerous leftists came under investigation by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, which received a notable influx of funds and personnel in order to meet the new demands placed on it by the decree. The intrusions on privacy and the demand for unquestioning loyalty elicited sharp resistance from the extra-parliamentary left, who recognised in the ban an attempt to bring leftist teachers and professors (as civil servants) to heel and thereby stamp out dissent. More than any other state measure, the “occupational ban” contributed to a sense of political repression on the left—a climate of fear and self-censorship—that many argued had more in common with totalitarian rule than democracy.” (Henshaw 2010, p. 136)
The right of schools in Ireland to discriminate on ground of religious affiliation when employing teachers can be seen in the same light: a measurement to guarantee for the most homogeneous composition of staff that ensures utmost loyalty to the ethical value-system of the patrons.

6.5.
Ritual experts reflecting amongst themselves

In the analysis of the interviews it became clear that there can be deciphered a number of themes in the reported reflection processes. They can be depicted in the following rubrics:

Negotiating harmonised practice
Confirming demarcation lines
Negotiating non-conforming position
Undercover rumblings
Discussing scripts and choreography of ritual
Negotiating ritualisation (formalisation) of activity[132]
Negotiating de-ritualisation (de-formalisation) of activity[133]
Defining teachers role in community
Negotiating ritual leadership
Trading tips and tricks (old – new teachers)
Review practice against conceptual ideas

These rubrics provide keywords for the description of themes that are at play in reflection processes. It is not my aim to provide a typology of pure categories into which the various examples can be neatly placed. Such a reading of the following passages would be misguided. In each process there can be more than one of these themes at play. In many cases a given example could be subsumed under more than one theme. This is a consequence of the multi-layered nature of the processes.

At the same time for developing the themes it is necessary to attend to them separately. For this purpose I will present a paraphrased report of the actual reflection process or direct quotes from the interviews for each of the examples. I also add a comment on each of the examples. Where appropriate in the comments I take recourse to further information from the respective interviews.

I am going to present a large variety of examples. The resulting extensive coverage is deliberate. It is meant to underline the claim that: Teachers reflecting with others in their professional practice need to be seen as actors acting in a social situation. Reflection processes in which teachers engage in discussions with others are best understood as another level of negotiation. In this sense one should think of reflection of teachers in their professional environment as yet another situational strategic activity, here: of defining and articulating reality in negotiation with their partners in the reflection setting.

It may be prudent to include a quick remark of reassurance here for those readers who feel that all this is going a long way from the notion of reflection that is commonly circulated in educational theory. Such an impression is certainly correct. However it will become clear from the expanded attention given to the examples on the following pages that such an approach is very much warranted. What I am attempting at this stage is first and foremost an account about reflection of teachers in terms of their actual practice, that is: what *is*, not what *should be*.

[132] The terms ritualisation and formalisation are not used as interchangeable here, thus the brackets around 'formalisation'. Formalisation has to be understood as an aspect of ritualisation. (see Bell 1997, pp. 138 – 169).
[133] See FN 130

References to the examples are coded by a numeric system. There is no connection between the code number for the examples of reflection processes and the codes for the interviews. This is to protect the anonymity of the informants.

6.5.1. Negotiating harmonised practice

In mainstream schools teachers find themselves in a situation where they are individually responsible for what happens in the classroom. However they are not free to do whatever they like. The formal boundaries are set by education law. But more important on an everyday level their practice in the classroom will always be measured against the practice in the parallel classrooms and the entire school.

In mainstream schools there will always be a field of tension in which the autonomy of a teacher to structure the classroom-life is contrasted to the demand for a school-wide coherence in terms of practices. This is even more obvious in those spaces that are deemed to be common spaces: corridors, assembly-halls, libraries, school-yard etc. A lot of time can be spent in a school environment to negotiate harmonised practice in a bid to increase the consistency of practices throughout a school.

In free alternative schools the demarcation line of the classroom door is hardly ever present in the same way as in mainstream schools. In most of these schools there are also at least two, often three or four adults working together in taking care of a group of children. The concrete presence and practice in shared spaces triggers discussions about consistency even faster.

As a theme the negotiation of harmonised practice is part of many reflection processes on rituals. The following examples are taken from interviews with German mainstream teachers. However the theme is just as much present in examples that are listed further below, e. g. in the rubrics of non-conforming, demarcation lines or de-ritualisation.

415 Seating order

In a German mainstream school three teachers in parallel classes have an agreement that the seating order of the children in class is shuffled regularly by the teacher. This is harmonised between the section team members. The teacher has a monopoly on putting children into a seating order. She shuffles this order every 4 weeks in a little ritual (having cards with names, putting them to tables …)

After a parents meeting where the practice is questioned by some parents the topic is brought up in a sectional staff meeting. In reviewing their practice, they try to analyse how it works in the various classes and how the teachers cope with certain elements of the process (e. g. 'Is the time of shuffling as loud in your as in my class?'). It is also put up for discussion whether the principle of teachers monopoly should be maintained as strict, or if there should be exceptions for children who seem to absolutely not 'gel'.

Teacher 'A' leads the discussion with her arguments, being aware of the critical aspects of exercising adult authority, but using it to establish (democratic) values in class: tolerance, equality, respect, inclusiveness – in countering cliques and bitchiness. Teachers 'B' and 'C' are in accord with this view. The general decision to have the practice in the parallel classes is confirmed in the process.

Comment

The teacher who reported the example relating to the seating order stated that she and her colleagues have a similar basic orientation towards teaching, they share a set of values that are in fact often colliding with the formal demands laid on them by the mainstream school system (particularly regards testing and the principle of performance). On basis of their shared orientation they find it easy to reflect upon issues like the seating order. They measure their practice against their own orientation, and try to find a way how to bring their values to bear in the concrete classroom situations. For them harmonising practice amongst their parallel classes is also a means to win a stronger position vis-à-vis parents or colleagues. Their reflection process as described here can be read as a re-affirmation of their practice, a check if there is a need to re-negotiate their harmonised practice or how much it is still supported by all three. The reflection takes place in a sectional staff meeting. These meetings are held on a weekly basis which provides the opportunity to come back to a given topic without too much time delay on a regular basis.

426 Establishing ritual charter

A new principal starts in a German mainstream school. She realises that there are quite different practices in the various classrooms. She suggests a staff planning day on rituals with the aim to harmonise practice. Three subgroups are working on topics: class representatives; reading time; morning circle.

In the working group on morning circle there are six teachers. They tell each other about their own practice 'how to morning-circle'. There is general consensus amongst the teachers that *"it is good as a ritual"* particularly in the form of a circle because *"all children get their share, it has to do with them personally, not with subject matter, but rather with their everyday life".* What differs are the exact details of activities. One teacher proposes story-writing, another one singing, a third one story-telling. The differences are noted and pros and cons are discussed.

The working group puts together a suggestion for the plenum in which 'building blocks' for a harmonised morning-circle are presented. In the plenum the working group explains the suggested building blocks with some examples. The plenum agrees to the suggested concept as a framework for all classes.

Three elements are made 'binding': the circle as a shape (formation); a 'how are you round'; visualisation of daily planner. The implementation is followed up by the principal, checking on teachers.

There is no repeated reflection or review however on staff level within two years. The concrete practices of teachers are yet different. On everyday level during the school year no reflection happens on this issue. The classroom door is still a demarcation line. It is only for the principal to "cross it".

Comment

The staff planning day dealing with rituals in school is explicitly addressing the question of harmonising practice. It is initiated by the principal who finds that there is not enough school-wide consistency in the various classes.
In the actual discussion in the working group the focus lies on technical aspects of 'how to morning-circle'. The discussion amongst teachers then brings a result best described as minimal agreement. It is a compromise that is bearable for all teachers. It does not cut too deep into their individual autonomy as territorial authority within the classroom situation.
The demand of the principal for a harmonisation is met, but at the same time the harmonisation is warded off to a great degree. As the teacher in the interview observes the concrete practice from class to class differs.

414 Holding back strategically

A 55 year old teacher 'D' starts a job at a new German mainstream school. She has been formerly vice-principal in another school and has worked in teacher education also. There are 13 members of staff in the school.

After half a year a colleague 'E' requests in a staff meeting that "rules are obeyed" and children are lined up after break time. With her request 'E' refers to another colleague 'F' who does not line-up children of her class. At this stage 'D' realises that there is a rule at the school for lining-up children. She has not done that either with her class. She dislikes lining-up as a disciplinarian measurement.

'D' in the staff meeting points to the disciplinarian character of lining children up. Another colleague responds that order and freedom are not necessarily adverse to each other. 'D' in the interview: *"At this point I was aware: ooops, aahm, yes, and it was clear for me, the atmosphere was like, no-one wanted to make this into something big. I could sense this also when I said, 'O.K., I see that there was a resolution made, and sure for the time being I will follow it.' It was like a sigh of relief, the general mood, everyone appeased, yes. And I thought, O.K., I can not start at the school here and immediately try to overthrow these resolutions."*

Consequently she does not push for further discussion.

Comment

The situation of the teacher who does not like the practice of lining-up points to the internal dynamics within a staff. On the one hand the teacher who took part in the interview is quite clear in her dismissive position towards lining-up. On the other hand she also measures efforts and effects when deciding not to enter into a discussion on the issue with her colleagues. As a new member of staff she feels she needs to be careful not to be isolated. This is the motif of 'cultural suicide' as mentioned by Stephen Brookfield. She is further aware of the effort that it would take to 'pre-structure the field' if she wanted to change the resolution. In the interview she mentions that she would have to talk to colleagues individually first (suss out, make allies, connect, get information for possibly confrontational argument). Her position as an experienced colleague (age, but particularly also: status as a lecturer in teacher education and former vice-principal) in her eyes gives her a certain protection, but it does not make her 'untouchable'.

She compares this with her situation when she was vice-principal where she was able to push topics on the agenda or even push for certain results simply because of her status position.
The reflection process about lining-up in the staff meeting dies out before it properly started. It remains a process of negotiating harmonised practice, here in the form of reprimanding colleagues who don't stay 'in line'. There is a sharpness in this process that is different to discussion about harmonising classroom practices in 426. Lining-up happens in the school-public area, in common spaces, school yard and corridors. It is here where compliance is claimed by other staff. The demarcation line of the classroom door does not protect from this sort of criticism.

6.5.2. *Confirming demarcation lines*

Where rituals in class are concerned teachers can fend off attempts to harmonise practice relatively easy on the basis of their sole responsibility for what's going on behind the classroom door. As long as there is no infringement of legal requirements it is left to the teacher to structure practice. Reflecting on classroom practice thus can easily shift towards the theme of confirming demarcation lines. This can be seen from examples of German mainstream schools:

<u>410 Talk without consequences</u>

In the staff meeting in a German mainstream school the 13 teachers exchange examples of their own classroom which they see as 'good practice'. This is meant as a means to get 'new ideas'. One teacher presents morning circle as a means of social learning. She would like to see others also engage in daily circle-time. Others say they don't have time to do morning circle, they have too much 'stuff to cover' (subject matter, curriculum). Others reckon that morning circle may be a good idea on a weekly basis. The discussion has no consequences. It is left to each teacher to do or not to do morning circle.

Comment

A reflection process like this is a way to confirm demarcation lines simply by not bringing together the strings in discussion. Arguments are put up, but they remain unmediated, standing opposite of each other: social learning vs. curriculum delivery. At the end of the day it is left to each teacher to do whatever they wish with the arguments. No-one will charge at them as long as they keep to their classroom boundaries.

This however is not the full story. For the teacher in this example there is a distinct problem because of the 'coordination' between parallel classes of subject matter to be covered in certain time spans. Dates for written tests are set for all parallel classes for the year in advance. The subject matter to be dealt with in the tests is to be the same for the parallel classes. This puts pressure on the teachers to work through the subject matter with their classes at the same speed. If a class lags behind, the test results will automatically be worse. Her parallel class colleague who is a stalwart of curriculum delivery works away faster with the subject matter, hence she has to follow suit – or at least feels under pressure to do so. In these circumstances daily morning circle can indeed create a time problem.

The discrepant attitudes and the resulting pressure on the teacher who favours circle-time as a means of social learning however is not addressed in the reflection process. The demarcation line of the classroom door provides a peculiar protection for the teacher who sets the pace in covering subject matter. Demarcation is in fact adhered to only where it is about certain aspects, here: the idea of social learning. Where it is about the principle of performance and curriculum delivery the classroom doors are not a barrier at all.

416 Tally sheets and traffic lights

In a German mainstream school a teacher teaches two subjects in a class that is not her own. The class teacher in this class has a system of 'demerits': a child who is 'inattentive' or 'disruptive' gets a tick on a tally sheet. The subject teacher does not like the tally sheet. In her opinion it is 'negative conditioning'.[134] However she uses the system while teaching her subjects.

After a while she finds, it does not work for her. She introduces instead her own system: traffic lights on tables.[135] With this system she is more comfortable. In informal exchange with the class teacher both confirm that for each of them their own system 'works' and thus they both 'leave each other alone'.

“Q – Did you discuss this with your colleague that you do that differently? And what sort of discussion was that, what did she say?
A – Well, she basically said the same thing, she said that in her opinion the traffic light system is hard to handle and she doesn't cope well with it, but she said at the same time, if it works for me, then it is O.K. with her if I use it in her class.”

This discussion happened at the beginning of the school year. The interview was held at the end of the school year and no further discussion on the topic happened between the two teachers since.

Comment

It is pretty obvious how the two teachers divide the territory amongst themselves. It is worth remembering that this was stated as an example by the teacher in the interview for a reflection process on a ritual. However what is going on in this reflection process is best described as a confirmation of demarcation lines. Exchange about the actual ritual remains on the level of asking: Does it work for you? If yes, stick to it. If no, use your own system. At the end of the day it is you who is responsible for what happens behind the classroom door.
Obviously there is no discrepancy in the principle that underlies the two demerit-systems, the difference is on the level of technical devices used to make the ritual happen. Therefore it is even easier for the two teachers to agree on the demarcation.

413 How to start PE

A teacher 'G' starts her first job after the final exam in a German mainstream school. She teaches PE in different classes. There are two colleagues who also teach PE. The three teachers come together for a sectional staff meeting at the beginning of the school year.

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[134] This should be 'conditioning of negative behaviour'. The difference made in behaviourist theory between positive and negative conditioning does not feature for the teacher.
[135] For an account on the 'traffic light system' see appendix 6

In the meeting the new teacher brings up rituals for starting and finishing a PE-lesson of which she holds they are important *“to mark beginning and end”*. One colleague 'H' who also starts new at the school rejects the idea with the argument that it is too time consuming. The other colleague 'I' who is at the school for a long time states that the idea is interesting. In the discussion the different lines of argument are put up but there is no scrutinising of them.

In practice 'G' introduces her ritualised ceremonies. 'H' and 'I' don't pick up on it.

Comment

In this case the teachers in question do not all agree to drawing the demarcation line. In fact 'E' would be quite happy to break it down – on her terms. She also feels that she can win an argument. She is self-confident about her practice, not the least on basis of her teacher training.
“I learned that during my practical year. I had a fantastic lecturer. From her we learned that it makes sense for PE also that the children know: now we start. (...) And that was the first thing that I did with my class in PE and I found that they took to it immediately, that was great, so that I have a ritual at the start and the end in PE.”
However when her colleagues don't share her enthusiasm 'E' does not escalate the discussion. *“And because it was at the beginning of the school year (...) I guess I didn't dare to say, to also say vehemently: 'But truly you have to do that for this and that reason.' Instead I accepted that she told me: 'I won't do it. Do you know how much time that would take?' And I said: 'Well, if that is how you look at it.'”* She is also acutely aware of her position as a new teacher. *“And if you are new in the place you don't really dare with a colleague, and I am personally like, ahm, that I thought by myself, hey, slow down. I don't want to stand out here like: look at her, straight from teacher training, has not a clue yet and thinks she could tell me how to teach PE.”*
The reflection process on the rituals for starting and finishing PE-lessons consequently remains a process of confirming demarcation lines.

6.5.3.
Negotiating non-conforming position

As noted earlier rituals bring with them an obligation to participate (see section 1.4.6.). “And on the side of the institution any uncertainty in the execution is primarily understood as resistance and in certain cases consequently penalised, even where it happened through momentary lack of concentration only.” (Hamm 1999, pp. 18/19) To not do ritual while the rest does is legitimately possible only on basis of a verdict that guarantees absolution for such non-conforming.

Negotiations of non-conforming positions are another common theme in reflection processes reported in the interviews.

<u>311 Special needs pave a way out</u>

In an Irish primary school parents of a child with 'special needs' approach the resource teacher. The child has problems with lining-up in the morning before school. The child is afraid of being too close to others with the movement all around.

The resource teachers brings this up in a sectional staff meeting. All teachers agree to observe the child in the morning. They discuss about their observations in the next sectional staff meeting.
All teachers share the impression as reported by parents. The teachers agree to advise parents to bring the child a little later and time the arrival at school so that the other children are already gone in (or in the process of doing so).

Comment

What is reported here by the teacher in the interview as a reflection process on lining-up is very much a negotiation of a non-conforming position for a child. There is no discussion about the ritual as such, in fact *"it was taken as granted that the children couldn't come in en masse into the building. You know, we knew that. That wasn't up for debate because of the safety of all the children. That couldn't be up for debate."*
The reflection process then is about a) for the ritual experts to confirm that the child in question is not 'malevolently' playing up, that there is a 'deficit' that b) allows for absolution to be granted for non-conforming.

418 Messing up the line

In a German mainstream school the (unwritten) rule is that classes line up after yard break. One teacher (not the one participating in the interview) reports in the staff meeting that with her class this does not work – the children are constantly fighting in the line.

In the ensuing discussion some teachers, depicted in this case as the *"older colleagues"*, are of the opinion that children should be able to line-up and it should in fact be required that they do it. Their argument is *"it should not be a problem to line up in pairs behind each other. That was done in kindergarten already and now they are in school. And the children need to learn the rules, and if we don't teach them now, when should they learn it at all?"* However other teachers also confirm that lining-up is generally 'messy'. It is consequently interpreted amongst the teachers as a matter of lacking supervision. There are two parts to the yard that are separated by a building and children are lining-up in different parts of the yard. To make the lining-up more orderly the teachers decide that all children are to line-up in the same part of the yard where they are easier supervised by one staff member.

This is tried and it works better, but the teacher with the original 'problem class' brings the topic up in staff meeting again. She reports that it still does not work for her class. There are *"ruffians in this class who push front, back and sideways with whom lining-up is simply impossible"*. This time an agreement is found amongst staff for this class to be allowed to go to the classroom without lining-up.

Comment

That lining-up does not work in the particular class is the children's 'fault'. They are constructed as 'deficit' children, ruffians or thugs. On this basis they are granted absolution for not participating in the ritual. The pattern is similar to example 311. The price however is a stigmatisation that is carried over into the children's 'public opinion', too.

The teacher in the interview: *“Well, my children would have asked me: 'Miss H., there is no teacher with the class yet and they go into the building already.' They basically told me that there was something not right and that the others were not allowed to go in already. Then I explained to my children that we have an exception of the rule because there are always problems with this class.”*

The entire reflection process can be depicted as a succession of
a) Negotiation of non-conforming position: request voiced by teacher 'on behalf' of her class;
b) Negotiation of harmonised practice: initial answer to the request;
c) Negotiation of non-conforming position: renewed request, this time granted by staff meeting.

The teacher who took part in the interview is not the teacher whose class was granted exemption from lining-up. It would be only speculation to comment any further on the motivation of this teacher to actually negotiate the exemption for her class, although it would be interesting to follow this up closer. At the end of the day it is also an exemption for the teacher to fulfil her obligation as a member of the corps, makes her life easier even if it is via stigmatisation of the children.

417 Diluted standards make non-conforming easier

In a German mainstream school the majority of classes are supposed by their teachers to line up after break (or before school) and wait for the teacher to pick them up on the yard. Some teachers however allow the children to simply go into the room at end of break without having to line up and wait to be collected.

The teacher who took part in the interview takes over a class in the middle of the school year. The former class teacher insisted that the children line up after break. She informally discusses the topic with a parallel class colleague. This colleague confirms her view that lining-up is not necessary with the arguments: the children know anyway where to go, and also for the teacher it gives a few extra minutes to be in the classroom already and prepare for the lesson instead of having to pick up the children on the yard.

The teacher abandons lining up for her class, too.

Comment

In this case there is already a dilution of standards prevalent in the school. The ritual of lining-up is not consistently adhered to any more. For the teacher who took part in the interview the reflection with her colleague functions as a catalyst. It is not an accident that she approaches this particular colleague. She knows that this colleague does not insist on the class lining up. She can anticipate that this colleague will support her in an attempt to also abandon lining up with her new class.
The reflection then is a process of negotiating support for each other in non-conforming – in a situation where the ritual at hand is already on a decline in this particular school.

412 No stepping out of line

In a German mainstream school there it is obligatory for all teachers to do morning-circle. Also obligatory is that at the start of the week one element of morning-circle is that at the end of the circle the children write a story into a copy-book.

The teacher in the interview 'J' reports about a colleague 'K' who finds that in her class the story-writing does not work and talks informally about giving it up in her class. 'J' on hearing this is adamant that 'K' has to comply with the agreed practice. In a staff meeting the topic is brought up:

“Q – And 'K' was of the opinion that she does not need that, does not want that?
A – She does not need that. And that is where we said: No.
Q – She has to do it?
A – She has to do it. It is part of our concept. And, well, of course we didn't say: you have to do that. We rather said, we need to work it out for her to see the point in it. I was, at the beginning, like 'no, no way, she has to, no way she doesn't'. And it was brought into a productive discussion then, more like how can we help this colleague so that her children get this wonderful book, too.”

The colleague 'K' consequently continues having children writing a story at the beginning of each week after morning-circle.

Comment

The attempt of the colleague 'K' to sheer out of line is answered by the rest of the staff with a clear message: you stick to the line. In a negotiation of non-conforming in this case no absolution is granted. The colleague is constructed as 'deficit', in 'need of help' – by doing this the potential sharpness of the confrontation is reduced.
We also see here how the negotiation of non-confirming is at interplay with negotiation of harmonised practice. In this case the demarcation line of the classroom door is not accepted. Formally 'K' could certainly sheer out of line, insisting on her role as sole responsible authority in the classroom. However the social cost for such a step could be very high, and it is exactly this what is made clear to her in the staff meeting.

517 Ensuring compliance

In a free alternative school the school concept refers to 'non-directive' education as a foundation for the actual practice in school. Amongst staff a decision was made to also have 'presentations', that is: adults offering certain topics to children (e. g. long division, dia-show on frogs etc.).

The school hosts three sections: pre-school, primary and SEK 1. In pre-school one teacher 'L' stops offering 'presentations'. She argues that the section is understaffed and also that 'presentations' are not in-fitting with the school concept. Another pre-school teacher 'M', who also is the 'official' sectional team-leader, is not happy with this. However she does not bring it up as a topic in the sectional staff meeting.

Instead she talks to a colleague 'N', the 'official team leader' in the primary section. This colleague has a child in pre-school, thus is a parent also. In a combined staff meeting of primary and pre-school 'N' brings up the topic. In this meeting 'N' argues that presentations are a necessary element to also make teachers persons, to give them a status as active members in the school, instead of 'de-personalised' observers only. In this she reminds everyone of the discussion amongst staff that led to the decision to include 'presentations' in the everyday practice. She also argues that extra staff has been recently employed countering the argument of under-staffing. The meeting gets 'confrontational', in 'N's report from the interview: *“Well that was no longer, it wasn't a discussion any more. Rather it was, the front was clear, and she had to defend herself, because I had attacked her.”*

The combined staff meeting does not lead to a conclusion or result. Instead the topic is discussed again in a pre-school sectional meeting afterwards. Here a decision is made (per majority vote) to have presentations.

Comment

This example mirrors the previous one. Reflection here is similarly a process that aims on ensuring compliance. A difference however is that the sharpness of the confrontation is actually brought to the fore. No attempt is made to interpret non-compliance as a consequence of a 'deficit'. At the end of the day the colleague who stopped presentations is 'put in her place' and is told by the majority of her team that she is obliged to conform (which is also: harmonise practice).

From the description of the process it is also obvious that the sectional team leader of the pre-school 'M' followed a particular strategic path. Instead of directly entering into negotiation (reflection) with 'L' in the pre-school sectional staff meeting she chooses to get 'allies' in the primary section first.

This exemplifies what was pointed out in general terms earlier on, that reflection is as much an act in its own right, a social act in which actors strategically intervene.

312 Playing the professional card

In an Irish primary school teachers of 6th class are expected to take part in mass in relation to the confirmation of the children. This mass is held outside school hours on a Sunday.

The teacher in the interview does not want to attend this mass. She thinks that it is the parents' job to prepare children outside of school, not the teachers'. She also feels “sometimes religion comes too much into schools”. She approaches the principal and discusses the issue with him.

“A - Aahm, to be honest, he didn't really make to many arguments against what I was saying. I basically said to him that, ahm, confirmation is personal choice, it's religion and. Aahm, I know obviously we do have to teach religion within the school, but I didn't feel that I have to be there for a ceremony that really was the parents responsibility if they wanted their child to take part in it. It's their responsibility and not mine ultimately. I think sometimes religion comes too much into schools.

Q - And did you say that to your principal?

A - Oh, i didn't say that religion comes too much in, but I did say to him that I think we are expected to prepare the children for confirmation whereas their parents, a lot of their parents, I wouldn't say all their parents, quite a lot of the parents have no interest. (...)
This was, this was something maybe, like it's different for say the day of the confirmation where obviously we would, we very much have a huge part in preparing the children for the actual ceremony itself. And that is no problem, you know being at, attending for this one. But Sunday mass it's, it's outside of the school time as far as I'm concerned and at the end of the day I think it's the parents' responsibility. And he was O.K. with that. (...)
You know, he said to me, at the end of the day it's your own choice whether you're there or not. He said, you don't have to be there. He said, Sister X would like you to be there.”

Comment

She positions herself as the professional teacher who finishes work on Friday and starts again on Monday. The principal accepts this position, although he points out that 'Sister X', the nun who represents the patron, would like to see the teachers there. This 'negotiation' is one whereby the teacher plays the 'professional' card against the 'religion' card – knowing that she will win this one.

What makes this example specifically interesting is that it is one of only two examples from the entire series of interviews where Irish teachers actually refer to reflection on religious rituals, despite the fact that all of them were quite clear that the term ritual fits best for religious activities.

It is also indicative that the teacher feels a need to negotiate absolution for her non-conforming with the principal although there is by no means a way to reprimand her for not attending a mass outside of school hours. Her approaching the principal then is also an attempt to appease in advance, again: take the sharpness out of a possible confrontation. This is all the more clear when the way how she argues is taken into account: She non-conforms 'outside of school' on the basis of conforming 'inside of school'.

***6.5.4.
Undercover rumblings***

The second example that relates to religion is from an Irish primary school where the teacher reports of informal exchanges amongst staff. These informal exchanges are also understood to be reflection by the teacher. In her answer on the question whether she has reflection with colleagues outside of formal meetings she says quite typically:

"A - So, we do it, I suppose very informally on a daily basis.

Q - And when do you find time to do that on a daily basis?

A - Aahm, sometimes at the end of the day, break time, after school, you know, I mean, it depends, maybe sometimes during a lesson during a lesson while the children are working you might have a chance to talk with the teacher to discuss, O.K., what will we do with this child or how will I go about approaching this with somebody. We would do that very informally a lot. (...) you're talking very quickly, maybe, and sometimes it happens, actually it happens a lot before school. A lot of us would be in the school quite early, so :

It is in these contexts that religious rituals can come up.

<u>313 Corridor complaints</u>

Teachers in an Irish primary school discuss amongst themselves on informal level about the work load that religious education, particular preparations for confirmation (6th class) lays on them. However these discussions are held informally only and the topic does not come up in formal meetings.

"A - I mean, the confirmation preparation takes up a huge amount of teaching time. It really does, especially for the last term of school, it's in, it just takes up so much time going over rehearse and practising and, it's a huge amount of work. And, really, it's funny, even some of the older teachers would say, they really think, the confirmation preparation should be taken out of the school. And it should be done separately.

Q - Hmhm, yes.

A - So, yes, no there's quite a lot of us who think that.

Q - That is an interesting thing because on the other hand you say, that would not come up as such in a staff meeting.

A - No, nono, wouldn't, it wouldn't be brought up formally, like that wouldn't be discussed in a formal setting. Aahm, it would generally be quite informally, depending on maybe, I suppose whoever was in sixth that year because obviously you have to attend quite a lot of ceremonies and masses and different things. It's usually it affects the sixth class teachers more than anybody else. So, no, it's never been brought up.

Q - Have you a theory why it's not brought up?

A - Aahm, (...) aahm, I think in our case in our school the nun who deals with our school is (...) I think our principal is afraid to bring these issues up with her. I think there's a little bit of, not fear, well, there's a little bit of fear of saying no to her. There is that. And we would, [laughs] we would be afraid to go to her, you know."

Comment

Reflection here remains under the threshold of 'official exchange of opinion'. It is an indicator for the current 'state of affairs', here: of this particular school. We will see however later that this 'state of affairs' is in fact a rather widespread phenomenon within Irish primary schools. The influence of the church filters through quite strongly. The entire complex of religion in schools, obviously including religious ritual, is approached by teachers with utmost care, so as to not cross a certain line. Open critique, questioning religious rituals in a formal setting is avoided. Instead there are undercover rumblings in form of corridor complaints, mutual affirmation of points of view that one does not dare saying out loud when confronted with a superior member of staff.

6.5.5. Discussing scripts and choreography of ritual

A large number of examples of reflection processes reported by the teachers in the interviews refers to discussions in which the choreography or the script of a given ritual is negotiated. Subsumed under the terms choreography or script are all those elements of a ritual that lead to a certain appearance of the ritual and that are fixed elements in the progression of those acts that make up the ritual. This can be sequences of movements, positions in space that participants are expected to take up, formulas to be said, songs to be sung, particular reactions prescribed in case of certain occurrences. We will have a look at some cases where teachers reflect on these elements.

315 What is a good line?

In an Irish primary school children are supposed to line up at the end of yard break. The school has an enrolment of 550 children. There are 24 teachers working in the school. In the monthly staff meeting a teacher brings up the topic of lining-up because there are always children who still run around at the end of break.

The reporting teacher does not recall details of the arguments in the ensuing discussion. However she remembers that most teachers would have agreed that the situation could be improved. In the staff meeting a decision is made to set up an incentive. The teacher on yard duty is supposed to give points for lining up to the various classes. Points are counted over the course of a week and the best line of the week is announced.

Comment

What is negotiated here is a technical fix. The teacher in the interview also states that in her opinion *"we're quite weak as a school probably sitting down and reflecting."* She herself keeps a regular journal as a reflective tool for herself. However for a discussion like the one on lining-up this has no consequences. She can't remember getting involved in this discussion. The fact that she does not remember any details of the discussion also indicates that there was certainly no controversy around the topic.

316 Honouring past-pupils

In an Irish 14-teacher school there is a tradition of past pupil achievement celebrations. During a staff meeting a brainstorming process happens in which teachers throw in ideas what elements could be included in the celebrations.

"A - Aah, caretaker would be assigned the creating of the stage. And class teachers, they would, we decided that we would write a song. (...) One or two of the girls of the staff, said: 'Wouldn't it be lovely if we had a song?'

Q - In the staff meeting?

A - In the staff meeting. Here is the first verse, and word, and then there was throwing ideas out. All you wanted was just one line, and just, the rest of it was repeated, so just to write three or four verses. So the song was written in less than five minutes. It was verse, verse, you know, it was just thrown out together. And then, aahm, what after that, the song, so then we decided there had to be art. So every teacher took the responsibility for getting some kind of art work, stars of flags or whatever. And then coming together on that date, the classes and singing the songs and waving the flags."

As another element of the ritual the seating order in the assembly hall is discussed. However this discussion is held informally:

"A - It's like what's the noise level like. But again, it's not intensive discussion. It might be between four, five members of staff. You know, it doesn't, aahm :

Q - Informal?

A - Informal. Yes. It's not, if, which might work better, if you think that's going to be a long drawn out affair and the infants might get tired, you might keep them in the U-shaped format because it's easier to keep control, or keep, because they're, the rows aren't as long there and they're kind of bunched in a little better and teacher has a better eye on them. You might, instead of rather being fifteen wide, you might have eight wide, three eights as opposed to fifteen, do you know what I mean."

Comment

The discussion is concerned with technical elements of the proposed ritual. It is what Stephen Brookfield calls reflection on the "nuts and bolts". Underlying such a reflection is yet an agreement amongst those involved that the particular ritual is actually not questioned as such.

<u>423 Welcoming new pupils</u>

In a German mainstream school the teachers who are assigned to next year's first class discuss in a sectional staff meeting how to celebrate the first day of school for then new pupils. In their discussion they talk about the various elements that together make up the script for the celebration. A particular aspect that gets attention in the discussion is the question whether the then second class children are to be involved in the celebration. Questions in this regard concern their potential position in the hall, are they going to sit amongst the parents of the new children or will they be backstage. It is also a matter of discussion if the then second class children will take the new children by the hand and lead them to the classroom. Other aspects discussed are the order of presentations on the day and the type of the presentations (songs, stories).

At the time of the interview the considerations on this topic are still ongoing. It is on the agenda for a number of consecutive sectional staff meetings. It will also be discussed by the teachers of the older classes because their classes are supposed to make presentations on the day, too.

Comment

It was mentioned already that the first day of school is a big event in Germany. Preparations for this event are in most cases meticulous. It is a show-piece for the entire school community. Consequently it is no surprise that the teacher in the interview reports of discussions of quite detailed aspects of the ceremony.

While the scale of the event is bigger, the actual matter discussed is similar to the example of the Irish teachers planning a past-pupil achievements celebration.

<u>519 Chain of Sweets</u>

In a free alternative school the annual celebration for new children on their first day of school is discussed. A committee is built from the whole staff meeting to organise the celebration. In the committee ideas for a choreography are collected, sorted and then put into a script for the celebration. Changes are made if elements *"don't feel right"*.

"A – We had, earlier there was a chain of sweets.

Q – [laughs] O.K., so you had a chain of sweets, and now you don't have a chain of sweets any more.

A – No, there is no chain of sweets any more. (...) I can't remember, but there may have been a time where we had both, at any rate we thought it would be nice, I think Susanne brought up the idea, ahm (...) to adorn them with a crown of flowers, so that they are quite visible on the day, too. (...) And this is now the established ritual. Well, the sweets are a bit, well, surely, the children like the sweets, but it is not really what we wish to promote."

Comment

The ritual of celebrating the first day of school is as much part of the school culture of this free alternative school as it is in mainstream schools. In the school there is also a strong emphasis on "formalised, symbolic performances" (Quantz, see section 1.4.3.)

Reflecting on the celebration of the first day of school then is a process in which the members of the planning group scrutinise choreography and script for the day according to the elements to "feel right" in the context of the school.

522 Farewell to school leavers

In a free alternative school a parent suggests to 'mark' the farewell for children who move to secondary school. This is not regularly done, but the teacher of the group that leaves the school agrees that the move is a massive step.

Together the parent and the teacher plan the event, consciously as a 'transition ritual'. They deliberately look for symbolic elements to be included in a choreography for a celebration with the children.

"A - We, it was clear to us that we wanted, if you like, a point of departure, where we were leaving this room in which we were for the last year, and where we also don't go back again, leave it behind us in a way. (...) And we thought about ways how to do that. So, we sat in a circle on the floor, we tidied the room completely before, everyone took their personal stuff that they wanted to keep, ahm, and then, exactly, all children had a candle in front of them and I lit up a big candle in the middle and every child then one after the other lit up the own candle with the one in the middle. And then we had a round where everyone could say what they wanted to leave behind and what they wanted to take with them. (...)
And for the leaving behind, we also, every could, if they wanted, throw into a litter bin what they wanted to leave behind.

Q – These are a couple of elements, and they are quite symbolic, the candle, the litter bin, ahm, did you discuss the symbolism beforehand?

A – Well, the litter bin, definitely yes. Like, what is there in terms of negative emotions or associations or energies, that that is left behind, symbolised in the litter bin, ahm, and that one can make move on to something new without luggage, if you like.

Q – And in discussing with the mother, or also with the children during morning circle, did you explicitly name this as a symbol?

A – In talking with the mother, yes.

Comment

This is the only example from all interviews in which a teacher actually engages with a parent in reflection on a ritual. Their strong anchoring of the choreography in a system of meaningful symbols is quite obvious from the excerpt. The symbolism to which they adhere is a particular way to define and articulate reality, and by putting it into practice in the ritual: "for the cognitive endorsement by all."

It is noteworthy yet that this ritual remains a once-off in the context of the school. In the next year the colleague who is with the older children does not pick up the ritual again. It remains a singular event.

<u>525 Stay overnight in school</u>

In a free alternative school there is a tradition to have an annual overnight stay for all children and all staff. There is a difficulty to find a date due to several activities coming up at once. Amongst staff there is informal talk to cancel the overnight stay for this year. Parents who hear about the idea of cancelling the activity protest and claim that the overnight stay is an important ritual in the life of the school.

The issue is discussed in the staff meeting. One colleague in particular speaks for cancelling the activity.

"She had always hated it. (...) She finds that everyone who sleeps in the school only suffers. The small ones because they can't sleep, the bigger ones also because they can't sleep, only a little bit later around midnight. The next morning everyone is tired and has to spend a full day in school. There is a smell of chemical cleaning agent that is evaporating from the floor, the house is not soundproof at all, you hear every little step."

However she finds herself in a minority position. The majority of teachers find that it is a matter of organising the activity better. Hence the discussion shifts towards an exchange of thoughts of how to plan the overnight stay in a way that makes it less stressful for everyone. A date is picked where the oldest children are actually on their annual school tour and won't be in school, thus the number of children is already reduced. For the day of the overnight stay a number of physical activities (swimming, playground) are scheduled.

Comment

It is an essential element in this school that there is a rather strict division on everyday level between spheres. The school is conceptually defined as a counter-experience to the familial bonds. In this sense the teachers are afforded a role that goes well beyond the idea of a conveyor of subject matter. The overnight stay (as well as the annual school tour) are programmatic elements of the school life in which this counter-experience materialises in particularly strong manner. This is also part of the ritual character of the activity.

If a teacher questions the overnight stay then a different definition of roles looms in the background.

At the beginning of the staff meeting one teacher tries to develop the theme of de-ritualising, simply abandoning the activity. However her attempt is not successful. The question of cancelling the event is not taken up by the majority of the teachers. It is consequently not further dealt with. Instead the theme of script and choreography becomes dominant in the discussion.

Abandoning the overnight stay would be a move to potentially redefine power relations between parents, students and staff – at least in this particular area of school life. By accepting the parents' intervention and by shifting the discussion towards choreography and script the teachers practically confirm the status quo (ante). This process is also a negotiation amongst staff about their definition of their position (reality) in the system of the school.

422 Too hot on stage

In a German mainstream school there is an assembly held every Friday at the end of the school week. The assembly is open for parents and there are always parents present. The assembly is regarded as a chance for children to present to the school community what they did during the week. It becomes a topic for discussion when the oldest girls (4th class) start using the stage to perform dances with a sexual character.

"At the beginning that was all right, but then the dances became more and more like the stuff they watch in television. They actually dressed up specifically for it, those little ten year, nine year old girls with those bustiers (...)
And it grew into a problem when certain girls, somehow it was the third Friday and I think it was in fact two times in a row, they used this song that was a hit over here amongst teenagers, the texts are like 'you are so hot' and 'sit on my lap' and all in German and there is a powerful beat in it. And we sat there and (...) well, I sat there and was stuck for words, there was the mother of this one muslim girl sitting right behind me (...) and I wondered, what she would make of this petty little spectacle there on stage, and what sort of problems it may create for us. I mean, will this woman actually still talk to us. Yes, I nearly froze on my chair.
And then I also saw my boys, and I have a couple of them who are quite advanced in their development, near puberty. They were completely swept off their feet. And, I mean, surely that are nice feelings, too, but it also had, it triggered that during break time then they always followed these girls and didn't leave them alone and I know exactly why, they were hyped up by these half-naked girls."

Members of staff informally (at break time) discuss the girls' performance. Many of the staff members find the performance provocative. The principal brings up the topic in staff meeting.

The teacher in the interview reports that nobody in the staff meeting suggested to simply ban the dances. There is a consensus amongst the teachers that the stage is a deliberately chosen conceptual element in assembly (assembly is seen as ritual) for children to excel on their talents and become self-confident.

On the other hand there is similarly unanimous agreement that the girls' sexualised dance performance presents a problem particularly in relation to families with a muslim background who in fact account for nearly 70 % of the school population.

In the discussion staff decides to introduce a secretary post for registration of performances for the assembly. The secretary is a teacher (or the principal). If children wish to register a dance, it is checked, whether the dance has been cleared for the stage by the class teacher. Responsibility is thus handed to the individual teachers to allow or not allow a dance to go forward. Teachers in classes then work out with the children such performances that are not regarded as provocative.

Comment

The teachers in this school find themselves in a situation where the children put up questions to them in a sheer practical manner.

Weekly assembly is a very important ritual element in this school and its character as a stage for the school community to display itself is clearly wanted by the teachers.

In their discussion in the staff meeting they work out the various lines of argument. Once these lines are clear a practical solution is negotiated amongst teachers. The teachers in fact see themselves in a position where they have to act, they can not not act on the matter because they assume it would have the potential to create massive problems with parents for them. Consequently the preferred solution is one that keeps the sexual energy of the children in check, at least to a point where it is not put on stage.

For this purpose the script for the assembly is changed and a censor is introduced. In this manner it is ensured that the school community in displaying itself keeps to a format that is considered 'sound' and 'safe' by the teachers.

6.5.6.
Negotiating ritualisation (formalisation) of activity

Basic to all processes of reflection is that a situation incites "perplexity, confusion, doubt" (van Manen reciting Dewey, see section 2.3.). Obviously there is an abundance of situations in schools that bear such potential. To find a strategy for dealing with a problematic situation involves reflection. Formalisation and ritualisation of an activity can be one of the problem solving strategies chosen by teachers.

310 Introducing circle-time

In an Irish five teacher school the topic of 'anti-bullying-strategies' is informally discussed amongst teachers during lunch break. One teacher suggests to try using cirle-time as a way to address cases of children not getting on with each other. The colleagues agree to try it and after a while[136] feedback that it works well for them. They also decide to introduce circle-time as a standard procedure at the beginning of the year in each class. In this circle-time a chart of rules is to be drawn up that is then put up on the wall in the classroom for everyone to see at all times.

[136] The interviewed teacher was not clear how long. However from the description of the practice as prevalent in the school it is clear that it must have been at least a number of weeks, simply because circle-time at this stage was a crisis-intervention and would not have been a regularly scheduled event.

This process dates back five years from the date of the interview. Since then no further review or reflection on circle-time happened. At the time of the interview it is what the teacher calls “established practice”.

Comment

Looking at the actual reflection process there are two steps observable. The first one is where the teachers reflect upon anti-bullying-strategies, hence their topic is 'bullying and what to do about it'. Circle-time comes up as a possible solution. It is tried and after a while a second step happens. Here now a review of the 'trial phase' takes place. The solution is found to be satisfactory. It is consequently agreed as common practice in all classes, although it is not put into the form of a written document or a policy. In due course the practice becomes 'established practice' and is identifiable as a ritual (or routine).

<u>314 Formalising dismissal</u>

In an Irish two teacher school the teachers realise that there is a lot of pushing and shoving going on amongst children at the end of the school day when they try to get on the school bus. The teachers informally discuss the issue and agree to organise dismissal in turns, the junior classes first, the senior classes second.

There is no controversy amongst the teachers about the appropriateness of the formalisation of dismissal. They immediately agree that this is a strategy that will solve the problem.

The teacher who took part in the interview teaches the senior classes. She further formalises the process in her class so that 6th class children go first from her room, followed by 5th, then 4th and lastly 3rd class children. She also changes to use the Irish language when releasing the groups. She clearly identifies this practice as ritualistic. Her own choreography is not reflected upon with her colleague.

Comment

The reflection process in this case is a very short affair. There are only two teachers involved, the solution for them seems evident and simple. All that is required to make the formalisation of dismissal workable is a quick agreement whose group is going first.

Such a fleeting and momentary agreement can become a standing ritualised practice quite easily. The same teacher explains how the practice of lining-up children was established between her and her colleague. They two work together since 1985.

“A - No, it just seems to happen as such (...) It's sort of, at this stage I suppose we're doing it so long. Perhaps you know, the first trip we might have gone and we might have said, right, well, you know, we'll put them in pairs, you go the front, I go to the back.

Q - In 1985. [laughs]

A - [laughs] Yes, exactly. At this stage now, you know [laughs], I have to say there's no need for reflection or discussion at it. It happens. It's a ritual [laughs] for the want of a better word.”

419 Planning a ritual charter

In a German mainstream school a teacher and a trainee teacher who will teach a first class in the following school year come together informally during summer holidays and discuss what rituals they are going to implement. They specifically and consciously discuss this as 'class rituals'.

In their discussion they have as common starting points:
- children need regularity
- rituals provide regularity
- rituals are important
On this basis they plan a number of rituals which they introduce then in their class.
Examples: weekly changing 'table-chief' (a post of responsibility for a child, mainly to fulfil tasks in support of the teacher, e. g. collecting work-sheets or conveying information to the other children); morning-circle (storytelling-time); sound-bowl as means of communication; allocating classroom tasks like watering flowers, sort shoes in shoe-rack, tidy drinking table (the teacher explicitly states that the ritual is not the task but the allocation of the task, there is a certain time set apart for this in their weekly class schedule).

Comment

There is no controversy amongst the teachers about the appropriateness of the rituals as such. They start from the same platform, having negotiated a common understanding of the meaning of rituals in the context of school (and underlying common ideas about the nature of children or the role of school). The questions they deal with are more on the level of: which activity shall we ritualise and what choreography shall we give certain rituals, e. g. when allocating tasks having names pulled out of a hat or let children come forward for the various tasks.

6.5.7.
Negotiating De-ritualisation (De-formalisation) of activity

Just as much as ritualisation can be a means for teachers to address a certain situation that appears problematic it is also possible that a ritualised activity can become problematic for teachers in a way that they would rather not have it any more. In the passages on the themes of harmonisation, non-conforming and undercover rumblings examples were already included in which the potential for a negotiation of de-ritualisation was present.

The teacher who holds back in the staff meeting where lining-up is discussed strategically decides that it is not the right time and the right place to press ahead. The negotiation about giving up the presentation between the teachers in the free alternative school is shifted towards discussing the non-compliance of the 'stray colleague', but we remember that this is a result also of the strategic moves of the sectional team leader who secures her allies before directly tackling the issue. The undercover rumblings in the corridors of the Irish primary school clearly point towards a potential discussion about de-ritualisation.

There are however situations in schools also, where teachers see an opening for initiating negotiations with the aim to abandon a particular ritual practice.

421 No more dictation

A teacher in a German mainstream school attends courses on brain research in relation to learning. The material presented in the courses confirms her opinion that there is no reason to have children write dictation tests.

She reports about the courses in a sectional staff meeting and suggests to abandon the practice of dictation tests in the parallel classes. *“I had a good footing there, I brought all this know-how and then in the sectional meeting I voiced my desire for change: 'I am sure now, I would have done it for a long time, but now there is nothing to stop me. I won't have dictation tests any more. One every semester, that's it.' And they said: 'Wonderful, we join you.'”*

Comment

With her two colleagues the teacher has a very good working relationship. In the interview she describes this situation as one in which mutual respect provides a sound basis for open communication. *“We take each other serious, completely. We respect each other and we critically review our practice, without hurting each other.”* They share common views on education. Consequently it is easy for the teacher to bring up the idea of abandoning dictation tests.

Noteworthy also: the tests are not completely abandoned. This points to the wider environment. The school is a mainstream school. She teaches fourth class. Education law requires that there are written tests administered, six per year plus three 'learning controls'. They are to be marked and the marks added up to a half-year and a end-of-year grade. This for her is non-negotiable. She can try to minimise the adverse effects of marking and grading by applying 'modest standards' but she is still obliged to do it. Due to the fact that dictation tests are a common practice throughout most schools there is also pressure on her to show that she has at least covered this area of the curriculum. Hence the moderating “one every semester”.

In the context of the particular school this however is already a rather radical move. She also reports about earlier years in which there was a different colleague in the parallel class. A reflection process about de-ritualisation in relation to dictation tests would have been impossible.

“That was impossible with my former colleague. We had no way to talk to each other. (...) She was stuck in doing everything as she had done it all the time, and she administered a dictation test every three weeks. I simply had no choice but also have a dictation test every three weeks, although I did not want it.”

Objectively it is obviously not true that she had no choice. She could have played out the demarcation line of the classroom door and would have been formally untouchable. But it is also true that she felt that this was not an option that would have promised success. In calculating her strategic position she felt it was the better way not to escalate conflict, particularly also because she did not expect any support for her position from the principal.

With her present colleagues however she feels that there is an opening. Reflection then is easy, they work on common grounds, agreement is reached fast.

427 More no more dictation

The three teachers who have decided that in their parallel classes dictation tests are reduced to one per semester informally discuss the issue also with other members of staff. This is corridor talk or discussion during yard break.

In their sectional team meeting they decide to also invite an external expert for a staff planning day on the topic. While there is no objection from the principal it still does not happen because of a clash of dates that has the expert unavailable for the day.

Some of the colleagues from other classes then go to attend a lecture of the expert outside school hours. Their feedback afterwards is that they find the expert "stupid".

"A – And they came back and said: 'She is stupid.'

Q – O.K., they came back from the lecture with this expert and said: 'She is stupid.'

A – Yes [laughs].

Q – O.K. [laughs] and was that the reflection process then, or what?

A – Well, so far, yes. So far, yes. That is were it is left for now, yes. It has to continue somehow, but for the moment that is it."

Comment

The first step that was made in the sectional staff meeting encourages the teachers to also reach further. Their strategy to go about this business is to first try to secure allies via informal discussion and eventually push for a staff planning day on the matter. Obviously the three teachers feel that it is necessary to engage the colleagues in a discussion that starts on a different level then where they started themselves. The idea to get an external expert in to do a seminar on the topic is in fact a didactic approach. The three teachers intend to teach their colleagues, but they are aware of the difficulty resulting from their status as peers. The expert seems the better solution.
With some of the colleagues coming back from the external lecture with this expert and dismissing her as 'stupid' an impasse looms.

This is the situation at the time of the interview.

It is also worthwhile to highlight the importance of the temporal fit in the interplay of events. The courses attended by the teacher who brought up de-ritualisation in the first instance provide a sound basis for argumentation to make her point. As a reflection setting that is separate in space and time from the actual school in which the teacher works these courses are a chance to take a step back from the actual daily struggles. However the information from the courses can be transferred into the concrete school situation only on the basis that the teacher feels it to be safe to do so. With the old colleague gone and the two new colleagues at her side the teacher now sees a 'historical opening'.

510 Harmonisation obsolete

In a free alternative school a teacher is on maternity leave. She will take up her position again after summer holidays. On some days before the holidays she 'sits-in' to get accustomed to the group that she will work with. She observes morning circle and finds it dysfunctional. Children are not interested, are bored, 'sit through' or disturb.

She discusses her observation with the two colleagues who are in the group. She offers arguments for analysing the situation: children don't need daily morning circle. She also uses the school concept as a point of reference.

"It is necessary to understand how our school works, yes, it's a case that if we are offering something the children are invited to take part. Thus I assume that if I am together with a group, that this group is made up of children who actually want to participate."

In the observed situation however she finds that children do not want to participate, hence she suggests to abandon the daily morning circle.

While her colleagues share the impression that children are bored and often disturb the morning-circle, they yet analyse the situation differently. In their opinion it is a matter of structuring the morning-circle differently.

After the summer holidays the situation changes radically because the colleagues leave the school to work in another job. She takes over the group and scraps the daily morning circle.

Comment

In the free alternative school the reflection process is amongst staff who are supposed to work together as a team in the same room with the same children. There is no way for them to draw a spatial demarcation line similar to the classroom door. Their discussion touches on the compatibility of the ritual with the conceptual orientation of the school. In practical terms the three teachers would have to find a common position to be able to work together after the summer holidays. Their different interpretations and analysis of the situation indicates that there could easily be a problem for them to come to a result in their discussions that is satisfactory for everyone. There is pressure however on them to achieve such a result. When working together with the same children in the same rooms harmonisation of practice is a must, at least to the point where constant struggles over the legitimacy of certain activities, practices, ways to behave can be avoided.
The fact that the reflection process on this issue simply stops because two of the three colleagues quit the job is a good reminder that there are significant influences also from spheres outside of the individual school.

513 Will they stay or will they go

In a free alternative school with pre-school, primary and SEK 1 morning circle is a set feature in all age groups. A teacher in the pre-school section (2 – 6 yrs) brings up morning circle as a topic in the sectional staff meeting.

“He thought, well, isn't it dreadful to force them, well, to force them, if small children want to go, they will go anyway, you know, and you may try to hold them back, on your lap and say 'pst', but they will still go or they will be noisy and make it unbearable and you can forget about your morning circle.”

The discussion then is about making morning circle a voluntary activity like the rest of the activities in the school. The teacher who took part in the interview is sceptical.

“I was not convinced at first because I thought, no, that is all right as we did it since then, and that it will all completely disperse, and the older ones will also leave, I was sceptical. I was really, really sceptical.”

A compromise is negotiated. Children are obliged to come to the start of morning circle but they don't have to sit through until it is all over. It is yet at the discretion of the adults to allow children to leave.

“Such a morning circle can last quite various times. (...) And that, that they are supposed to be there when we start, you know, that they do not run around somewhere else, but that they be there at first. And when they really have enough, that we say: 'You can go to the other room and play.'”

Comment

Morning circle is a frequent topic in free alternative schools. In many cases it is in fact the only compulsory activity for children. As such it becomes a matter of discussion. This is not different in the example here. The discussion is about the freedom to decide whether or not a person wishes to participate in a group activity. This group activity is however one that is scheduled by the group leaders. It becomes a ritualised activity. The particular aspect of establishing, expressing and confirming group coherence, in terms of Bernstein/Elvin/Peters: the consensual aspect of ritual is highlighted by the teacher in the interview.

A discussion about the obligation for children to take part in the activity automatically raises the question of de-ritualisation. The lines of argument as sketched above are quite typical. The result in this case is a continuation of the ritual.

What is negotiated here is the concept of childhood that is legitimately used to define and articulate the concrete reality in the practice of the school. It is also the position of the adults in the group, the degree of control which they are supposed to exert over children (here: in the particular situation of morning circle). At the end of the day it is still in the power of the adults to decide if a child 'had enough' or not. De-ritualising even in the form of making morning circle voluntary for children would have toppled over this position of the adults.

Or, the same to be expressed from the other side: taking away the position of the adults (remember: ritual experts) would have de-ritualisation as a likely consequence.

514 The song's over

In a free alternative school the teachers have decided that the singing of a song is an obligatory element of morning-circle. They explicitly include it as a ritual element that is meant to strengthen group coherence and to incite an emotional bond to the school community.

In practice the children resist the singing. They don't participate as expected, remain silent, mourn and complain about the singing. One teacher takes the children’s' complaints up and brings the topic to a staff meeting. This teacher argues that the children feel compelled, that the singing is dysfunctional because they don't want it and that they will always bastardise it.

“And at some stage I said, if, if we realise and if we all realise that they don't need that, that they can't appreciate it, there is no point in forcing them only because we want it that way, you know. And there was pro and con then. Some said, the children are not yet able to understand why that is important, but we want it simply for the emotional bond to the group and so on. (...) And it was quite emotional then, too, the discussion.”

She remembers two colleagues in particular getting very emotional. These colleagues find it important to stick to the ritual even if the children don't want it. The team negotiates a formula whereby 'singing will happen when it fits'.

In practice however it is more or less abandoned. It happens only occasionally when there is a birthday celebrated, but not otherwise.

Comment

The lines of argument here are quite similar as in the example before. The underlying topic is re-occurring. The teacher who took part in the interview (and advocates for de-ritualisation) is in fact convinced of the value of rituals. She also shares the view that rituals as an expression and reinforcement of group coherence are important. Nevertheless she successfully negotiates a removal of the obligatory singing from morning-circle. For her a consensual ritual has to grow organically from the groups interaction and can not be forced per decree.

The team amongst themselves however also appease the two colleagues who feel strongly about the singing. In the formula that 'singing will happen when it fits' their aspirations are acknowledged. Such an arrangement settles the momentary conflict that arose in the staff meeting, hence take the cutting edge away. It yet leaves open the chance for shifting negotiations into the practical arena. With a formula like this it is left to each individual to try and convince the others in a given situation that now singing may fit, or as well not.

6.5.8.
Defining teachers roles in community

Rituals in school include also those events in which school and wider community come together, social gatherings, ceremonies, festivals, public performances. Teachers inevitably play a role in these rituals. Even where a teacher decides not to take part in a particular ritual it will be noted as a statement. The teacher of the Irish primary school who does not want to attend mass outside school hours can be sure that her absence will be spoken about by parents and colleagues[137].

For teachers to reflect upon rituals that are located at this intersection of school and community can also mean to engage with the theme of defining the teachers' role in the community.

[137] … which she anticipates and consequently seeks absolution, although it is formally not necessary

<u>318 Such drama</u>

An Irish primary school stages a public play at Christmas time in the local community hall. It is as much a fund-raiser as it is promoting the school in the community. Afterwards the teachers discuss informally about the play.

The amount of work put in by teachers and the time used for the preparation are identified as a problem. There is agreement amongst the teachers that they would not like to continue doing the extra work every year. Also the amount of time that is lost for curriculum delivery is mentioned. There are also arguments highlighting the value of the performances for self-esteem of children, and for community coherence, however there is consensus amongst the teachers that it is too much for them every year.

Consequently the teachers decide to have a two-year rhythm for the public performances. The decision is then also recorded in the next staff meeting.

Comment

Teachers are paid to deliver the curriculum. This is their task as far as the Department of Education is concerned. Preparing children for a public performance that is staged on a Saturday or Sunday evening is not part of the official task of the teachers. Most teachers still do that, and they cherish the social gain that lies in such engagement. This is not different in the example presented here.

However there is also an element of self-preservation on the side of the teachers that has them looking at their position within the wider school community with a focus on economic use of their energies. In the christmas play they find themselves in a role of ritual experts for an audience that stretches far beyond the school walls.

Just as much as there are expectations on the side of 'Sister X' (example 312) and on the side of parents in the free alternative school to organise an overnight stay (example 525), there are expectations of teachers also in the example with the christmas play[138]. When reflecting on the event the teachers negotiate amongst themselves an acceptable definition of their role in the community. In this case the result is what the teacher in the interview presents as a form of a compromise between the lines of argument.

6.5.9.
Negotiating ritual leadership

Events in which the wider school community are involved are favoured occasions for the hierarchical structures in a school to be displayed and at the same time confirmed or shifted. Reflection on ritual celebrations can just as well enter into a negotiation of leadership roles.

[138] For the teachers in the free alternative school the overnight stay is actually counted as working hours and they take the respective time off at other times. For the teacher who is expected to attend mass this is not the case, neither is it for the teachers who do afternoon hours in preparing children for the christmas play or attend the play on Saturday evening.

532 Winter solstice

In a free alternative school winter solstice is celebrated every year since the day the school started.

In a staff meeting the preparation for winter solstice is discussed. The teacher who for years in the past had the role of leading the celebration refuses to do it again. She claims that in recent years the celebration increasingly lacks 'spirituality'. Parents seem to have no interest in the 'spiritual' elements. This is expressed in 'standing aside and chat' like at a cocktail-party, they 'rush for food' without waiting for the buffet to be officially opened, and they pay no attention to the speech/es. She puts the question to the team whether the celebration is still wanted at all.

The colleagues confirm that in fact the celebration is still wanted. The discussion then concentrates on who will take on organising it.

This discussion is repeated annually. In one year the male members of staff claim responsibility for the preparation and organisation of the celebration. The men in general follow the same script as usual. Yet the women in the staff are not happy with the result.

"Q – No, wait a second, was there not the fairy of lights, and was the bonfire lit up, was that all the same?

A – Ah well, yes, that was, ahm, they found that quite O.K. to have a script to follow. (...) But I don't know, did they change something? They had thought about the fairy and should they replace her with a dwarf or something. They wanted to include a child there, I think, at the time a child did that and it wasn't the fairy of light but rather a dwarf in a costume. But by and large it was the same structure.

Q – And what was different then?

A – The energy."

In the staff meeting after the celebration it is reflected upon and criticised for its 'lack of energy' – the men retreat and leave it up to the women again.

Comment

The gender balance of staff in this school is fifty-fifty. However the sectional leaders are all female. The move of the male members of staff to take on organising the winter solstice celebration breaks into a long time female domain.

The reflection on the course that the celebration took is immediately linked to the question who did (or will) lead it. The theme that dominates the reflection thus is ritual leadership. Obviously there are repercussions of ritual leadership also into the overall power relations amongst staff. The ritual leader and the group that is organising an event like the winter solstice celebration enjoy an increase in their informal status if the event is seen as a success.

6.5.10.
Trading tips and tricks

A specific process concerns the trading of tips and tricks. It is particularly observable in reflection processes in which a young (new) teacher engages with an old (experienced) teacher. In the communication one of the two partners is afforded a monopoly on the correct interpretation of a given situation or topic while the other partner takes on a complementary role.

425 Three wise women

A teacher who has just finished teacher training starts working in a German mainstream school. In her training she heard about the value of class-council as a means of social learning. She introduces it in her (5th) class, but she is not happy with the result.

She approaches three older colleagues (each individually) informally. She gets three different versions of class-council. She does not discuss with the older colleagues, but rather listens to them. One of the colleagues emphasises the need for children to directly talk to each other during class-council, another one suggests a round in which green and red cards are exchanged as symbols of praise and criticism amongst the children, the third one talks about class-council as a weekly review and feedback amongst children on their behaviour during the week. Afterwards she takes on certain elements of what the colleagues have told her from their own practice, while she dismisses other elements.

Comment

Formally the older colleagues are at the same level as herself. They are class teacher just like her. In the situation that the teacher creates with her older colleagues there is yet a status difference acknowledged from the outset.

At the same time she is aware about the demarcation line of the classroom door. She constructs herself in this situation as a learner who is shopping around for advice. In this role she is able to listen to the colleagues without getting into a compromised position. In not discussing the suggestions of her older colleagues with them she keeps her autonomy in making the decision what practice to implement in her own class.

A peculiar detail in this report is that she approaches exactly those three colleagues. At other times during the interview she says of them that she could not work with them due to their views which she finds too child-oriented. Yet it is exactly these colleagues whose advice she looks for.

317 Boisterous in the bus

A teacher in an Irish primary school has developed what he calls his 'little ritual' for keeping his class calm and quiet when they are on a bus trip. At the beginning of a trip he usually goes around in the bus chatting to children individually until everyone is rather settled.

One day a trip to another town takes place but the class teacher is not in the bus. The children get boisterous. The teacher who is with them can not get them quiet. Afterwards she reports the situation to the class teacher.

“So, we would have discussed that. The teacher, who wasn't as experienced as I would have been on buses and this was her situation and this is what happened. And she was, you know, more or less asking me to talk to the children or give out to them or whatever. So we discussed it and I just pointed out a few little things that I do when they get on a bus first. And that leads to a situation where they're calm. (...) And so she was saying to me: 'well, normally we sit down here and they're quiet'. And I said: 'Yes, but that's because I have spent the first 15 minutes just being a presence without even having to say anything, but just being a presence down there.' (...) I mean, that's, she was, she was open to it. I mean, she would have been on a bus many times with me and probably didn't realise, probably just thought I was chatting down there or whatever, you know. Obviously didn't realise the purpose behind it. But, so I just kind of pointed out to her that these are little sort of things that you just learn from experience.”

Comment

From the interview it is not clear what the female teacher in this example makes out of the information that her colleague passes on. As a reflection process it is again a rather short affair, happening informally. In it a trick of the trade is explained by the male colleague who in his report also constructs himself as the more experienced partner in the conversation. There is no indication of any further examination either of the problematic situation in the bus or of the actual 'little ritual' that is suggested to solve it. The interpretation offered by the male colleague stands.

424 Anything but television

In a German mainstream school 4th class has a regular morning circle every Monday. The children are asked to tell each other stories of what they did during the weekend. The class teacher is in her first year after college.

In one of the Monday morning circles a child speaks extensively about watching TV. The teacher requests that the child speaks about something different. The child starts again, but comes back to TV, does this three times before the teacher eventually asks the child to stop and somebody else to take over with a new story.

In the sectional staff meeting she brings the topic up. She explains the situation and asks for feedback.

“Yes, I mean, one of the colleagues, she is very experienced and also quite resolute. While I as a new teacher quite often still think, no, I can't do that, they are only children. But she said: 'No, once he was to start about having watched a film, I would have said: Stop! [claps her hands] Not this. I don't want to hear that you have watched television. If you have not done anything else, than that's it.'”

The young teacher argues that the circle is for telling about weekend experiences, and the child has experienced watching television. The older teacher asks: “Does it annoy you or not?” The young teacher answers: “It does.” Old teacher: “Then you need to act.”

“Q – And was there a discussion between you and the colleague (...) it sounds as if it was a rather short exchange.

A – It did not take long, that's true. There was no long discussion that I would have said: 'No, I can't do that, I see that all quite differently.' Because at the time I was not happy with the situation in class myself.”

In the next circle-time she implements the rule that children shall not tell any stories about computer-games or about television.

Comment

This works for the young teacher because the older colleague wipes away the tender doubts that she had. In the short exchange between the two the younger one actually argues as she herself would expect a child to argue in a discussion with her as the teacher. But the resolute determination that the old teacher displays does the job for her. It provides the necessary back-up for her to not feel at fault implementing her 'anti-tv-policy'. If pressed hard she can excuse herself by taking recourse on the instructive comments from her colleague. And it is possible that she uses it also in her inner dialogue when doubts (and possible feelings of guilt) nag her.

6.5.11. Review practice against conceptual ideas

There can be no educational practice without a concept: a concept that is of childhood, of learning, of justice, of truth, to name but a few aspects. Everyday practice in schools however underlies numerous influences. In the dynamic environment of a school the most honourable conceptual ideas and aspirations can easily fade away from the radar.

For teachers reflecting on rituals can pave the way to a review of practice against conceptual ideas that are promoted in the particular school. In earlier examples this was partly implicated already. The discussion about the sexualised dance performance (example 422) and the discussion about abandoning presentations in the pre-school section of a free alternative school (example 517) are the most obvious cases. In both of them the connection to conceptual elements is immediate and in the actual reflection process also made explicit amongst the teachers.

I will present one more example that illustrates this point.

516 Aspirations overhaul

A teacher starts working in a free alternative school. In the school there is a weekly school meeting. This is an assembly of all members of staff and all children. The school meeting is a decision-making forum. It is supposed to work on the consensus principle, that is a decision requires a consensual support. The teacher however experiences the school meeting as in contrast to the conceptual ideas.

“School meeting is meant to be for the children, if they have something that concerns them, they can bring it up there. If they have a problem and realise: 'that is not going right here, we need a rule or something.' Also if there is a personal conflict that can't be solved it can be brought up in the school meeting and ask for support from the other children. But in my experience the school meeting is used mainly by the adults for blazoning out things, making announcement, passing on information. (...) It is usually rather messy, too, with shouting and yelling.”

The school concept stipulates that the principle of self-regulation is adhered to. For the school meeting however it is not clear whether children are obliged to take part or not. The teacher reports of children hiding when school meeting is on and colleagues chasing them to bring them into the meeting.

The practical interpretation of the consensus principle is a further problem.

“A – I find it nice, the aspiration to say, one is open for the others, is interested in their opinions and tries to achieve highest satisfaction for everyone. This is what I understand as consciousness about consensus. And I believe that comes up automatically. But it is a different story to say: 'no, we will leave the room only if we find a consensus and a vote is anyway out of the question.' (...) And this is another ritual in my opinion. It is ritualised that there is no voting, categorically.

Q – How do you know when there is a consensus?

A – Exactly this is a problem.”

The teacher raises the issue of the apparent discrepancy between conceptual aspirations and practical implementation in a meeting with all staff members. In this meeting reactions are split. Some of the colleagues defend the practice as is, others agree that there may be a need to discuss the issue in more depth. The discussion in the staff meeting remains a short exchange of opinions.

For the teacher who raised the issue the topic is not dealt with. It will be brought up again, possibly in the regular reflective supervision meetings.

This process is ongoing at the time of the interview.

Comment

With a new person coming into a school there is always a new perspective coming also. This offers the chance to review the established practice against this new perspective. In this case the new teacher has made a conscious decision to work in this particular school. The school concept played an important role in the decision. Therefore it is only logical that the point of reference for the new teacher in the reflection is the school concept. The connection from observation of practice to conceptual aspirations is made immediately and is made explicit. The fact that there is a school concept in written format makes this connection easier.

6.6.
Reflection as a social act

The extensive coverage given to the various examples over the last pages was meant to develop the themes that can be identified in the reports of teachers about reflection processes on rituals. What I am offering here is an enhanced way of understanding what goes on in these reflection processes of teachers. In doing so I am following the approach that guided Catherine Bell's study on rituals. As mentioned earlier (section 1.6.) she explicitly avoids formulating a (new) theory of ritual. She rather forges “a framework for reanalysing types of activities usually understood as ritual.” (Bell 1992, p. 219) Ultimately my study is going to do a similar thing. Rephrasing Catherine Bell, what I am suggesting is a framework for (re)analysing activities understood as reflection processes of teachers on rituals.

I have repeatedly pointed to the fact that teachers' professional reflection processes are a social activity, one that is best understood as another level of negotiation. What is at stake in the reflection processes is the legitimacy of certain ways of defining, articulating and shaping reality. By systematically including these elements as parameters in the analysis of the examples as reported by the teachers in my study it is possible to demonstrate how the application of a framework based on such an enhanced understanding leads to results that transcend those to be gotten by simply applying the tools derived from theories of reflection as referred to in chapter two.

What the examples show is that the reality of reflection on rituals amongst teachers is not a neutral activity. And it would be hard to imagine how it could be, given that the situation in which the reflection takes place is not a neutral situation either. How reality is to be shaped depends on power relations amongst those who are involved in it. Where a particular definition, articulation or materialisation of reality is negotiated it is necessarily also a negotiation of these power relations.[139] This holds also for professional reflection processes of teachers.

Teachers in reflection processes engage in a situational strategic manner. They decide when it is best to bring up a topic, when not, who to approach, who not, which argument to place at a given time, which not. What we find in the examples reported by the teachers is best depicted in terms of negotiating legitimacy. Legitimacy, that is, of certain ways to interpret reality and to act accordingly. Such an understanding is not yet present in the theoretical contributions on reflection as referred to earlier.

The instruments provided by these theories are certainly not wrong. It would be possible to depict the various examples above in terms of their processual scale. We would then find that most of the processes reported by teachers would in fact be subsumed in Griffiths/Tann's category of 'review'. To decide if there are cases of 'research' we would have to define where the threshold of systematic observation lies that distinguishes it from simple observation, or the boundary of rigorous analysis in comparison to simple analysis.

[139] This is mirrored already in the models of communication theory in which the content and the relationship aspects of communication are depicted as always co-existing in each and every communication. (see Watzlawick/Beavin/Jackson 1967, p 51 ff.) In the literature on rituals in schools we find this phenomenon also implied in the process of identity-bargaining (Wellendorf 1979) as referred to in chapter one. In this context see also chapter seven in which the motif of power takes central stage.

Cases like the reflection process that leads to the exemption from lining-up for the child understood to have special needs could be depicted as involving systematic observation, but how rigorous an analysis is included in this process? The discussion of teachers about the sexualised dance performance involves a bandwidth of observations and considerations that is certainly far more extensive than the fleeting exchange about formalising dismissal. We would also find that in none of the examples recourse is made to the use of what Griffiths/Tann term 'public theories'.[140] Thus we can conclude that 'retheorising' does not occur in them.

It is similarly possible to categorise the reflection processes in terms of their functional character as suggested by Jack Mezirow. We then would find that there are mainly processes of content or process reflection reported, and we would not be surprised by such a finding either. It would confirm the common sense assumption that most reflection processes actually aim at finding an immediate solution for a given problem. Premise reflection, an "assessment of the validity of norms, roles, codes, 'common sense', ideologies, language games, paradigms, philosophies, or theories that we have taken for granted" (Mezirow 1991, p. 105) would be found to be a rare aspect in the examples. The discussion about the school assembly in the last example comes closest to enter into these realms. However it is not guaranteed that it will actually happen.

The implicit model in these approaches is the engagement of an individual person with a subject matter, be it the choreography of a given ritual or be it the paradigmatic concept of childhood underlying the assumption that a 5-year old needs to be forced to take part in morning circle. This engagement can not be questioned. It is self-evident that reflection will always be about some subject matter.

What is missing in the models however is the conceptual inclusion of the social character of the reflection process. Not only has it implications on processual scale and functional orientation, it also directly influences the contributions made by the various participants who discuss a certain subject matter, hence: how reality is legitimately defined and articulated in the reflection process.

In this regard the themes developed above are a way to depict the reflection of teachers in their professional environment as a social act and yet another situational strategic activity, a negotiation of legitimacy of defining, articulating and shaping reality and a negotiation of power relations. I will pick up the issue of power again in chapter seven when I turn explicitly to the idea of critical reflection. But first it is necessary to have a further look at the material gathered in the interviews.

The examples referred to so far were all about teachers reflecting with colleagues, in terms of ritual analysis: ritual experts amongst themselves. There are yet a few examples also of reflection processes that bring together all actors involved in a given ritual. I briefly referred to them earlier as collective negotiations. These shall be attended to next.

[140] The only exception of this is the example in which the three parallel class teachers decide to reduce the dictations to one per semester. The teacher who initiates the move refers to attending courses on brain research and learning theories in which newer ('public') theories on didactics where presented.

6.7.
Collective negotiations

For a ritual to happen it needs participants. A celebration like winter solstice may be planned and organised by a small group of ritual experts and someone may take on the role of leading the ceremony, yet without a sufficient number of participants it will simply not happen. A teacher implementing class council relies on the class to be there. Empty chairs can be put in a circle but they won't tell each other about their weekend adventures.

In some of the examples reported by teachers in the interviews the reflection processes actually take place amongst all actors, that is teachers and pupils. In all cases they are from schools in which there is a primary and secondary section. For each of the examples included here the age of the children who took part in the reflection process is stated.

Collective negotiations can happen in two ways.

6.7.1.
Transfer into collective negotiation via 'uprising'

In the examples recounted above there are cases also where children don't play along in the rituals, most obviously in the various examples where children don't line up as expected. We have seen already that teachers can react to these occurrences by reflecting amongst themselves and e. g. change script and choreography of the ritual.

In the interviews some cases where also mentioned in which the situation as initiated by children's interventions were transferred into a collective negotiation. Two examples:

527 Saying grace

The teachers in a free alternative school decide to have a ritual in which before meals (breakfast and lunch) all people in the room are holding hands so as to build a long chain. Then a formula of saying grace in reverence of the natural cycle is to be said ("earth who brought us this, sun who let it ripen ..."). The children in the respective group are 5/6th class.

In practice the children don't like holding hands. Adults at meal times always struggle to make the holding of hands happen. The children also claim that the formula is "silly" and suggest a different wording. In this they add one extra word each day until the formula is unspeakable.

"And also, that they felt it took too long, they wanted to start eating. And there were a couple of, really a good few complaints. At the beginning we said: 'No, that will be done, it is extremely important for us.' Ahm, until we then at some stage brought it up in a staff meeting. Because, we didn't take it serious for a long time, their criticism. The criticism of the children: 'I don't want that any more, holding hands, and I want to eat right away.' And eventually they were up in rage and said: 'I don't want that any more.'"

The team discusses the issue in staff meeting. One colleague 'O' pushes strongly for preserving the ritual. This colleague is very religious and claims that saying grace is essentially important for each individual. He argues further that there have been other rituals already abandoned in the school in recent times and that giving up the ritual before the meal there would be a blow to the community spirit. On this ground the ritual is continued.

However the children make it a topic in the weekly assembly.

“Q – And did adults take part in this discussion?

A – Yes.

Q – O.K., and the children said: 'We don't want that any more.'

A – Exactly. And the adults then have said, in this case 'O', ahm: 'But we don't want to have nothing at all. We don't want to start without anything. Let us see what we can do there.' And then they came up with a solution.”

A decision is made to have a minute silence before eating.

“Q – And the solution is one of which you also said, the children would not have come up with it.

A – Well, if 'O' had not intervened, the children would have said: ''We simply start once everybody is there.' Yes. Exactly.”

Comment

The process comprises of a number of successive steps.

1) Ritual experts negotiate ritualisation (formalisation) of the activity before meals, this includes script and choreography. According to the teacher who took part in the interview there was no controversy about either the fact of ritualisation or about the script and choreography at this time.
2) The children in practice negotiate by sabotaging the ritual.
3) Ritual experts re-negotiate amongst themselves. At this stage the value system that is expressed in the ritual is made explicit. It is accepted as valid and the ritual is reconfirmed.
4) The children transfer the process into a collective negotiation.
5) A compromise is negotiated.

The compromise that is found in the opinion of the teacher in the interview is yet one that is based on a strong intervention of 'O'. The teacher in the interview suggests that the discrepancy of rhetoric and experience in discussion in this case is simply used to advance the adult position – in terms of numbers also the minority position.

“(...) he is a master in rhetoric, and [laughs], well that's how I know him, if he has an opinion then he pushes it a hundred percent, bullying his way through regardless, and he takes whatever arguments he finds and throws them in for good measurement, and yet you know that it is really only his opinion, and his own agenda that is so strong behind it.”

The discussion in the weekly assembly in this way is in itself another negotiation of power relations. Expressed in the terminology as introduced above the collective negotiation deals with the themes of de-ritualisation (from the side of the children), and adaptation of the script of the ritual. The theme of de-ritualisation is not accepted by the teacher. The children don't pursue it after his intervention, they rather meet him on the theme of adapting the script.

526 Sleep and chat

In a free alternative school there are different morning circles with different adults on offer and children can choose to take part in any or also in none of them.

One of the teachers creates a choreography for morning circle in reflection with a colleague. The idea is to 'make people active' by playing a game, singing a song or other activity during morning circle.

Children take part but do not bring in any activities themselves. The teacher also stops bringing up activities but rather concentrates on making announcements. The children say that they don't really like the format. When the teacher is away on a course, the children create a new format. They have a 'sleep and chat' circle. These children are mainly 5/6th class.

“It didn't take that long for it to be discussed in the first place, I’d say maybe a month at the most because it becomes quite immediately apparent that things aren't, that people maybe aren't satisfied in the way you're doing it, and so as I say, suggested changes. Ahm, I think with this sleeping and chatting thing that came about, it (...) that was, it's been not that long, it was before the Christmas holidays, so it must have been two months, three months or something. And I was away on a course, training thing, and I wasn't there one Friday, and I came back in the next week I went to go to morning circle and the kids said to me: 'We don't actually need you. We worked out how we do morning circle and it's really nice. And what we're doing is this.' And I said: 'Oh, am I allowed to join in then.' And they said: 'Oh yeah, you can join in.' [laughs] And so it actually came about that way, it came about that way, there was one day were they were on their own, and they created what they, what they wanted. (...)
And then they allowed me to come and join it, and then we worked out from there how it would actually work. And now it's quite like, they chat with me. They know that it's important to me that if there's things that I would think a need to be announced within the space, that I do say them. Because I think it's important, I feel like it's important, it's my responsibility if there's an important meeting going on or whatever that they know about it. And they, and we've then talked about the fact that that's important for me and I need that and so, they do, we arrive and it's time for 'Sleep-Chat-round' but they also say: 'Anything you really needing to tell us today? This is your moment.' [laughs] And they give me that space because I've expressed that that's my, that's my need when I come there as well. And I respect their needs for what they want to do there, but we try and work out so that both (..)”

Comment:

It is obvious how the opening of the space for the children creates a situation in which they take charge of the ritual. Subsequent to the earlier notion of ritual ownership one can say that here the children appropriate the ritual in the absence of the teacher. In this sense they effectively negotiate their position in the constellation with the teacher.

On her return she accepts the shifted positions. On this basis then there is a reflection as collective negotiation initiated about the different ambitions that are connected with the idea of morning circle. A new choreography is mutually agreed.

6.7.2. Collective negotiation from the start

The second way that collective negotiation of rituals happens is where reflection is started as a collective process from the very start.

<u>530 No visitors</u>

In a free alternative school a daily morning circle is held. The age of the children in the group is 10 – 14. The teacher observes that at some stage the morning circle becomes a rather dull thing and children are not engaging in conversation any more as they did before.

He has a hunch that this may be caused by the presence of visitors, mainly students who are in the school for practical parts of their teacher training. He discusses the topic with the children.

"And I suggested, O.K., let us reserve one day in the week where no visitors are allowed during morning circle. And they were all up for it on the spot, and they said: 'that's what we do.' And we picked a day and so, we have morning circle for ourselves once a week, and the quality changed immediately."

Comment

The example may seem minor due to its briefness. There is yet a lot in it. One may say that as far as reflection is concerned there is not much happening, in fact it is the teacher reflecting on the situation on his own (a process of thought without exchange with anyone) first and him doing so is not at all a collective effort. That is true. Yet, it is the fact that he brings his thoughts into exchange in discussion with the children that gives the reflection any sort of relevance. His thoughts would have made as much difference to the course of the world as an unwritten poem did he not do anything about them.

The school runs on a principle in which in matters that concern the group each member has one vote irrespective of age, that is children and adults alike. In this environment for the teacher to act on his thoughts the logical consequence is to bring it to the children with whom he shares morning circle.

The teacher here does what David Gribble describes as sharing responsibility: "Democratic decision-making in schools does not mean adults abandoning their responsibility, it means adults sharing their responsibility with younger people. As long as this sharing is genuine, and group decisions cannot be overturned at the whim of the head teacher or the governors, teachers will find their relationship with their pupils transformed and the atmosphere in the classroom co-operative rather than confrontational." (Gribble 2012)

Despite its brevity the rather brief exchange in which the teacher and the children conclude to have a day for themselves every week is yet a collective negotiation. It is a reflection process that can be depicted in terms of processual scale (review) and functional character (content). But more to the point it is a social act, one that in itself does far more than generating knowledge. It influences the social situation strongly. It confirms the shared ritual ownership of children and teacher of the morning circle. It demonstrates to the children that the adult actually cares for the common well-being of the group. With this little exchange group coherence is effectively (re-)established, the consensual ritual defended against a possible dilution.

As for community spirit: how much more effective is this small act – in comparison to the laboured efforts to establish group coherence via coercive participation!

531 Re-structuring juridical committee

A free alternative school expands from primary only to include SEK 1. Due to the increase in the number of people populating the school the school assembly, that is all teachers and all children (age range from 6 - 14), discuss the format of their juridical committee. A decision is made to re-structure the committee. Two teachers are allocated the task to mediate the process of re-structuring.

The two teachers (one of them is the partner in the interview) reflect on the way 'how to find a solution for re-structuring' and come up with a 'seminar' for all potential candidates. In the seminar discussion ensues about the composition of the juridical committee, about the qualities that are required of members of the committee and about the actual choreography for meetings of the juridical committee. This concerns quite detailed aspects, too:

"We thought about the seating order and what it does to someone. We asked two participants to leave the room and then we asked them to come in for three times in a row. Every time we had changed the seating order. (...) First there was a room with a lot of distraction where people sat in different areas of the room. Then we made it into a setting like in a court hearing, with a table and behind the table the members of the committee, and the plaintiff and the defendant on chairs in front of the table. And then we also made an open circle of chairs with free chairs for the two who came in.
And then after they did that three times we asked them about their feelings in the different situations. And, yes, simply to think about, O.K., what does such a seating order actually do to oneself. And, ahm, it was clear then that we needed a different room (...) where it was possible to sit in a circle. And this is how we do it now."

Participants in the seminar are all those people who declared an interest in being a member of the juridical committee at some stage.

"Q – That means in the seminar not only those took part who were elected to the committee, but rather the entire pool of children?

A – Correct. And the adults, they had to take part, too."

Comment

In the seminar there are children and adults together and collectively negotiate the script and choreography of the ritual. Their authority to decide on this is directly derived from the assembly in which the democratic principle of 'one person one vote' is adhered to irrespective of age.

The entire process thus is best described in terms of collective negotiation, here: on (re-)structuring a central ritual of school governance.

6.8.
Where reflection on rituals does not happen

In the material above there were a number of examples where reflection processes were stopped at a certain point. The teacher who strategically holds back in the staff meeting when she feels that there is no winning of an argument on lining-up is one of them. The case in which discussion about abandoning dictation stops because an external expert is deemed to be 'stupid' is another one. Other reflection processes were incredibly short (small in scale). This concerns situations like the brief exchanges on children telling stories about television in circle time or the ritualisation of dismissal. Hence one could argue that in such cases reflection did not happen.

This however would mean drawing a line at the wrong point. In all the above mentioned examples there was at least some exchange about an activity that the respective teacher identified as a ritual or ritualised activity. In this sense a process of reflection was initiated. That it stopped in some cases very soon afterwards does not do away with the fact that it started.

The following passages then refer to those activities, depicted as rituals, that are not brought up by the teachers as a topic in a reflection process with others in their professional practice. Consequently in these cases no reflection with others happens at all.

6.8.1.
Religious Hegemony

The most obvious area in which reflection of rituals does not happen for teachers in the three different school types concerns the entire complex of religion in Irish school. Irish teachers associate the term ritual first and foremost with religion. In the course of the interviews there were numerous situations where religious rituals in schools came up in the conversation. In only two of them reflection took place: the teacher who does not want to attend mass outside school hours and the undercover rumblings about the extra work due to confirmation. In all other cases religious rituals were not reflected upon.

For teachers who themselves are religious a religious ritual in school will not be an issue to reflect upon. They grew up with them, they are practised in each and every school. It is just 'normal'.

“Q - You said that religious rituals are actually quite common in your school, as in that's day to day practice. Have they ever been discussed? Or reflected upon?

A - Not really, because, I mean, we were brought up going to school and doing our three prayers. That continued, and we were, we do the Alive-O-program which isn't in the curriculum. So we all had to do a separate course in college to teach religion. So, it's not really discussed, you just kinda take out your book and go with it, like.” (IE 03)

With 96 % of all schools under religious patronage, there is no questioning of religious ritual. *“No, I wouldn't, my colleague and I would never have discussed, well, should we [laughing: you know, should we throw it out the window], or whatever, it's just, we’d, we just know it's part and parcel in a catholic school as such, you know, that one does these things as such.”* (IE 08)

The hegemonic position of the catholic church within the education system in Ireland over decades clearly echoes in these accounts. However “over recent decades, Irish society has been undergoing major political, social, economic, cultural, demographic and educational change. Among key changes (...) are the greater diversity of religious belief systems and the more multicultural composition of the population. There is also a minority of about 10 percent who declare themselves as having ‘no religion’. ” (DES 2012, p. 1)

Teachers who have broken away from religion are still obliged to teach the religious belief system in their school. This brings them in a dilemma situation.

“I, it's an area that I would, I think it's a lot of bunkum, it's a lot of rituals. Listen now, if you want to go rituals, definitely you are in the right zone there, and I think there's a lot of people who are fed up of doing, following the rituals, and I’d be one of them. I just, I'm not a ritualistic person at the moment. I have kind of broken away, this is, on the record, off the record or whatever, I just, I would have no time for it, any of that. I would call it rubbish. But I will do it on a professional basis, because I'm expected to. (...) But yes. I would have no time for any of those religious rituals. On a personal basis. On a professional basis I would go through it, do you know. I'm being the [laughing: the biggest hypocrite.] You know, I be a hypocrite if it's part of my contract.” (IE 04)

From the interviews it is quite evident that questioning religion as such in the context of a school under religious patronage is a no-go-area. During the interviews the Irish teachers inevitably also speak about various aspects of school life that are related to religion. I wish to briefly divert and attend to two examples in this context here.

355 Santa Claus

In an Irish primary school there is only one child in the infant classes who comes from a non-catholic family. This child tells the classmates that Santa Claus does not exist. The other children get upset. A teacher meets with the mother of the child and discusses the issue.

“Well, the parent of the child was saying, that, look, this is a lie and you shouldn't be, you know fostering a lie or, you know. And my argument was that it wasn't really a lie, it was, you know, I suppose, whether you call it a ritual or what, but it's a tradition and a custom and it's a harmless sort of, and it's a nice thing and so on. (...)

The discussion ended in that we both agreed to respect one another's viewpoint, that the child was

quite entitled obviously not to believe in Santa Claus or whatever, but that we would appreciate if she just sort of, she wouldn't be talking to the other children about it. And if there is any other aspect of her faith, you know, that would be different, that we would respect that as long as she would sort of respect ours as well."

This example was actually depicted by the teacher as a reflection process. In line with the standards applied throughout my study I agree to this view. On the other side the reflection, here: in form of negotiating of non-conforming position, is not really about a ritual in school. Santa Claus is not celebrated in the school either. The reflection between the teacher and the mother is a reflection about the reflection on the ritual that the children have.

359 National anthem

In an Irish primary school the class gets up three times a day to say a catholic prayer. 40 % of the children in the class are not catholic. One of the prayers is said at the end of the school day.

"Q - And who speaks?

A - They all do. Obviously not the children who, the children who aren't catholic don't. Just the catholic children would say prayers. And I would say it with them at the same time.

Q - And you say you have non-catholic children in the school there.

A - Oh yes, yes.

Q - And what do they do at the time?

A - They just, they just stand at their place, while we're waiting to say prayers.

Q - Right, O.K., and they wait for the prayers to be said, because that's officially the end of the school day?

A - Yes. But they're also, I would also say to them, if they want to say their own prayer from their own religion, they're allowed to do that, like, if they wanted.

Q - Does it ever happen?

A - Aahm, not out loud, but some definitely, children, some muslim children would bow their heads, and they would say their own, I don't know I've never, they've never asked could they say it out. I was not having a problem with them saying it out. They do sometimes have their own little quiet time."

At the same time the children in this class have successfully negotiated the end of school day ritual. Apart of the obligatory prayer there is also a singing of the Irish national anthem.

"A - Aahm, we do our tidy up, we get ready for prayers, say prayers, and then sometimes, not every single day, but a lot of days they will ask, can they sing it. Like they ask, I don't, I don't make them, it will come from them, not from me. (...) Aahm, they learned it at the start of the year and they became very patriotic about it, my class. Even though, fifty percent of them are not nationals, not non-nationals but foreign nationals. (...)

Q - But you don't raise the flag in the classroom?

A - Nonono, no. They do stand up with their hands behind :

Q - What do they do with their hands?

A - They put them behind their backs. They stand up straight and kind of push their chests out a little bit, they're quite proud of it."

What both examples have in common is the fact that they make evident how much non-conforming beliefs in Irish primary schools can have no voice. This applies to children and teachers alike. We have already seen how teachers can be afraid to openly question the role of religion in schools. There may be corridor complaints and undercover rumblings but it would not come up in a formal setting like staff meetings.

The children in the second example however find a way to effectively negotiate the situation and introduce a counter-element to the display of catholic hegemony. Paying tribute to the Irish state for them is a way to overcome the apparent separation along religious lines. The national anthem obviously has a symbolic value that they can salute in unity. How much they exchange like for like is a discussion that would lead to far away from my topic and therefore needs to be left for another time. For the teacher neither the ritual of singing the national anthem, nor in particular the religious elements were ever reflected with anyone.

In the interviews with German teachers in both mainstream and free alternative schools the complex of religion does not play a significant role. Only in one example reported by them religious motives come into play. The negotiation about saying grace before meals shows how the teacher who requests this practice on religious grounds has to actually argue his case against strong resistance.

Saying this does not mean that there are no influences of religion on the activities in schools in Germany. The conflicts about religious symbols in Bavarian classrooms are a good indicator that education in school is still a contested field in which religious parties invest a great deal of energy (see appendix 8 and 9). At the end of the day in Germany school and religion are defined as two separate zones of life. And yet there are ties. The first day of school that is reflected upon by teachers in example 423 for children of christian belief also includes attending a mass. However the school has officially nothing to do with this mass. It is organised by the local church and it is the parents who will bring the children to it, sit through it and then bring the children to school to take part in the celebration that is organised by the teachers. Thus for the teachers the mass is not a question to consider when they reflect upon the welcome ceremony.

Religion can also be a point of reference like in the winter solstice celebration in the free alternative school which is clearly understood as an alternative to the christian tradition of celebrating christmas. According to the teacher in the interview when the event was planned the very first time the idea of connecting to pagan traditions was essential part of the plan. In the reflection processes reported by the teacher this motif however is not explicitly picked up.[141]

In relation to reflection processes of teachers on rituals the bottom line is that there is a hegemonic position of the church in Irish education that is not mirrored in Germany. And with this hegemony institutionalised in the schools there is a taboo zone for reflection on religious rituals even for those teachers who have made their personal break with the church.

6.8.2.
The done thing

Apart of the religious rituals there are other ritual aspects of school life that are often not reflected upon because they simply seem too normal. The teacher in the earlier example on ritualisation of dismissal has at least a vague memory that at some stage she started the practice of lining-up children on school tours. In many cases such a memory is not even present. *"Every class has, I think we just got them to line up, since, you line them up, that's what, that's what we've done, like in my eight years here, that was the done :"* (IE 04)

In "Tanz nicht aus der Reihe" (Hamm 1999) I have looked at the way how in the earlier days of compulsory schooling the practice of lining up children had to be established first.[142] I also showed how it is possible to use an analytic approach aiming at detection of ritual indicators to identify historic developments within the discourse of pedagogy. The virulent spread of circle time in German schools as an antithetical motif in comparison to lining up is the most obvious example for such a development. These developments can lead to the normalising of ritualised practice to the degree where it is beyond the radar for reflection.[143]

In many respects we all adhere to certain conventions within our daily lives that are never questioned. We dress in a certain manner, we apply certain hygienic standards on ourselves, we wait at the yellow line in the post office to be called to the counter, we say 'how are you' although we are not a bit interested in 'how' you are. But it doesn't matter because you will not take a bit of notice of the fact that we asked you how you are. Most likely you will even return the favour and ask us a similarly conventional question, also not expecting an answer.

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[141] Analysing the succession of events that underlie the reflection process in example 532 one will certainly find that the religious motif plays a role for the dynamic amongst the teachers. We remember the lack of 'spirituality' that is registered by the long time leader of the ceremony. It is on this basis that she baulks and a new ritual leadership is negotiated. And yet the motif is not developed in the reflections of the teachers.

[142] For an instructive overview on the establishment of methods of school instruction see also Petrat (1979).

[143] Circle time has the potential to become one of these ritualised practices that will in the future simply be seen as 'the done thing' – far beyond questioning and simply accepted as the 'done thing.' In the eyes of future generations of teachers who as children where exposed to circle time already it may be a case of seeing circle time as something that was 'always done'.

It is only where there is a break in the convention that it may come up for questioning. Particularly those ritual activities that are small in scale, everyday rituals (Wellendorf), low rituals (Henry) are exercised habitually. We have seen in earlier examples how disturbances in the performance do actually lead to reflection. The mess created by children who don't stay in line after break time brings the topic on the agenda. For an occurrence during a ritual performance to be noted as disturbance, this occurrence also has to cross a certain threshold. It needs to be depicted as disturbance in the first place.

Similarly the doubts about the appropriateness of the frequent dictation tests triggers reflection about it. Of course in many cases exactly this is missing. There is no feeling of uncertainty about the practice as such.

Conforming to conventions is normal. For it being normal it is not reflected upon as long as everyone conforms and no-one makes it into a problem. In another Irish primary school children line up always in separate lines of boys and girls. The girls are always first to go, the boys wait.

"Q - And is that a part that comes up in discussion?

A - It would be established practice. To say we would have specifically, it would be probably not overly discussed about it, but it would be taken as established practice. You know what I mean, it's kind of man and woman walk to the door, you go first or I go first, we don't talk about it. But it would have been established. Maybe it's societal, do you know what I mean, that we take, it would be taken as a given. (...) To say that we categorically discussed it in the staff room I can't honestly say that we did, no.

Q - So you didn't bring it up and nobody else?

A - No, but it would be, it would be done in all classes at the same time, if you understand what I mean."

And it is not the case that the teacher would not be aware of the potential for reflecting this practice, and indeed reflecting it critically.

"I suppose maybe you could perceive it as being sexist that the girls always go first. Probably because, I suppose maybe in greater society it's always perceived as good manners from the male perspective to allow the girls out the door first or whatever. And, that, you know, it maybe gives the lads a, maybe, hopefully a little bit more respect for girls." (IE 05)

However in the situation with the colleagues the topic is not touched. As the "done thing" it is simply not a topic.

6.8.3. Demarcation lines

Rituals can differ from one class to another in a given school. Teachers in reflection can work on the theme of harmonising practice, and non-conforming positions can be negotiated. But in mainstream schools there is at all times the demarcation line of the classroom door that can present an impassable barrier. It is an essential part of teachers' professional status that they are the sole responsible person for whatever happens in the classroom.

"The self-contained classroom ... is more than a physical reality, for it refers to a social system, a set of recurrent and more or less permanent social relationships. Under this arrangement the teacher is separated from immediate supervision, and intrusion in this private domain is prevented by a set of understandings subscribed to by administrative officers and teacher colleagues. A set of norms exist which act to buttress the ecological separation:

(1) the teacher should be free from interference of other adults while teaching,
(2) teachers should be considered and treated as equals, and
(3) teachers should act in a non-intervening but friendly manner towards one another." (Lortie, in: Denscombe 1985, p. 70)

All teachers in all interviews report of at least some reflection setting which they use to reflect on their practice. As we have seen the negotiation of the demarcation line is a re-occurring theme in mainstream schools in reflection processes on rituals. The sharpness of confrontation that is possible in discussion about those rituals that happen in common spaces is rarely mirrored when it comes to reflecting classroom activities. The "non-intervening but friendly manner" is usually adhered to in reflections on the latter.

The professional code of non-intervention is a type of non-aggression pact. On these grounds it is possible for teachers in mainstream schools to operate widely without reflecting at all with others on their classroom practice. Where a school hosts more than one class per year a teacher may have to adhere to a minimum standard of coordination in relation to curriculum delivery. There may be a need to agree book lists, timing of tests etc. with parallel class teachers. However all aspects of classroom culture, routines, rituals may be simply not reflected at all with others.

451 Good morning horse

A teacher in a German mainstream school has established in her classroom a greeting ritual. As the first thing every morning she takes up a hand puppet in the shape of a horse. The children all stand at their tables. She then plays the horse to say good morning to each child individually: good morning Patricia, good morning Patrick etc. Each child sits down after her/his name has been called. She explains why she introduced this ritual.

"A - Well, I hate it when they all together say: 'Good morning, Mrs. T.' That makes me shiver, I find it terrifying [laughs].

Q – And what is so terrifying about it?

A – Mmmh, that is, it's more like old school. [laughing: I suppose, it's a bit old-fashioned.] I don't like it. And some have it that they let the children say: 'Good morning, Mrs. Anyone, nice to have you here.' I find that all too artificial, you see, there are always some who don't find it nice to have me here at all, they would rather stay in bed if they could."

In her class then she introduces a choreography that is set off from what she perceives as old style. In doing so she does not confer with anyone. She is the one who makes the decision, there is no interference from colleagues. Her reasons are not communicated. Reflection on the matter is not happening.

"Q – Do you know how it is done in other classes?

A – Yes, it is mostly the teacher saying: 'good morning' and the children all together answering: 'good morning'.

Q – And that is different in your class.

A – Mmh.

Q – And did you talk with anyone about your reasons for doing it this way?

A – No. [laughs]

Q – You don't have any exchange on the matter?

A – No."

In her classroom she has introduced a 'new style' in contrast to what she perceives as the 'old style' in other classes in the school. Reflecting with colleagues about the different choreographies bears the potential to step over the line of "non-intervening and friendly manner" that is part of the non-aggression pact. She fares well in her own little empire. As long as the others leave her alone, she leaves them alone. Despite the fact that she hates the 'old style' she will not rock the boat with her colleagues.

The theme of demarcation lines does not appear in the interviews with teachers of free alternative schools. This is however not surprising if we consider the character of these schools. The classroom door as demarcation line simply does not exist in them. Earlier I wrote about free alternative schools (example 510): When working together with the same children in the same rooms harmonisation of practice is a must, at least to the point where constant struggles over the legitimacy of certain activities, practices, ways to behave can be avoided. There is no chance for an 'old style' and a 'new style' to co-exist in a free alternative school.

One might assume that the professional code as depicted above applies across the board for mainstream schools. I would hold that this is in fact the case. From personal experience on management level in an Irish primary school and from several personal contacts with Irish primary teachers I can only confirm that there is no intervention in the inner affairs of teachers amongst themselves. It is interesting then to see that the theme of demarcation lines is similarly absent in the interviews with teachers of Irish primary schools.

This has to be seen in the light of what was said earlier about the ritual cultures in the three different school types. Taking rituals as indicators for the norms, values, beliefs that are enacted in a school we found that the situation of teachers in German mainstream schools is the least clear. These schools could be depicted as an environment in which the ritual culture indicates a situation in which contradictory value systems, norms, beliefs are represented in the daily practice of the schools. Irish primary schools and free alternative schools in contrast are environments in which a rather consistent system of values, norms, beliefs is enacted.

Taking the teachers as ritual experts we find that teachers in Irish schools establish a rather homogeneous ritual culture. The 'old style' and the 'new style' that is prevalent in German mainstream schools in Ireland is largely 'one style', at least to a degree that makes the development of the theme of demarcation lines in reflection processes unlikely.

6.9.
Reflection settings and reflection of rituals

A preliminary assumption that guided the investigation into the reflection settings as used in the three different school types was that there may be a connection between reflection settings and reflection on rituals. Common sense would suggest that the setting is an influence factor on the actual reflection, particularly in relation to topics that are related to values, norms, beliefs.

We have seen how reflection on rituals nearly always happens for teachers amongst themselves. When we look at the reflection settings generally used by teachers in the three school types and compare with the reported examples, we find that professional support/counselling, staff planning days, meetings with parents and meetings with the principal play no significant role. For each of these settings there is but one example mentioned in all interviews. Meetings with pupils are at least included to some extent, but we also find that these collective negotiations are restricted to one particular strand of free alternative schools.

By depicting the various themes as developed above reflection processes could be identified as a social act and yet another strategic activity in which definition and articulation of reality are negotiated. The various reflection settings then were expected to be so many arenas in which these negotiations take place. It is obvious now that the assumed many arenas are in fact confined to a rather small number of settings: staff meetings, sectional staff meetings and informal meetings with colleagues.

For a reflection process on a ritual to be initiated somebody has to bring it up as a topic. This implies that there has to be a question associated with the ritual activity, at least for the person who brings the topic up. We saw earlier how reflection has been described as a reaction to a situation that incites “perplexity, confusion, doubt” (van Manen reciting Dewey, see section 2.3.). With the extended perspective on the idea of reflection now we can also understand that in schools a teacher will strategically decide to bring up a topic in this or in another setting, at this or at another time.

From the material collected in the interviews no particular pattern can be detected in relation to the distribution of reflection processes according to the settings of staff meetings, sectional staff meetings and informal meetings with colleagues. In relation to the three school types there is no significant deviance from the overall findings as presented in the last chapter. In Irish schools informal meetings are more often referred to than is the case for German schools. In free alternative schools informal meetings are in fact mentioned only in one example. What can be said is that it is a situational decision of a teacher when and where to raise an issue about a ritual activity.

A teacher in considering to initiate a reflection process will necessarily anticipate the potential process and outcome that is triggered by such a step. For topics with little or no conflict potential these considerations are no big deal, for topics that bear a great conflict potential a careful consideration can be crucial. The discussion in example 316 on the past pupil achievement celebration does not hold a lot of conflict potential. It can be brought up at any given time in any setting.

The discussion about ensuring compliance in making 'presentations' in the free alternative school in example 517 is obviously an affair that needs some amount of preparation and the timing and setting wants to be carefully chosen. A process of making allies and 'setting the scene' precedes before the topic is actually brought up. It is strategically not brought up in the sectional staff meeting in which the conflict potential actually lies, but rather in a joint meeting of pre-school and primary section. With this shift of arena the chances to achieve the desired outcome rise.

One example may be referred to for its apparent uniqueness. The choice of the teacher who negotiates her absence from the mass outside school hours with the principal is one that deserves a few sentences. In the comment I have already highlighted the fact that the teacher plays the 'professional card' knowing that she will win this one. However it is also the case that formally there is no need at all for the teacher to discuss the issue with the principal. On the 'professional plane' nobody can get at her for not attending a mass on a Sunday. She knows that.

Her reflection with the principal in this sense seems to be only play. At the same time it is more than play. It is a ritual of paying deference to the authority structure in place in the school. The character of appeasement in this act has been mentioned already.

The position of the principal is one that seems to play a stronger role in Irish primary schools than in German mainstream schools. Another teacher reports in her interview of a case that indicates in that direction.

<u>452 Pupil of the year</u>

In an Irish primary school at the end of each school year from each class a pupil of the year is picked by the class teacher. In a ceremony in presence of parents and all pupils the awards are presented to the winners.

“Q - (...) you say that one of the teachers of your staff had a problem with that.

A - Yea, she opted out because she thought it was unfair and had a negative impact on all the other pupils who were, you know, in junior infants, they were almost or equally as good and she found it impossible to have to select out one and that's, so she decided not to participate.

Q - Yes. And was that brought up in a reflection process?

A - No, no, I think she may have gone, (...) she may have gone privately to the principal, I don't know how that decision was reached.

Q - But you have never discussed that on a level of staff meetings, or?

A - No, we haven't, no, no."

It is not relevant here whether the teacher who did not participate in this scheme in actual fact had "gone privately to the principal" or not. What the interview partner makes clear however is that going privately to the principal can be a way to sort issues of dissent. What such a practice of private solutions also does is that it prevents a topic from becoming an issue of wider discussion. It therefore also cuts off reflection processes before they actually start to spread.

There is not evidence enough in the material from the interviews in my research to enter into any substantial debate on this particular aspect. It would be a worthwhile topic for an intercultural study to investigate the differences in the approaches to vertical power relations based on status within institutions.

6.10.
Again: Are rituals reflected upon by teachers?

When I looked at this question earlier (see section 6.4.) the preliminary answer was: Yes, teachers in all school types in their interviews recall examples of their own practice in which rituals are reflected. After attending extensively to the material gathered in the course of my research it is possible now to elaborate on the question some more. The question itself contains two crucial terms: ritual and reflection.

As for the term ritual, it is the case that teachers in Germany and Ireland do not have exactly the same understanding of it. This comes as a consequence of the different discourses in the different countries, and different languages, on rituals in education. There is a concept of rituals in education available for teachers in Germany that is in a certain way consistent. For them it is therefore a common enough phenomenon to think about school practice in terms of ritual. This is not the case in Ireland where teachers have a general idea of ritual but it is not linked particularly with the practice in educational institutions. Ritual is rather identified as a term that is immediately associated with religion. Nevertheless there are merging lines between the terms routine and ritual as used by Irish teachers, which in turn makes it possible to look at activities in school that are usually described as routine as being rituals.

The connection made in German educational discourse between children's needs and ritual is not found in the 'personal theories' of Irish teachers. The respective meanings are not simply 'lying around' for them as they seem to be for the teachers in Germany. Yet when it comes to depicting certain practices as ritual the teachers largely talk about the same range of activities irrespective of their national background. This range of activities also corresponds with the spectrum of activities referred to as rituals in the literature on rituals in education.

If we were to analyse the relevant situations we would also find that it is possible to identify them as ritualisations in Catherine Bell's understanding. But such an analysis would lead us away from the question as posed here.

The distinctions made in the literature in attempts to classify rituals according to scale, function or ownership (see chapter one) don't filter through to the 'personal theories' of teachers. However, a modus operandi to deal with the term ritual in the question is found relatively easy. We can simply take at face value what the teachers in the interviews depict as ritual.

It is also worth noting that in the considerable collection of examples of reflection processes on rituals in schools there is not one that could be depicted in Bohnsack's terms as 'conjunctive ritual', but rather all examples refer to activities that are 'communicative rituals'.

In relation to the idea of reflection we found that there are a number of concepts available to classify reflection processes. As mentioned already it would be possible to describe the examples provided by the teachers in the interviews by using concepts of processual scale or functional character. However applying such concepts neglects the essentially social character of the processes and the influences that come with their nature as social acts in their own right. To enhance our understanding of what goes on in reflection processes of teachers it is necessary then to apply a set of parameters that takes this social character into account. In shifting the perspective it became possible to look at the participants in the reflection as actors who define and articulate reality in negotiation with their partners. Thus we found that the professional reflection processes of teachers on rituals are best depicted as another situational strategic activity, a negotiation of legitimacy of defining, articulating and shaping reality.

As mentioned earlier my analysis of the examples of reflection processes on basis of the parameters with the perspective shifted towards their social character generates a framework for (re)analysing those activities understood as reflection processes of teachers on rituals. In this I follow an approach similar to the one applied by Catherine Bell in her study on rituals. In doing so I am also guided by the model advanced by Sabine Knauer.

Writing about contemporary issues of school development, Sabine Knauer finds that discussing concrete examples of teachers' practice means entering complex terrain. She refers to examples of teachers who in their practice give unclear and contradictory instructions, accuse children of having impure intentions, shout at children, exclude children, show up particular children in front of the class, teachers who are “in brief, showing a behaviour that, if it was exercised by the children, they themselves would decidedly refuse to tolerate.” She also refers to the “near complete lack of any sort of match between theoretical pedagogy and didactic (...) the reality of schooling (…).” (Knauer 2006, p. 243) In discussing the difficulties to come to an engagement with teachers on such issues she points to the “dilemma between power and powerlessness within the hierarchies of the educational system in which teachers find themselves first of all as subjects[144] and merely secondary as representatives of the system.” (Knauer 2006, p. 254)

[144] In common parlance in English one would probably refer to a 'teacher as a person' rather than 'a subject'. Such a translation would yet not be true to the term subject as used in the original text by Sabine Knauer. She writes in the context of a subject-scientific approach. For a conceptual approach in this context see Holzkamp 1985, pp. 236 ff. Anke Grotlueschen (2005) provides a discussion of the benefits and limitations of suject-scientific learning theory in which she also takes into account newer developments. She finds that: “In general terms, it is very difficult to stress the ‘subject’ in an age in which individualism has become debased into a neo-liberal ideology. It might be contended that Critical Psychology always pointed to the social contextualisation of the subject and the mediation of meanings by historical processes, even to the extent of Feuerbach’s 11th Thesis, if that is not going too far. But there is still some obvious unease throughout the schools of theory. ” (Grotlueschen 2005, p. 18)

As a serious impediment of any sort of reflection on teachers' practice she identifies a “taboo of speech” [Sprachtabu], basically depicting no-go-zones that are commonly respected by teachers amongst themselves wherever in bringing up a certain topic a questioning of their practice looms. In her descriptions is mirrored the professional code of non-intervention as referred to in section 6.8.3. Confronted with this type of taboo she sees the task of her essay in carving out and offering a way out of the “speechlessness” by means of terms in which one can express that what has been inexpressible so far, thus making it not only accessible for communication, but also allow for further dissemination in scientific discussion. (Knauer 2006, p. 241)

Taking Sabine Knauer's contribution into account it becomes clear that the framework suggested in my analysis of the reflection processes on rituals provides for terms that offer a way out of a certain speechlessness that comes as a result of applying the tools provided by the theories on reflection as referred to earlier.

The anchor point for me in my analysis had to be the research questions that guided my study, in particular: Can the process of reflection be described? Can typical patterns be identified in the professional reflection processes of teachers in primary schools concerning rituals/ritualisations?

The extensive coverage given to the concrete examples as reported by teachers shows that it is possible to address these questions in a comprehensible way. For the requested description of the reflection processes it was helpful to employ rubrics that depict a number of themes that are developed in the reflection processes. I have pointed out already that these rubrics are not understood as a typology of pure categories into which the various examples can be neatly placed. They are merely descriptive tools which allow one to express that what has been inexpressible so far.

In each process there can be more than one theme at play. In many cases a given example could be referred to in more than one rubric. This is a consequence of the multi-layered nature of the processes. As processes of negotiation involving a number of actors whose aims are not necessarily similar, and who in fact may follow strategies aiming at different aspects of the underlying subject matter, there is always the possibility to develop the one or the other theme more strongly in a given reflection process. Example 527 (saying grace) was presented above as a case of transfer into collective negotiation, in it there are also detectable themes of de-ritualisation or discussing ritual choreography. In example 410 (talk without consequences) demarcation lines are a dominant feature, however in it there is obviously at the same time the topic of negotiating harmonised practice. In the discussion of the teachers about the non-conforming position of the child in example 311 (special needs pave a way out) the question of harmonising practice is similarly present.

By using the suggested rubrics as descriptive tools it was possible to identify certain patterns in the reflection processes on rituals. These allow us to see how the negotiations of legitimacy are actually put into practice in the three different school types. From the material gathered in the interviews it is clear that reflection on rituals remains a practice in which teachers engage mostly amongst themselves. This applies to all three school types. When it comes to rituals and ritualisations thus the negotiations about legitimate forms of defining and articulating, eventually shaping reality are a domain of the teachers which they mostly don't share with other partners (parents, but especially children).

Only a minority of cases from the free alternative schools refer to collective negotiations and these examples are of negotiations with children who are at the upper end of the age scale of primary school (5/6th class) in schools where there is also a secondary section included. This observation raises questions about the claim of free alternative schools as “schools of negotiation” (Scholz) as mentioned earlier. When it comes to rituals and ritualisations: what exactly are the forms of negotiation that take place between adults and children in free alternative schools? As I have concentrated on the reflection processes of teachers I am not in a position to make a definite statement on this matter. It would certainly be interesting to investigate this issue with a different research focus.

The specific situation in Ireland, with the hegemony of the church in education, filters through also in relation to reflection processes on rituals. Religious rituals in Irish primary schools are in general not reflected upon. They are not 'touched' despite the fact that they can be perceived as a nuisance within a school context that is gearing towards delivery of a curriculum that is focussed on the three 'R', reading, writing, arithmetic – or in more contemporary terms: literacy and numeracy.

The situation in German mainstream schools, with rather varied conceptual orientations being frequently present amongst staff within one school, accounts for a distinct focus on the theme of demarcation lines in this context. This can lead to non-reflection. It can also mean that in reflection processes the theme of demarcation is developed in a way that is not observable in the reports from Irish teachers and from teachers in free alternative schools.

The actors in the reflection processes are bound to the social situation in which they reflect. What they do or not do, the topics which they happily develop or drop, the thoughts which they exchange or censor away, the remarks which they make or hold back depends on this situation. In this regard we saw how the ritual culture of a school correlates to the reflection processes that are happening in it. At the same time the actors in reflection processes are yet actors. They assess the situation in which they are and on that basis they make strategic decisions about entering into a discussion or not, drawing a demarcation line, playing a friendly non-intervention game or harmonise their practice.

The subject matter in reflections on rituals or ritualisations are social acts that are essentially linked to social order, norms, values. In Catherine Bells terminology “ritualisation is a strategic play of power, of domination and resistance, within the arena of the social body.” (Bell 1992, p. 204) When explaining the particular choice of school types for comparison in my research project (see chapter three) I have also pointed to the centrality that the complex of power has for an understanding of rituals and ritualisations. The data driven exploration of the reflection processes reported by the teachers in their interviews has led to me repeatedly referring to the character of these processes as negotiations of legitimacy of certain ways of defining, articulating or materialising reality. The analysis of the examples clearly shows that these negotiations are not in the first place guided by a deliberative rationality but rather by strategic assessments of the social situation in which they take place.

Strongly resonating in these reflection processes is the particular character of rituals and ritualisations as inherently linked to the motif of power negotiations. Essential for those negotiations that are understood as “ritualisation is simultaneously the avoidance of explicit speech and narrative.” (Bell 1992, p. 111)

We saw earlier that a particular strand of reflection aims specifically at uncovering mechanisms at work in social situations that are normally not made explicit. Covert hegemonic assumptions and power relations are the main focus for reflection processes understood as critical reflection. (Brookfield, see section 2.9.) As documented in the research questions the idea of critical reflection enjoyed attention from the outset of my study. In the next chapter I will turn to this particular approach in which the motif of power takes central stage.

7. Critical reflection on rituals in school

One of the questions that stood at the very beginning of this study was: Does critical reflection on rituals take place? At the time there was an assumption that there may be a quality inherent to rituals that would make them difficult to access in processes of critical reflection.[145] The close connection of rituals to the complex of power relations played a crucial role in these considerations. After going through an investigative process as described in chapter six it is also clear now that the reflection processes dealt with in this study are social acts and that negotiations of legitimacy are central to them. As negotiations of legitimacy they attend to aspects of social order, norms, values. As social acts they can not be construed free of aspects of power. A serious attempt to research reflection processes of teachers on rituals and ritualisation therefore must pay attention to the idea of critical reflection in which covert hegemonic assumptions and power relations take centre stage.

When the research question was put down it was guided by the expectation that it would be possible to classify reflection processes according to their orientational character. In doing so the criteria as suggested by Stephen Brookfield (see section 2.9.) promised to be an applicable model for such a classification. In this chapter I will describe how the reality of professional reflection processes of teachers on rituals is unlikely to fit the idea of critical reflection. There may be critical questions coming up as aspects in the reflection processes, but even this depends on a constellation of a critical mass of teachers with prevalent critical attitudes in a given school.

Brookfield holds that “Reflection becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes. The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests.” (Brookfield 1995, p. 8) He condenses this later in the formula: “Externalising and investigating power relationships is the first purpose of critical reflection. The second purpose of critical reflection is to uncover hegemonic assumptions.” (Brookfield 2010, p. 222)

Critical reflection in the sense of Stephen Brookfield implies that those who come together for reflection have made a decision that this is what they do:

- externalise power relations,
- investigate power relations,
- uncover hegemonic assumptions.

Externalising power relations basically means to lay them bare in a process of naming them. Investigating power relations would require a systematic analysis of these relations to find out how they are exercised, why they are there in the first place, how legitimate they are in this form etc. Externalising and investigating power relations rely on a concept of power to be used as a screening filter to be laid over the matter reflected upon.
Uncovering hegemonic assumptions means to consciously search for the roots of 'personal theories' or 'common sense theories' which implies that there is from the outset an assumption that these theories are possibly distorted. It further suggests a validation of these theories, why else would one want to uncover them otherwise?

[145] The question of this supposed inherent quality of rituals and ritualisations has been at the core of the investigative process that went on in the memory-work groups. It will be followed up in chapter eight.

As is obvious from the various examples of reflection processes collected in the interview series, they are not initiated for the purpose of externalising and investigating power relations, or to uncover hegemonic assumptions. They are initiated for purposes that are clearly anchored in the practical activities of the teachers' professional lives. What the teachers look for in the reflection processes is not in the first place a (better) understanding of power relations or hegemonic assumptions. What they look for in the reflection is a practical outcome, a harmonisation of practice, a de-ritualisation, a certain choreography. These are all material results. They have practical effects and consequences: a teacher does not have to shout at children to stand in a line but rather can sit relaxed in her classroom and wait for the children to come in after break on their own; a teacher can hit against a sound-bowl and 25 children will be quiet; a teacher will stand on a stage expressing a welcome to 120 parents whose children start school on this Monday (and the local paper will have her picture printed in the 'breaking news' on Friday); a teacher will eventually be able to stop grabbing the 4-year old child who can't sit still during morning circle.

From the perspective of the individual teacher this is what the professional reflection processes on rituals are about in the end: a certain way to shape reality. The reflection then is only a means to achieve this. As far as externalisation, investigation of power relations and uncovering of hegemonic assumptions are happening in a reflection process they are a means to an end. They are moves employed by a teacher or teachers in the concrete situation in which definition and articulation of reality is negotiated. The metaphorical figure of the knowledge-seeker who engages in reflection for the sake of a better understanding alone is a myth that is mocked by the actual practice in the real life situation of educational institutions.

It may well be possible to think of reflection processes that are designed from the outset as critical reflection. We will see how such a design can look like in practice when we move on to the section about memory-work in chapter eight. However in the professional reflection processes of teachers on rituals that are observable in the real situation in the three school types this is not the case. Critical reflection here is merely an aspect that may enter into a reflection process. If it does it is on the basis of teachers asking critical questions.

Not all questions about power relations or hegemonic assumptions are 'critical questions'. We remember Foucault's notion of the critical attitude as mentioned in the section on critical reflection. The perpetually raised question is: “How not to be governed *like that,* by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such objectives in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.” (Foucault 1997, p. 44)

Therefore asking a question like: 'What power relations are there in our school?' is an ordinary question. What makes it a critical question is the critical attitude, that is an anti-authoritarian agenda (or at least an impulse). Following such an agenda the critical investigation of power relations and hegemonic assumptions aims on scrutinising their legitimacy. Where basic assumptions are found to lack substance, or in fact to be wrong those social acts or social conditions that are based on them lose their legitimacy. Underlying such an investigation is always the threat to overthrow such power relations that are found to be illegitimate.

As a pre-condition for critical questioning there has to be a critical attitude. And yet for a teacher having a critical attitude does not guarantee that critical reflection on rituals takes place. We found that in reflection processes teachers make strategic decisions about entering into a discussion or not. Critically externalising (naming) power relations, asking questions about them or putting hegemonic assumptions up for scrutiny are no exception of this rule. A teacher with a critical attitude will strategically decide to bring these questions up or not.

As far as rituals are the matter to be reflected upon we deal with material acts of material actors. In rituals social norms, values, belief systems are enacted. The actors who take part negotiate, by means of ritualisation, what is legitimate and what is not. They practically define and articulate reality. They do so by situational strategic interventions. They ritualise.

For teachers to reflect upon rituals in school is not like a film in cinema or a play in theatre, where they sit back and watch it or walk out of the show if it becomes too scary or too boring. The teachers are *in* the film, they are *on* the stage. Their every act is part of the further development of the plot. That is also why their reflection is similarly an act that is connected to other acts.

What's more about this particular drama is that in contrast to a film or to theatre there is no director and no screenplay. Directing and screenplay are constantly negotiated by the actors. In doing so they are bound to yesterdays acts, they can not simply cut and start somewhere else. This would be possible only by leaving the stage altogether. If they want to cut while on stage, they have to clean up the mess of the past while still being on stage.

In this sense it is possible to re-interpret the terminology suggested by Donald Schön. If we take away the dashes from reflection-in-action we arrive at 'reflection in action' which is just what the teachers in our examples do. Their reflections are part of the film in which they play. Even while they reflect they develop the plot *on stage*.

The assumption put forward earlier was that: To reflect *on* rituals or ritualisations it is necessary to distance oneself from the actual situation, step out of it, and look at it with deliberative rationality. (see section 2.2.) From the extended consideration of the reflection processes as presented in the last chapter we now see that these processes may fit the idea of reflection-on-action as far as the term is understood as a pure technical expression denoting the timing of a reflection process. They are not yet 'reflection on action' – here now without the dashes. For this to happen there would be necessary a real distance between the actors and their acting. They have to basically leave the stage, at least temporarily.

In the reflection processes on rituals that are reported by the teachers in their interviews this is not the case. Their reflections are still 'in action'. Surely, not in the sense that they happen on-the-spot, but very much in the sense that the situation in which the reflections happen are as much determined by the system of power relations that are otherwise acted out and negotiated in the rituals.

In the rituals the actors are constantly concerned with positioning themselves in a social situation. They enact power relations, make them material. One can say they *make power happen*. “Power exists only when it is put into action (...) In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely, it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue or their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.” (Foucault 1982, p. 789)

Enacting power relations implies exerting authority, making others do, or refrain from doing. In doing so the actors are also responsible. Asking questions with an anti-authoritarian agenda or impulse about actors acting in ritualisations means to also make explicit how responsibility is located in the actors.

Earlier I quoted Catherine Bell who said that ritualisation "(…) is a way of acting that sees itself as *responding* to a place, event, force, problem, or tradition. It tends to see itself as the natural or appropriate thing to do in the circumstances. Ritualisation does not see how it actively creates place, force, event, and tradition, how it redefines or generates the circumstances to which it is responding." (Bell 1992, p. 109) Obviously it is not ritualisation that sees itself responding to a place, event, force, problem or tradition. It is the actors who see themselves responding. In doing so they shift responsibility to the initiating phenomenon. The own actions are constructed as a response. The responsibility lies on the side of the place, event, force, problem or tradition. Critically investigating rituals implies uncovering the responsibility of the actors for their actions. It makes explicit what was meant to be not explicit. This also threatens to destroy the legitimacy of one's own actions as natural and appropriate thing to do in the circumstances.

Is there evidence of critical questions aiming at externalising and investigating power relations, uncovering hegemonic assumptions in the examples reported by the teachers in the interview series? Let us have a glance at the three different school types.

Irish primary schools

The only example from Irish primary schools that could be assumed to name ("externalise") power relations concerns the corridor talk of teachers about the influence of religion in school. The report of the teacher is not clear on this, but it can at least be reasonably construed that in the informal discussions there may be some naming of the actual power structure that causes the burden of extra-work for the teachers. From the interview however there is no indication how explicitly this is done.

In none of the reported processes is there an attempt of uncovering of hegemonic assumptions. Where practices like lining up, dismissal, honouring of past-pupil achievements, the Christmas play come up in the discussions there is no search for the roots of the 'personal theories' or 'common sense theories' that are underlying their implementation.

Power as a screening filter is not applied in any of the examples either. This concerns particularly the role of adults as decision-makers and the legitimacy of this role.

German mainstream schools

In the majority of cases power relations are not explicitly made an issue in these reflection processes. Only in some examples they play a role.

In the discussion about the sexualised dance performance the fit of various value systems is discussed. The value systems themselves are not scrutinised. According to the parameters set by the institutional context the teachers make their decision to introduce a censoring agent. The power issues that are included are not investigated.

For the reflection process on the seating order the teacher reports that the question of adults regulating the physical matters of children is actually looked at for the potential of exercising undue authority.

The teacher who holds back with her position against the lining up holds in her hands a key to initiating critical questioning. She decides not to try to use it at the time. She expects that it won't open the door that needs to be opened.

One may argue that the teacher who has her doubts about restricting talk about television in some way asks the question how legitimate her practice is. Yet the question is not asked explicitly and definitely not critically. I will take up this example soon again.

Free alternative schools

The discussion about making 'presentations' in the school with the 'non-directive' concept involves a questioning of conceptual elements. One may argue that this is also questioning assumptions that can be seen as hegemonic, e. g. of children's needs, or how learning is to be understood.

In the case of the teacher who is on maternity leave and brings up the question whether children need daily morning circle a process of uncovering assumptions is initiated. It stops however once the colleagues leave the school.

The discussion initiated about the school assembly in which the teacher incites a review of the practice against the conceptual ideas opens the field for a process of critical investigation. In it the power relations as they are enacted are explicitly named. How far an investigation will follow is open due to the pending process.

In the discussions about saying grace before meals, the pre-school children to be kept at morning-circle, and about the obligatory singing during morning circle the power relations are explicitly named. In these discussions the legitimacy of adult authority is discussed.

Looking at the (not very long) list of reflection processes in which critical questions come up we find that those ritual activities that involve a strong differentiating component are more likely to incite these questions. We remember the attempt of a classification of rituals made by Bernstein/Elvin/Peters who distinguished between consensual and differentiating rituals. Franz Wellendorf has pointed out that in every ritual both aspects are present (see section 1.3.2.) For a given ritual then the accent can lie stronger on the consensual or the differential character. Consensual in this context refers to the establishment and display of group coherence while differentiation refers to internal hierarchies within a group.

That those rituals with a stronger differential accent are critically questioned seems to make sense because in them the elements of enacting power are more pronounced towards effects internal to the group. Rituals of self-governance are a variant of rituals of differentiation. The conceptual ideas behind school assembly or class council may aim at a levelling effect.[146] At the end of the day they are yet a way to regulate internal hierarchies.

[146] If the aim is at all times a levelling effect is debatable, see e. g. Münte-Goussar (2001)

There is no stringent connection in the sense that every time teachers reflect on rituals with a strong differentiating component this would necessarily lead to critical questions being asked. We see that this is not at all the case in the Irish schools. We also see that in the German mainstream schools in the majority of cases this does not happen. In the free alternative schools it is more common that reflection on such rituals brings up critical questions. This is not really a surprise given the different orientation towards authority in these schools.

In answering the question about the orientational character of reflection about rituals in schools we can say, as part of a reflection process critical questions may be brought up, but the likelihood of this to happen differs. They are more likely to appear in the reflection processes of teachers in free alternative schools.

We find that there is a connection between critical questions to be asked and a critical attitude to be present. In this context I want to briefly go back to the example of the teacher who asks her colleagues in the sectional staff meeting about the morning-circle in which a child tells stories about watching television (example 424). We remember this teacher being in her first year after finishing teacher training. Her question asked in the staff meeting about the legitimacy of her prohibiting talk about television in morning circle is triggered by a tender doubt.

She sees a contradiction in asking children for their weekend experiences and at the same time censoring out what this particular child has to say. She herself holds a certain value system (and theory of childhood) in which there is no appreciation of children watching television, and particularly not 'Star-Wars'.

“A – (...) after the weekend, when he tells his story, what he did (...) and that was in fact, ahm, nothing special at all, he has simply watched television. That in itself is bad enough, for a child to only watch television at weekends. But then, not only can he tell you the entire story of the film, he can actually act it out, too.

Q – It seems that was an exciting film.

A – That was Star-Wars. Fourth (...) I can only say, fourth class. Now, I find Star-Wars is not really appropriate for fourth class. On top of it.”

Her question is not driven by an anti-authoritarian agenda or impulse. In her entire interview there is no sign of such an agenda. Yet the question as posed has a critical potential. But this potential is not developed at all in the situation where she reflects with her colleagues. She gets an answer to her question that wipes away any trace of a doubt that she had. One may see it as her personal fate that she is paired with those particular colleagues at this particular school. In another school with another parallel class teacher her doubts may have been cultivated by a feedback that would have turned the question into a critical question. Had she by accident been paired with a teacher who holds a critical attitude, the potential of the question could have been actualised. Here it was not.

Which raises the question of the chances of critical questions being asked in an environment where there are no teachers who hold a critical attitude. We remember the example of the teacher who reduces dictation to one per semester. She also reported about 20 years of agony with her former colleague with whom there was no common ground for even scrutinizing the learning theories that inform the practice. It is only when two new colleagues come to the school that she sees an opening.

For critical investigations about rituals to happen in reflection processes of teachers it is a second pre-condition that there is a critical mass, a sufficient number of teachers in a given school who share the desire to investigate power relations and uncover hegemonic assumptions. This is very much common sense. What actually constitutes a sufficient number may differ from one case to another. At any rate the lack of support as a decisive factor in preventing critical reflection to happen is clearly mirrored also in suggestions as made by Sabine Knauer or Stephen Brookfield. Both of them, despite coming from rather different angles, point out that it is crucial for teachers to "find a small group of peers – even one person will do – who share your conviction" (Brookfield 1995, p. 239) or to "first encourage small, informal group meetings with colleagues" (Knauer 2006, p. 255). It is clear also after our engagement with the reflection processes in chapter six that such suggestions basically promote a particular strategy, namely 'making allies' first before going into 'open battle'.

At the same time that is not to say that critical questions *can not* be asked without such a critical mass. There is no doubt, a teacher can always ask whatever question she or he wants to ask. But for the one who asks the critical question in a situation where there is not sufficient support such a move bears the risk depicted by Stephen Brookfield as committing cultural suicide. "Teachers (...) can commit cultural suicide without even being aware of what they're doing. As they speak about how they're questioning and reevaluating their practice or how they're doing things differently these days, they run the risk that colleagues will see them as engaged in an act of betrayal. They are whistle-blowers on the culture of stasis – the collective agreement not to rock the boat by asking awkward questions or doing things differently." (Brookfield 1995, p. 236)

Even for those teachers who hold a critical attitude it is a necessity to anticipate the potential risk that comes with asking critical questions. That is why critical questions are more likely to be asked in free alternative schools. There is a critical mass of teachers (and parents) already who have an agenda in line with Foucault's questions: "How not to be governed *like that,* by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such objectives in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them." (Foucault 1997, p. 44)

In all cases the rituals reported by teachers in their interviews as reflected upon (and also those mentioned in the course of the interviews but not being reflected upon) are communicative rituals in the terminology of Ralf Bohnsack. Their enacting is a means by which 'reality' is articulated for cognitive endorsement by all. And: they are owned by the official representatives of the institution (see section 1.3.3.). We remember the remarks of Catherine Bell as referred to in section 1.6. and the shifted perspective of investigation derived thereof leading to question being asked of actors, not of acts. Therefore Foucault's question for teachers would have to be turned into: How not ***govern*** like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such objectives in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that. And the very last part of the quote however would have to read: not by me, not by us.

That is why if critical questions are asked in reflection processes of teachers on rituals in school they are not in fact asked of ritual. The critical question asks about the 'actors'. How reasonable, grounded, explicable is their acting? It asks about their being governors. It asks about their governing in its ambiguity within a wider social context and the legitimacy of acting in just this manner and not in another one.

From the findings presented so far it is clear that rituals and ritualisations are a very sensitive topic in professional reflection processes. Their inherent link to social order, norms, values, their character as enacted negotiations of power relations count for a high conflict potential in discussions that aim at critical reflection. This was already anticipated by various comments about the issue of rituals and reflection as referred to in section 1.8. (Wellendorf, Piper)

Obviously rituals and reflection are not the same thing. Rituals are enacted by certain means predominantly anchored in bodily practices, making use of analogical forms of communication. Reflection is an engagement in communication in predominantly digital form.[147] But even if communication in them is predominantly digital in the form of verbal exchanges this does not mean that the processes feature as an investigation to find a definition of reality that holds as a universal truth. The discussions are rather overdetermined by the various interests of the participants. Instead of seeking a universal truth what is looked for is a particular definition of reality. The aim is the construction of a truth that is made valid in the given social environment.

In the concrete situations of schools rituals and reflection on rituals could both be depicted as negotiations. In the overall context of the institutional life in schools they are but two elements of one complex that revolves around the legitimacy of defining, articulating, shaping reality. Who is allowed to do what, with whom, when, where and how? Who can act upon possible actions to make them easier or more difficult, who is allowed to allow, or to constrain and forbid? Whose definition of reality is dominant in a given situation, whose is redundant?

The shaping of reality manifests itself in practical acts, here: ritual practice. An essential element in the up-keeping of a given practice is the "strategic misrecognition" or "blindness of practice" as described by Catherine Bell (see section 1.6.). Critical reflection threatens to challenge this. It threatens to make the process of constructing a particular definition of reality as valid truth visible and by doing so unmask it as an act of domination.

On the basis of this the question suggests itself: is it possible for teachers to critically reflect on rituals at all?

In the reality of teachers' professional life reflection remains a social act that connects other acts. There is normally not distance enough between the actors and their acting to enter into a process of reflection on action (without dashes, see above in this chapter). Every move made in a reflection process will have immediate consequences for the actions to follow, in case of bringing up critical questions including the possibility of "cultural suicide". For critical reflection to take place then a setting seems to be needed in which the necessary distance between the actors and their acts is actually possible.

[147] The terms analogical and digital in relation to communication have been introduced earlier already. I am using them in line with Watzlawick/Beavin/Jackson. "(...) digital communication is more exact and identifiable in that this form of communication makes direct reference to the thing by its articulated name. Speaking a language and using easily identifiable and concrete terms and words, as when people are conversing, or reading text, is a digital communication." (Blanford 2009; see also FN 17)
This is not to conclude from the material collected in the course of this research that communication in the various reflection processes described by the teachers in the interviews does not also include analogical forms. It would be a rather peculiar suggestion to say that there are no such elements prevalent when teachers meet and discuss issues of their work. However, the design of the reflection processes as discussions implies that the dominant mode of communication in general is the digital form.

Judith Cohen and Deborah Piper have described the effects of what they call the "breakdown of roles" in the context of a residential adult learning community. They refer to an option offered to students in the Adult Baccalaureate College of Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts that sees "a group of forty to fifty students and seven faculty members (…) convene for a nine-day residency at the beginning of each semester". (Cohen/Piper 2000, p. 207) The purpose of the residency is for the students to identify interests, experiences and existing areas of expertise on which basis an individualised study plan is designed.

The example of Cohen/Piper does not specifically aim at a process of critical reflection in the terms as depicted here. The breakdown of roles however is similarly essential for what they identify as a transformative learning experience as it is for critical reflection on rituals to happen. They emphasize the importance of "usual hierarchies (…) to vanish." (Cohen/Piper 2000, p. 210)[148] The same motif underlies the concept of peer review groups (Walsh/Moore 2011) or "kollegiale Beratung" aka intervision (Becker 1999, Schmidt 2002, see above section 5.4.7.).

In the following chapter I am going to attend to the third empirical part of my study. In it I turn to the practical application of the method of memory-work for a reflection process on rituals. In applying the method a setting was chosen that guaranteed for the necessary distance from the "usual hierarchies" of the participants. As explained earlier (see section 4.1.2.) practically 'doing' memory-work on rituals as a part of my investigations was anchored in the research questions. It was meant to address two aspects of my research project. I hoped to be able to ascertain whether there are potential problem areas for critical reflection inherent to rituals and ritualisations. I also expected the practical implementation of memory-work to be helpful in potentially developing suggestions for their increased inclusion in processes of critical reflection.

Memory-work offered the opportunity to look at the application of a method that is designed from the outset as a tool for critical reflection. Used in a setting in distance to the "usual hierarchies" of the participants it also addresses the idea of reflection on rituals (without dashes). I am going to describe the method, its development and the experiences derived from its application in detail.

[148] It is questionable how far the "usual hierarchies" in Cohen/Piper's concrete example "vanish." At the end of the day the faculty members are faculty members and remain faculty members even during the residency, and similarly the students remain students. What "vanishes" may be more the actual way how the "usual hierarchies" are enacted. Thus it may well be possible that what vanishes during the residency are not so much the "usual hierarchies" but rather the "usual rituals" that go with these hierarchies. Cohen/Piper do not problematise this in their essay.
For the purpose of my own study it is however not relevant whether in the empirical situation that Cohen/Piper refer to the "usual hierarchies" in fact vanish or not, what is of relevance for my purpose is simply that they refer to the importance of these hierarchies to vanish where a transformative learning experience is sought after. An in-depth discussion of their article would lead too far away from the line of argument that I am following at the moment.

8. Memory-Work as a method of critical reflection[149]

8.1.
Introduction

In planning my research project, I was aware that there were difficulties in engaging with rituals in terms of their accessibility to reflection processes. From the literature on rituals in schools (see section 1.8.), and from my earlier engagement with the topic, I expected that critical reflection on rituals could pose a real challenge.

Parallel to the investigation into the reflection settings used by teachers, and the interview series about the concrete reflection processes, due to these potential difficulties I also intended to involve a practical reflection process on rituals. This was meant to ascertain if there was an inherent problem with rituals that would render them inaccessible for critical reflection. The experiences with the practical reflection processes were also meant to be put in relation to the findings of the interviews and the questionnaire. This was seen as a helpful step to arrive at suggestions for improved conceptual inclusion of the complex of rituals/ritualisations in professional reflection within the educational system, making rituals/ritualisations accessible for critical reflection.

From this perspective, the method of memory-work offered a promising tool for this endeavour. Originating from the context of feminist studies it was developed as a research tool that essentially worked against the grain of established social science during the 1980's. It aims at deciphering the connections between ideologies, constructions of self, and the shaping of reality. I will describe the method and its history in section 8.2.

In the course of my study two groups were organised that did practical memory-work on rituals in school. The processes are documented below, in section 8.3. and 8.4. respectively. An appraisal of the memory-work group follows in section 8.5.

Towards the end of the chapter in section 8.6. I also include a contribution on methodological aspects of memory-work.

[149] Parts of this chapter are an expanded version of the presentation made to the Conference on “New Agendas in social movement studies”, 26th of November 2011 in NUI Maynooth (Hamm, 2011b)

8.2.
Making memory-work

8.2.1.
Roots

The method of memory-work was developed by feminist activists in West-Germany, namely a circle of women who were part of the project *Frauenformen* (women's forms) surrounding the editorial group of the journal *Das Argument* throughout the 1980's. In the preface to their publication on female sexualisation they explained the origins of the method: "The whole project arose out of our fundamental unease with all the theories of socialization previously developed within psychology and sociology. (…) The question of how individuals make certain modes of behaviour their own, how they learn to develop one particular set of needs as opposed to certain others, is never addressed. In no existing work did we find any indication of the existential affliction and obstacles facing girls in their attempts to become 'grown-up' women." (Haug 1987, p. 24)

The discussion processes of the women who pioneered memory-work were embedded in a context of debate on Marxist theory. An important influence was also the development of Critical Psychology (CP) at the same time with its subject-scientific approach. "CP as a subject-oriented research program promotes a type of research in which subjects are both participants and co-researchers simultaneously (…). Psychological research is intended as research for people and not about people. This is possible only if psychological research is conducted from the standpoint of the subject." (Teo 1998, p. 247) The closeness of the project *Frauenformen* to this approach is obvious. "Taking humans as subjects of the conditions of their lives – as in the project *Frauenformen* – demands from the research process to bring to bear their subject-status." (Mayer-Siebert/Schmalstieg 2002, p. 48)[150]

What *Frauenformen* focused on was the problem of construction of self in circumstances of suppression, and the perpetuation of these very circumstances in spite of their suppressive character through the acts of the subjects. The demand to bring to bear the subject-status of those who took part in the research process meant also to include participants in the process as co-researchers. Research then is not research on, but research with and research for those who are the subjects of the research.

"The project *Frauenformen* addressed these demands on feminist research through the method of memory-work which was formulated at first in Vol. 2 of the publications of *Frauenformen* and increasingly systematized through the different projects.[151] Research material are stories/scenes that are written by the participants in the research project themselves." (Mayer-Siebert/Schmalstieg 2002, p. 48)

A key figure in the process of developing the method was Frigga Haug who taught sociology at the Hamburg University for Economy and Politics until 2001. She was also a visiting lecturer in Copenhagen, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Sidney, Toronto and Durham.

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[150] The term subject in this context has the double meaning of 'made by' and 'makers of' at the same time.

[151] Between 1980 and 1997 *Frauenformen* published a total of 9 books on topics like female sexualisation, performance/gender, fear, film experiences, politics of women

8.2.2.
The method

'Female sexualisation' contained a chapter on the method in which guiding assumptions were presented. (Haug et al. 1987, pp. 33 - 72) But as Frigga Haug explained, for a long time she hesitated to write a research guide for memory work because "in principle this runs against my idea of keeping the process methodologically open and allowing for space for innovative intervention." (Haug 1999a, p. 7)

As a consequence of her series of lectures held in Durham, North Carolina she eventually presented such a research guide 1999 in her article on "Memory-Work as a Method of Social Science Research: A Detailed Rendering of Memory-Work Method." (Haug 1999b) She highlights four basic theoretical assumptions that underlie the method:

- "That one's own personality is constructed
  The idea that our personality is not simply inherited, fixed, but rather that we construct our self in given structures, includes that our personality consequently has a history in which we gave meaning to what we found essential and by doing so shaped ourselves as personality. This history defines our steps in the present and the future.

- The tendency to eliminate contradictions
  All that does not fit in with the unambiguous presentation of our self is put aside in favour of a most clear-cut picture of our self, for ourselves and for others.

- That meaning is constructed
  In our everyday lives we try to establish a consistent meaning for ourselves. We create a type of image of ourselves in which we believe and that we try to present in all communicative situations. The construction of meaning is a process permanently ongoing. We send messages and expect that others receive these messages in the same way as we intended to send them. The construction of meaning thus relies on the acceptance of others. This happens by means of gestures, appearances, expressions, but first of all by the means of language.

- The politics of language
  (…) Language is not simply a tool which we can use at will, but rather (…) in and through the existing language politics are made that are talking through ourselves and that are regulating our construction of meaning. This means also that culturally in a way there are ready-made meanings lying around. These meanings impress themselves upon us when we are writing and dictate us what we may not ever have intended to express." (Haug 1999b, pp. 9 - 11)

Memory-work is a collective process. A group comes together for the purpose of investigating a specific question or topic. At the heart of the process lies the engagement with self-generated stories/scenes, their writing and analysis. This engagement however is necessarily embedded in a discussion process on the actual topic or research question. Only in this context does the work on and with the self-generated scenes make sense.

Four main parts of the process can be described in general terms.

1. Initial discussion/s

Subsumed under this heading is the necessary clarification amongst the participants of the actual topic. The exchange of thought on the topic in question should lead to a preliminary 'sketch of the problem' as point of departure from which the group will approach the topic. This should be done in a manner most accessible to all participants.

"The topic should be formed in lay terms. It is important not to pose the question in scientific or analytical terms since memories will not emerge when the appeal to them takes the form of language that is not in the vernacular. 'A time when I was afraid' is common language to which everyone can relate. Setting the question in scientific terminology, 'About the problematic gender-specific emotional inability to act' would elicit few memories." (Haug 1999b, p. 3)

2. Writing of scenes

Each member of the group writes a scene on the agreed topic. The scene shall describe a situation that the author remembers from her/his own life. The stories are written in the third person singular. "This forces the participants to explain themselves as not self-evident and, therefore, unknown persons. (…) We might call this choice of third-person narration historicizing or distancing the narrator." (Haug 1999b, p. 4)

When writing the text the author will concentrate on this one experience only instead of the description of a set of experiences[152] or a biographical report. 'Meta-explanations' should be avoided[153] as well as interpretations of the scene within the story. However as much detail of the actual happenings as the author remembers should be included.

The length of the scenes needs to be adjusted to the time available for the group to work on the text-analysis. As a rule of thumb one typewritten page can be dealt with in a two-hour session.

3. Text-Analysis

This step follows a set procedure:

a) The text to be analysed is read out loud and consensus about common sense understanding and theory is sought amongst the group

[152] Take e. g. the topic ‚job interview' – instead of simply describing one interview, one could also a write about a number of different interviews over a period of time (a set of experiences)

[153] E. g. if one describes a journey from Sligo to Dublin and starts to explain the historical roots of the railway system of Ireland ...

At this first step in the text-analysis the group follows the pattern of empathizing with the author. “We first want the meaning the author wishes to convey. Most of us learned in school how to interpret text. What does the poet want to tell us? (…) At this point it is important (…) to work toward a consensus about the author's meaning. This will open up a lively discussion. A number of different suggestions should arise, as each member of the group analyses the text. There are never any wrong answers. Each suggestion should build upon the others creating a thesis-like formulation of different statements, ultimately reaching a consensus.” (Haug 1999b, p. 11)

The group also seeks for the common sense theory that informs the message conveyed. This concerns ‘sediments of folk-knowledge’ that are part of our stories also. Common sense message and theory can often be expressed in form of a proverb or saying.

The results of this first step are recorded and put out of sight.

b) Deconstruction of text

While “the next step is simple and at the same time rigorous. (…) [It] is not easily done because most individual experiences reported rely on empathy and comprehension and are successful in eliciting these in everyday communication.
The consequence is the attempt to cultivate therapeutic discourses of sympathy and to relate connecting stories by way of 'psychologizing'. This stance and practice is not only theoretically unproductive, but it also stands in the way of insight. It invites group members to ally with opponents of understanding and active thinking and simply increases painful perceptions. It is absolutely necessary that distance be established in order to work with the text. (…) The questions about the text are limited to language use - basic grammatical rules. Sentences contain a subject, a verb, an object, perhaps adjectives. They give information about the engaged person, her emotions, her activities, and other persons. With this notion, we split the text in its elements.” (Haug 1999b, p. 14)

First the verbs referring to the active subject are collected, then motivations that guide the active subject and emotions that the active subject experiences are noted. In doing so all interpretation of the text is to be avoided.
Then the same is done for all other persons who play a role in the story.
Then the group looks for linguistic peculiarities, e. g. the repeated use of impersonal subjects, or auxiliary verbs, or negative forms of expressing activity.
Then white spots are identified in the story, that is “elements not mentioned in the written memory but necessary to the plausibility and agreement of the story.” (Haug 1999b, p. 18)
Eventually contradictions within the story are listed.

The collection of textual elements is visualized for everyone. This can be done on a flip-chart, on posters on a wall, on a white board etc. For this purpose a table format provides a template that can be adapted according to space and equipment used.[154]

[154] The table presented here is an adaptation of the format presented by Frigga Haug. I am going to also show examples of its practical application in section 8.4.

	Verbs	**Motivations**	**Emotions**
Active subject			
(if needed: active subject in plural 'they', 'all' etc.)			

Who	**Verbs**	**Motivations**	**Emotions**
Person 1			
Person 2			
Person 3			

Linguistic peculiarities	**White spots**	**Contradictions**

c) Reconstruction after Deconstruction

At this stage the actual text of the story is put out of sight to give room for a new perspective on the story. Now the group works only with the table that was created in the deconstruction of the text. The elements used in the construction of the story are laid bare and are looked at as the building stones, the material which the author choose to put together.

By using only the material in the table, the participants discuss how the author actually constructs her/his personality. During this step there is always a temptation to go back to empathizing with the author in a bid to 'save' her/his common sense message. Therefore this step requires a certain analytic discipline. The material to be used now is only what was detected by deconstructing the story.

The group formulates a thesis about the way the author constructs her/himself.

The same process then is repeated for other persons appearing in the story.

4. Problem transfer and final discussion

With the re-construction of the actors in mind the participants now discuss the meaning of the story again. The findings of the re-construction can lead to a different angle altogether from which the story is viewed, it can even lead to statements in opposite and contrast to the first step findings about the meaning of the story.

From this discussion a transfer of the original problem (question) onto other planes is possible. New questions can evolve that were not obvious before starting the text-analysis, certain theories can become a matter of interest and further investigation. Taken-for-granted assumptions and the dominant ideologies that guided the author's constructions can be deciphered. Thus uncovering the entanglement of personal and public theories and the ways how reality is defined and articulated can lead to new pathways. Following these new pathways can increase the participants' ability to understand the problem at hand better and become more conscious in dealing with it in their own (life) practice.

8.2.3.
Dissemination and derivations

The character of memory-work as a method left open for developments has been mentioned already. Frigga Haug explicitly refers to this idea in her introduction to the *Duke Lectures.* When she presents her research guide she compares it to a cooking recipe. While one can read “how it is commonly done” it also offers the chance to “examine what one should not leave aside, or change.” (Haug 1999, p. 7)

“Memory work is applicable in a variety of situations. It is suitable for adult education outside the perimeters of the university, as it is for people beginning something new, or in social movements.” (Haug 1999b, p. 6)

As early as 1984 a group of women from *Frauenformen* brought memory-work to Birmingham where it was taken on by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). “I remember that some of the women from the group in Berlin came to the CCCS to talk about the project on female sexualisation and to describe their memory work method. (…) I think what attracted me to their idea was that they valorized the private, the everyday, the personal and carved out a space for aspects of experience that, as a mother of three, were of immediate, daily interest to me.” (Clare/Johnson 2000, p. 199)

Mary Jane Kehily remembers that “memory-work became a key feature of many of these groups at Birmingham. It was commonly seen as a research method that also served as a productive mode of analysis. As a method and a mode of analysis, it could be readily incorporated into the cultural studies notion of group-work as a politics.” (Kehily 2010, p. 14) She recalls various collaborative projects that used the method.[155]

Mariette Clare and Richard Johnson in their essay on identity and power in a memory-work method provide a reflection on their use of the method in the context of CCCS. This report is quite dense in relation to the dynamics that the method unfolded on the group involved. From their description however it can also be understood that they applied the method not in a rigid manner, but rather developed their own tradition. This included technical adaptations in terms of writing the texts, e. g. there is no emphasis on the historicizing of the author, or stories are written under a certain time constraint. “In theory these autobiographical fragments are to be written at some speed, preferably within an hour. The speed is important because it seems to minimize the opportunities for self-censorship and self-editing, making the contradictions of everyday life more available for analysis.” (Clare/Johnson 2000, p. 198)

The memory-work group that Mariette Claire and Richard Johnson describe had eight members, seven postgraduate students and one teacher. From the way in which they highlight the dynamics that unfolded in the group a difference is noticeable to the reports given by the *Frauenformen* collective. For the CCCS-members there is evident a much closer and much more personal involvement of participants that is recorded also as internal negotiations of power in the group.

[155] Mary Jane Kehily refers to - “The Popular Memory Group” (1980’s); “Televisual Machinations” (1990); “Cultural Forms and Social Identities” (course ran by Richard Johnson as part of a Masters programme); “Politics of Cultural Studies of Sexuality” (1990’s); “ The Narrative Group” (early 1990’s – 2004).

From their report however it is not clear which are the determining factors for such a perception been able to arise. If there are differences on the level of cooperation and consequences in group dynamics for the collaborative process between the original groups of *Frauenformen* and the CCCS groups it would be interesting to follow these up and find out if these can be related to different adaptations of the method.

Besides the connection to CCCS in Birmingham[156] particularly the visiting scholarships of Frigga Haug accounted for the dissemination of the method over the realms of the German speaking part of the world. On these grounds then memory work has been taken up over the last twenty years by researchers in North America, Scandinavia, Canada and particularly Australia to investigate a wide range of topics.

Jenny Small in a cursory overview lists: emotion and gender; the experience of women leaders; work-life harmony; body/landscape relations; body and place; racism; subjectivity; silence and gender; women's sexuality; consumer service encounters; patient practitioner relationships; leisure experiences; tourist experiences; sport; use of memory-work to enhance student learning; student assessment process; experiences of casual ESOL teachers; women's writing; emotion and gender and learning; study of economics and gender; emotion and mathematics learning; science; women and mathematics; menstruation; pro-feminist subjectivities among men; women's speaking positions and feminine subjectivities; women and AIDS prevention; HIV treatments; older women, health and relationships; heterosexuality and desire. (Small 2000)

In the course of the various studies researchers have more or less regularly adapted the method to their own needs. This led to a number of questions to be asked about the method also. In an introductory chapter to their compilation of articles on international perspectives on memory work Judith S. Kaufmann, Margaret S. Ewing, Diane Montgomery and Adrienne E. Hyle find that only "two, of what might be called, 'traditional' uses of memory-work have been published since Haug. Traditional, because the researchers most closely adhered to the method as set out by Haug." (Kaufmann/Ewing/Montgomery/Hyle 2008, p. 11)

Problem areas which they see in relation to memory-work concern the liberty of researchers "to bend and break the rules of the method," (Kaufmann/Ewing/Montgomery/Hyle 2008, p. 9) dimensions of time, topics investigated, the question of collectivity in the research process and on a general level the lack of detail provided by researchers in their description of the application of the method. In relation to derivations and developments of memory-work they find "perhaps the most imaginative and intriguing extension of memory-work is Davies (2002) use of collective biography." (Kaufmann/Ewing/Montgomery/Hyle 2008, p. 9)

Together with Susanne Gannon, Bronwyn Davies highlights differences of her concept of collective biography and the original memory-work process in a chapter on *The practices of collective biography*. Referring to the gap between Marxist theory and their own experience as women as constitutive for the pioneer group who developed memory-work she states: "Haug and her colleagues set out to disrupt existing theory by insisting on a starting point in their own experiences as girls and as women, and then going back to theory to see how it might be changed in light of those experiences. Our approach has not been embedded in this kind of quarrel with Marxism. Our theoretical framework is post-structuralist, and we take this not to be a dogmatic framework that is in need of quarrelling with." (Davies/Gannon 2006; p. 4)

[156] In an unpublished interview which I conducted in September 2011 with Frauke Schwarting, former member of *Frauenformen* and Dirk Mescher, CEO of the teachers union in Hamburg, the connection of the discussion circles of Critical Psychology and *Frauenformen* with CCCS are also confirmed from the 'other side'.

Bronwyn Davies specifies further. “Foucault (…) identifies three types of struggle against the powers through which lives are shaped: '… against forms of domination (ethnic, social and religious); against forms of exploitation that separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection [*assujettissement*], against forms of subjectivity and submission).'[157] Although each of these struggles is bound to the others, the emphasis of radical feminism, and of Haug’s memory-work, is on the first (although Foucault has omitted to add gender in his list). (…) As a strategy of resistance, collective biography places its emphasis on the third type of struggle, without ignoring the first two, of course, since they are inevitably bound up with each other.” Davies 2008, p. 48)

Such a statement is certainly useful in establishing a gap between memory-work and collective biography, it is however questionable in that it plays the various struggles out against each other. In fact, for the founders of the method memory-work is concerned from the outset with all forms of subjugation. “Memory-work (…) deals with the entanglement in the system – how are we actually involved in the ideologies, in the habits, in the emotions in this system and what possibilities of loosening and changing ourselves can we find, what openings are there? At the time [of developing memory-work, RH] this corresponded with the development of Critical Psychology, which is mainly concerned with the zones of opportunity and alternatives open to us if we just consciously exercise them for expanding our abilities to act. The question thus is how do we become subaltern obedient, fearful, feminine. Apart from ourselves we can receive assistance here from Critical Psychology and the chief authors, Gramsci and Marx. This is what memory-work researches: how we socialize ourselves, the human essence which in its reality is the ensemble of the social relations.” (Haug 2005)

It would certainly be worthwhile to distil the theoretical differences between Bronwyn Davies’ concept and the original memory-work in a more expanding manner. In the context of my current study however this can not be achieved.

For my purposes at present it will suffice to note that memory-work has already flourished in a way that incites derivations of the original approach. The way of perceiving such a development is certainly bound to the context of the observer, be it as an attempt of post-structural mopping-up what could be supposed to be Marxist ballast, be it as an attempt of modernising the methodology at hand.

Another important reference in relation to derivations of the method concerns the efforts of Karin Widerberg (University of Oslo, Norway) who holds that it “really is a method that makes a difference. (…) I have allowed myself to develop it into a whole set of methods and techniques. This, I believe, is to be true to the very idea behind the method, if not strictly true to the model as it has been developed by Frigga Haug.” (Widerberg 2008, p. 114)

She reports of using memory-work as an individual enterprise, whereby remembered scenes on a specific topic are written by the individual engaging in the process over a period of time. The result is a collection of scenes that can be used to incite further study, providing traces of potential engagement. She reports on two such processes in which she wrote about ‘sexual harassment’ and ‘sexuality and knowledge.’ She concludes: “Since the stories had been written one at a time with the purpose to explore and illustrate diversities rather that similarities and connections, the result is of course a picture of an ‘I’ as multiple. This is a result of the method.” (Widerberg 2008, p. 117)

[157] Source of quote of Michel Foucault in Bronwyn Davies' text: Foucault 1982, p. 781

However she is quite conscious about the restrictions of not sharing the scenes with others for interpretation. She also reports on memory-work as a collective enterprise of four scholars from three different scientific disciplines (literature, psychology, sociology) who worked on an interdisciplinary project on "body/experience in a way and in a connection that could enable us to learn something new." (Widerberg 2008, p. 117) They took up the idea of memory-work, wrote four texts each and adapted the rules of writing to their own needs including a body-biography also. She describes the process of writing and collectively discussing the texts in positive terms as an experience of fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue.

Furthermore Karen Widerberg reports of her experiences in teaching memory-work in three-day courses with students, graduate and postgraduate alike, and of using the method in various workshops where the focus was not on learning the method but rather on a specific topic. Eventually she also describes how she uses the method as a tool in her general teaching practice as a lecturer in sociology.

In all cases the idea of using self-generated texts as basis for an engagement with a certain topic is at the core of the application. What varies are the extent to which discussion is possible (time), the number of participants (from individuals to large groups of up to 100 students), the composition of the group (i. e. their mode of entry), the way topics are chosen (preliminary discussion, set upfront) and obviously the purpose of the exercise.

In her concluding remarks Karen Widerberg notes: "For me memory-work is an invitation to methodological explorations that can further the development of qualitative research. It is an approach that can result in a whole variety of methods and techniques that can also be used as part and parcel of the more traditional methods and techniques, such as interviews and observations. It is a method that makes visible the social and taken for granted. Thus it is one of the most fruitful methods available in making gender, class and ethnicity known to us in new ways, both in research and teaching. The lack within sociology is not theory but empirical knowledge of 'how things are put together' (Dorothy E. Smith's expression). We need to know how the social comes about, how it is done, and here memory-work inspired methods can help us out." (Widerberg 2008, p. 131)

It is obvious that finding out "how the social comes about, how it is done" is also at the heart of critical reflection on rituals and ritualisations in school. Following these general considerations I am going to describe the practical application of memory-work in two groups in the course of my research. This will be done in a rather detailed fashion. First I will give a general account of experiences with the two groups. Then I will document the discussion processes of the second group and comment on their development also. The expanded coverage is meant to address the stated lack of descriptions about the actual application of the method. (Kaufmann/Ewing/Montgomery/Hyle 2008, see above)

8.3.
Getting a grip on the method

8.3.1.
Pilot group

Having read some of the *Frauenformen* publications in the 1990's I was aware of the method of memory-work and it's potential to approach a topic in critical manner. However this awareness was rather peripheral to me. I had not personally participated in a memory-work group.

When memory-work was developed first, it was mainly acquired as a research tool by active participation. “At present we introduce the method in every semester in one or two hours briefly and relatively unsystematic. We explain what memory-work is, how we proceed and provide an overview on our research. The new women then learn the method not in joint studies of the basics, but first and foremost through practical participation. The theoretical foundations out of which the method was developed and which at the same time provide the yardstick for a discrete application are moved into the background.” (Haubenreisser/Stöckmann 1993, p. 140)

In my own situation when considering memory-work as a method for my research I found the theoretical foundations rather accessible. The relevant literature guaranteed a good footing in this regard. What I lacked however was the experience of practical work with the self-generated texts. Here the research guide of Frigga Haug became quite handy. It provided enough detail to function as a point of reference in the practical work with two groups.

A first pilot group was made up of two teachers, a retired lecturer, a social worker, a software developer and myself. The participants knew each other in advance from the context of involvement in a primary school, as parents, teachers, or on a management level. The group came together for the purpose of experimenting with the method on the topic of ‘rituals.’ There were two men and four women in the group. Two of the participants came originally from France, three from Ireland, one from Germany. The age span ranged from 28 to 55. The group met on seven occasions. Meetings were 3 – 4 hours long. A number of experiences emerged from the process with this group.

1. It was easy enough to introduce the general idea of the method. Theoretical foundations of the method as presented in the research guide were commonly accepted. The attempt to understand the various steps of the text-analysis without having practically exercised it however proved rather difficult.

2. Before turning our attention to the topic of rituals we tried to get a grip on the format of writing. To this end all participants wrote a story about an experience ‘At the pool.’ We choose this as a topic that was general enough so that everybody was easily able to remember a scene. The writing of the scenes proved relatively easy. This gave us some confidence for continuing with the project.

3. The discussion of the term ritual brought together a lot of material, but very little clarity. While we were able to list a number of characteristics, these were not seen as in any way consistent. This was seen as a problem of the topic, not one of the method.

4. When we moved from the initial discussion to defining a theme for the writing of the scenes there was a general understanding that we were investigating rituals. Yet we failed to clearly formulate our research question/s. This lack of clarity led to situations at later stages where in discussions of the actual stories the point of reference was not always clear either. The theme chosen was ‘A ritual in school.’ The generality of the term ritual was thus narrowed down to experiences in the framework of school. The fact that the field of interest was school was certainly influenced by the fact that the participants knew each other through a school context and that they shared an interest in questions of pedagogy.

5. A particular difficulty for our group was connected to the first step of text-analysis, i. e. the detection of the ‘meaning’ and ‘common sense theory.’ We found that we had a constant tendency to already question the first impressions as evoked by the texts. We found ourselves critically analysing instead of empathically reading the scenes, hence being ‘too fast.’

6. We found that the technique of dissecting was easy to handle as long as we kept rigidly to the conceptual idea which proved to be not difficult either.

7. We reshaped the template for the text-analysis provided by Frigga Haug in her research guide and included a section for the ‘active subject/plural’ which in the context of the written scenes played a prominent part.

8. The authors of the scenes had no problem with the fact that it was ‘their text’ that was scrutinized. Feedback was unanimously positive about the experience for each of the authors. It was found to be enriching to actually look at the scenes in this analytical manner. In many situations all members of the group had great fun in looking at our own ‘crooked’ constructions.

9. The discussions ensuing after each text-analysis were seen as fruitful and enlightened. They brought together a great number of quite valid statements on rituals (in school). However due to the lack of clarity in terms of an overarching research questions, the results of these discussions stood more or less beside each other without a clear connection. This mirrored the situation that we found at the beginning of our memory-work project (as above under 3.). It left us in a situation were we seemed to have detected a lot of detail, but the overall picture remained unclear, thus a positioning of our own selves in the context of ritual (in school) was not yet possible.

10. On an organizational level the meetings took place in the houses of participants. The atmosphere was very informal. While this impacted certainly on the initial feeling of well-being of all participants, it also had disadvantages, be it simple occurrences like disruptions by incoming phone calls, children to be brought to bed etc., or also on the level of concentration which could easily be distracted.

8.3.2.
The second group

The second group came together as a course offered in an Education Centre in Ireland. Participants were four teachers and myself. There were three female and two male participants. One participant was 25, the other participants were in their late 40's or early 50's. All participants apart from myself were from an Irish background. Participation was voluntary. Eight meetings took place on a weekly basis in late afternoon hours, i. e. after school. The meetings were held in the Education Centre. They lasted for two hours. The course was announced under the title 'Memory work – school rituals and ritualisations.' The experiences in this group differed in parts from the first one.

> 1. I was much more in the role of a 'leader' in this group. The mode of entry, the formal context of the course offered in the framework of the professional development program, the fact that participants did not know each other in advance in a private setting, the fact that I was 'employed' by the Education Centre to 'deliver' the course, hence: being responsible for its 'success' – all this accounted for a different atmosphere from the very start, less intimate and more formal.
>
> 2. As a consequence from the experiences in the first group, I approached the project differently. From the first session on the focus was on the actual topic 'school rituals/ritualisations.' The method of memory-work was introduced only briefly, a short discussion took place on the basic assumptions, but in general everyone agreed to these.
>
> 3. No 'trial writing' took place. The process of writing as such was not problematised from the side of the participants. The general rules for writing as stated in the research guide were presented and accepted.
>
> 4. The initial discussions on ritual were quite similar to the ones we had in the first group. The fuzziness of the term and the lack of clarity of its meaning was easily discovered. Based on the discussion we developed as research questions: What is the role of ritual in school? What is our role in ritual? These questions functioned as a point of reference and a point of departure in our later discussions after the text-analysis. They also provided a way back on track if a discussion drifted away too much.
>
> 5. To allow for a change of modes/approaches in the text-analysis we used a technical fix. At the start of text-analysis the scene to be looked at was read out loud by the author. Although the other participants had received copies of the text, at this stage they only listened to the story, but did not look at the text (copies were simply put under tables). In this way it was very easy to follow the story in empathic manner and consequently come to consent on 'meaning' or 'common sense theories.'
>
> 6. In this group however it was more difficult to stick to the rigid concept of dissecting. On a number of occasions the texts in question were empathically 'defended' by participants. However this was usually corrected, sometimes by me, sometimes by various members of the group. Eventually there was a common understanding in the group that we all have the tendency to 'feel' with the author which in memory-work runs counter to the intended process. Hence everybody became sensitive towards this phenomenon.

7. There was a degree of anxiety present in the group that only went after the first text-analysis was finished. Such anxiety was no issue in the first group. The level of trust that was a given in the first group however could not be assumed unconditionally in the second group. It had to develop.
A couple of times in the first meetings I found myself in the role of reassuring that the matter of our engagement was not to analyse the 'true identity' of a participant, lay bare 'who they are', strip them down to the core of their personality etc., but rather that we are looking at ways of self-construction that are applied in certain situations or circumstances. It took me three sessions to find out that there was actually some confusion about terminology when one participant informed me that in looking up 'memory-work' in the internet one finds reference made to a range of psychological investigations particularly in the context of child abuse.[158]

8. The discussion after analysing the various scenes was far more coherent than in the first group. Here the clear formulation of the point of departure in form of the research questions played a crucial role. It may have been important also that the way the problem was laid out included a clear reference to the participants, i. e. 'What is our role in ritual?' While it can not be said with absolute certainty, it is however quite likely that this way of posing the question made it much easier for the participants to refer to their own practice in the discussions. Approached in this manner the topic was simply closer to their everyday life.

9. The coherence in the discussions from one to the next session allowed the problem to also develop further. New questions came up in the course of the exchange. Discussing the role of teachers in rituals led to questions of responsibility in the profession, of structural conditions, of political impositions and of articulated alternatives within the education system.

The reluctance to furnish a rather stringent description of the various steps of the process of memory-work in bid of the supposed openness of the method for situational changes as referred to by Frigga Haug also meant that for researchers there was probably a threshold to actually experiment with memory-work. What the two pilot groups however show is that it is quite possible to apply the method on the basis of the template provided in her *Duke Lectures*. That such applications are always apt to situational adaptations according to the given circumstances in which memory-work is initiated seems self-evident.

The memory-work groups were meant to function as a laboratory for critical reflection on rituals. During the course of the second group's proceedings I was in regular contact with Frigga Haug via telephone and e-mail. She followed the progress of the group with great interest and her comments provided vital feedback. The following section gives an account of the second group's discussion processes.

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[158] There is also in the German language another use of the term "Erinnerungsarbeit" (memory work). It is used in historical science in projects of uncovering 'forgotten history', often of a local dimension. It became particularly prominent in relation to projects dealing with the history of Nazi-Germany (for a recent example see: http://www.darmstadt.de/leben-in-darmstadt/soziales-und-gesellschaft/erinnerungsarbeit/).
As there is no copyright on such a term and due to its open meaning it can in fact be used in manifold ways when biographies are attended to. (see e.g. Mitchell/Weber 1999) Kersten Reich includes "biographical work" in his "pool of constructivist and systemic methods of teaching/learning" and he states that "biographical work is memory work" (Reich 2008 ff.). Obviously any biographical work includes always remembering, that is: without memory no biography, hence the statement.

8.4.
Memory-work on rituals in schools – a report of the discussion process

In this section I am presenting the summaries of the meetings that took place with the second memory-work group in the Education Centre. These summaries were written by me the day after each session and posted via e-mail to all participants. They were re-edited for the purpose of including them in this text, albeit changes overall were minor in scale. They were mainly made to guarantee anonymity and no changes were applied to the thematic content of the summaries. The character of the summaries is that of a communication amongst the members of the memory-work group. This accounts for certain passages appearing like personally addressing the reader (which in their original context they did as they were addressing the members of the group). For reasons of authenticity this has not been changed either. The summaries are highlighted by a grey background colour to distinguish them for their documentary character.

8.4.1.
Session One
Initial discussion

At the beginning we found that there is obviously a problem of clarity when thinking and speaking about ritual.

We found that there is a connection between:
- Routine and ritual
- Habit and ritual
- Tradition and ritual

These terms all seem to have something to do with each other.
We found that there is an overlap in our use of the words. Activities can be understood as routine and ritual at the same time. An activity that is seen as a tradition can also be seen as a ritual. Out of a routine a habit can grow. A habit may also be seen as a ritual. Yet they are different terms so one would expect them to denote different things also.

Based on this first impression we tried to figure out if it is possible to describe something that could be seen as characteristics of rituals. We did this by constantly switching between concrete examples of experiences that we understood as ritual and a level on which we tried to find general terms for the elements that played a part in those experiences.

Examples of concrete experiences included:
- Break-time, deputy principal being ‘present’ on corridors
- Annual school play (staged performance)
- Taking care of injured children
- Start and end of lesson (learning support)
- Prayer in class (getting up, sitting down)
- Lining-up
- Time-out chair
- Hide and Seek (children hiding from teacher)
- Traffic light system (rewards, disapproval at end of week)

A good part of our discussion circled around a question along the line of:
Are there certain patterns in them that can be distinguished, be it that they are similar for some, or different for other experiences?

It may be possible to come closer to an answer to this if the question asked of the rituals in the examples is posed slightly different first:
What is the role of ritual in school?
What is our role in ritual?

Asked in this way we look at the function of the ritual, and also at the part that we play in the ritual.

For the role of ritual some elements of this sparked up in our discussion already. It was mentioned that the annual school play (including the build-up, preparation period for it) seems to have a function for 'breaking down barriers' between teachers and students. We identified elements of discipline, order prevalent in rituals like lining-up, ‘time-out-chair.’ The hide and seek game could be seen as a ritual of reassurance of good-will and mutual acceptance. Transgression seemed to play an important role within ritual. This led to the question whether ritual is in a way dependent on (be it materialised or potential) transgression.

It appeared as if ritual often has to do with boundaries. Status was another term used in this context.

The role that teachers play in rituals in school also featured in our talk. The presence in the corridor during break-time was seen as a specific way of supervising (in this case ‘being approachable’, but at the same time by simply being there preventing unwished-for behaviour of students). This example also led to the impression that in the actual ritual situation there seems to be ‘tension'.

I think we briefly followed this thought, but I can’t remember fully whether we could come up with something like a consensus, how we should actually understand this ‘tension’ – I know that it was said (maybe not in exactly these words) that the tension is certainly one that is felt (by the teacher). But I don’t remember us going down this route of thought any further.

It was said that acting as a teacher can mean to act in ways that one might not really agree with. In certain situations in schools we put aside concerns about inter-human relationships that would be guiding principles for our interaction outside of school. Most pointedly this was put into the formulation of teacher vs. human being, which referred to the situation of ‘breaking down barriers’ in the context of the annual school play.

It was also said that as a teacher one depends on the cooperation of the students/pupils in rituals. If a student/pupil simply refuses to cooperate at all – the ritual seems to break apart. A limit for teacher action in this context was seen in the application of physical force.

Rules and regulations were mentioned as a defining element of school (teaching) practice: from school policies over curriculum to education law. However it was also said that the actual way a ritual in school is performed is in fact not regulated by those written decrees. Obviously the participants in the ritual decide ‘how to do things'.

We noted that rituals can change over time. The way prayers featured in school was mentioned in this context, and it was understood that the sheer number of prayers said during a school day has decreased over the last number of years. This obviously constitutes a change in the ‘ritual culture’ or ‘ritual framework’ of the institution (school).

In passing it was also mentioned that greeting ceremonies change over time. ‘High five’ or the ‘hip-hop gangsta greetings’ were mentioned as an example of this.

We also found that for a teacher changing class can mean that in one year certain rituals are established in a class, but in the coming year those same rituals may not be possible at all. This was traced back to the different characters of pupils that teachers meet in different classes.

In this context it would be interesting to change perspective and look at it from the side of a pupil, or better from the side of a class (group of pupils). Obviously they change teacher every year as much as teachers change class. If teachers find that certain rituals do ‘work’ with one class, but not with another – can that be said in the reverse also from the perspective of students/pupils: certain rituals ‘work’ with some teachers, but not with others?

We did not specifically mention the different set-up of primary and secondary school. In relation to rituals in school it may be the case that the fact that in secondary school a class is taught by different teachers (according to subjects), and vice versa that teachers teach different classes – while in primary school a teacher in general works with a class all day for a year – has an influence on the rituals.

In our discussion we also found that from the perspective of children the entire school day could be seen as a succession of rituals. The age of children seemed to play a role in this, i. e. the impression was that the day is more ritualized for younger children and that ritualisation seems to decrease from the children’s perspective with getting older.

In this regard the notion came up that children may need rituals and that there is a correlation to age, i. e. the ‘need for rituals’ being stronger in younger years and decreasing gradually.

We noted that there may be a difference between the perception of a school day as a succession of rituals when viewed from the side of teachers or the side of pupils. We did not however go down the route to make this clearer and work out the differences between pupils and teachers.

We noted that rituals are context-bound. There is a ‘right time’ for ritual. If the bell in town rings at noon, everyone gets up to say a prayer. We understood this to be a ritual. Not getting up would be a transgression. If students/pupils are assigned with silent work during a maths lesson and in this situation a student gets up and starts saying a prayer out loud it would be completely inappropriate.

It was said that ‘the way to do things’ in a sheer physical sense becomes a matter of interest in ritual. We looked at the example of ‘how to stand for a prayer’ and found that there is a certain leeway for students, but not endlessly. The decision of what particular physical performance of an act is acceptable or not is made by the teacher. Yet it was also noted that in making decisions teachers take into account the pupils. Dress-codes were mentioned as an example, and it was noted that too rigid a regime on the side of a teacher can be quite counterproductive, leading to conflict.

We found that rituals have to do with expectations. The establishment (or performance) of rituals in the classroom were seen as influenced by expectations from e. g. colleagues or principal. It was mentioned that as a teacher one is expected to ‘have control’ or ‘be in control’ of the class. The example of the 'time-out chair' was used to stress this point. It was said that if a teacher is seen unable to make a child sit on the 'time-out-chair', the colleagues/principal will think the teacher does not have control.

It was said that as a teacher one is similarly expected to do things at certain times in certain ways. This was referred back to the idea of the school day as a succession of rituals (from the perspective of children), and we found that it may in fact be possible to see it in a similar light for teachers. Following a pattern in teaching practice that runs along the line of ‘what is expected’ was found to be potentially experienced as a ‘pressure to conform.’

The question was put forward how much we do actually know what others expect of us, and what role in this our ‘expectations of the expectations of the others’ play in this.

8.4.2.
Session Two
Reassurance – Basic assumptions - Technicalities

This session consisted of three parts.

Reassurance – a recap of initial discussion

We used the example of bringing the children into the classroom in the morning (‘in groups’) to recap on our initial discussion. We found that a number of elements/characteristics (routinisation, discipline, dependence on cooperation of pupils, potential transgression, set way of acting) are quite obviously identifiable in the activity. We agreed that we could safely understand the activity as a ritual activity.

We turned towards religious activities which we simply accepted as ‘ritual’ in our first session but did not clarify why we do so. It was said that religious activities gain ritual character if they are done in a ‘set manner’ (as ‘prescribed’). A difference was noted between saying a prayer in solitude or in company with others, the first possibly not being a ritual, the second however being a ritual.

We took up the situation as mentioned in our first meeting in which a pupil in a maths class during silent work suddenly stands up and recites a prayer. It was noted that this would in fact not happen. However we played with the thought of it happening and found that in practical terms the teacher would try to put an end to it by pointing to the inappropriateness. The situation however would be difficult for the teacher and we found that this may be caused by the fact that in saying a prayer a pupil would use one value system (religion) to play it off against another one (instrumental learning). Both of these systems are essential to schools under religious patronage.

We found that in ritual activities there is always an expression of values (norms). This was applicable to religious but also to secular ritual activities. In the example of bringing the children to the classroom values could be identified relating to ‘work ethics'. This could probably be put in words like this: “we now enter the time and space where ‘learning’ takes place and you are expected to ‘do your best’ in this environment.”

Another normative (value) aspect found prevalent in the example was the way one relates to her/his own body and others. A possible wording: “each individual is expected to keep to their own physical sphere.” Pushing and shoving was seen as not opportune (“of less value …”?).

Safety was mentioned as an argument against ‘pushing and shoving.’ This was contrasted to the situation at a birthday party with a number of 8, 9 year old children and it was found that in this situation ‘pushing and shoving’ often happens.

Expectations of others came up in the discussion again as a strong factor of influence. We spoke about putting up displays in the corridor and how pressure can be felt strongly to put ‘good examples’ of class work up regularly. It was noted that this pressure may be something that all teachers in a school may feel without even knowing what expectations the others factually have. It seems as if there is a ‘silent agreement’ that displays are ‘to be put up’, that they need to be ‘up to date’, and that they fit into a category of ‘good work’ which is defined along lines of ‘common taste’. However this ‘silent agreement’ is not verified/falsified in discussion.

The notion of ‘good work’ was questioned. Reference was made to a group of special needs children for whom doing any work at all is already seen as a success. Results of their work processes however don’t fit the standards of ‘common taste’. Teachers may be reluctant to put such samples on public display (in corridors) simply to prevent the students who produced them from ridicule.

For our further proceedings we agreed that we are comfortable enough at present with not having a general definition for ‘ritual’ but rather a number of aspects, elements, characteristics which are obviously connected to the notion of ritual.

These will function as points of reference in our discussion of individual memories (stories). By going along in our process of analysing our stories we may also be able to gain a clearer picture of the interlacing of various aspects. After finishing analysing our stories we may take up our discussion at this point again. The question of ‘defining ritual’ may come up then again, but there may also be other questions developing on our way that we may find more beneficial.

Basic assumptions in memory-work

We looked at the basic assumptions that underlie the concept of memory-work.[159] Discussion of these assumptions was not controversial. In general everyone seemed to agree to these points as presented.

The interdependency of individual and society came up at various points and it was questioned how much ‘responsibility’ one has in ‘constructing one’s own personality’ – or else how much one can be a victim of circumstances also. It was said that this question would play a central role in the process of analysing (deconstructing, reconstructing, interpreting) the stories.

It was pointed out that in the actual text-analysis we are going to work with the texts only. Rather than using the text as a means to find “who you are” (i. e. lay bare one’s “true identity”) we will use the text to find out how certain patterns are used in the construction of the text to create (“construct”) and convey a particular image of self and society.

[159] Participants had received a hand-out at the end of the first session in which these basic assumptions were explained in a manner roughly similar to the presentation above in section 8.2.2.

Technicalities

We then looked at the technicalities of writing the stories and agreed on the following.

We will all write about: “A ritual in school that I liked” or “A ritual in school that I did not like” This is understood to be the topic of our stories.
When writing our stories we will write in third person singular, ‘he’/’she’ rather than ‘I’ – this allows for a greater distance from the story when entering into text-analysis.

While writing we will avoid biographical narration or recounting series of successive events.

- Example: If I wrote a story about how I learned to swim, I would concentrate on an actual story in the pool and the happenings that I remember, however I would avoid explaining that I was born in town XYZ as the second son of my parents … etc. I would also concentrate on one experience/scene, even if the process of learning to swim may have been a succession of swimming lessons I would describe one session as I remember it rather than describing the succession of ‘learning steps’ that I went through (e. g. first using foam wings and a float, then removing the float, then removing the wings etc. all of which may have taken place over the course of a few weeks/sessions)

While we write we try to describe the situation as we remember it. In the description of our memory details are welcome.

Format:

- We will write with a font-size of 11 or 12.
- Line-spacing should be 1.5
- Stories should be not longer than one page (A-4). Obviously if a story is shorter that is no problem. Also, if one needs a little bit more space to finish a story there is no problem. The ‘one page’ is a guideline, not a law.

We agreed on a deadline to have the stories written and posted around per e-mail to everybody by next Monday.

8.4.3.
Session Three
Greeting the flag

In the third session we started the process of text-analysis. The stories were sent around as requested beforehand so that every group member had copies of all stories. I picked one of the texts as the first one to analyse and got the O.K. of the author for this.

The story was read out loud by the author while the other members of the group listened. The copies of the actual text of the story were put aside during this time. (see above, section 8.3.2.)
This is the text of the story:

A Ritual That I Liked In School

Every day, once the coats were hung up and shoes were changed, prayers were said and the children turned to the flag. It hung in between a picture of the pope and the 1916 proclamation. On this particular cold morning, the honour of holding the flag fell to a brown haired, pig-tailed six and a half year old. She had been patient so far, but now she looked up hopefully as the teacher scanned the room. There were butterflies in her tummy. She knew the words as well as the other children – in fact, she thought she might have known them better than some - and she'd been practising at home. Her name was called and she eagerly walked over to the teacher. She wouldn't have dared to run, the teacher would not have been happy with that, but she wanted to. How lucky for her that her mother had let her wear her new bobbins today. Thoughts of telling her parents when she got home raced through her mind but she concentrated now on the task at hand. Inside her chest, her little heart was beating furiously. Outwardly, she was poised and serious. She knew this was not the time to smile even though she was bursting with pride. This honour could so easily be snatched away. She'd seen it happen before. Now, as the teacher firmly placed the old, faded flag in her hand the other children looked on expectantly. She extended the child's arm until she was satisfied that the flag was at an appropriate angle. The child's arm locked into place determined to keep it that way. And then it began. With a nod from the teacher, thirty-four children placed their right hands over their hearts and began singing Amhrán na bhFiann. The little girl joined in enthusiastically. It was more difficult to hold the flag straight than she would have thought, but glancing over at her teacher she willed her arm to stay put for the duration of the anthem. Her heart soared as it came to the final lines, they were her favourite lines after all, but a part of her was sad because it would be a long wait for her turn to come again. While the class applauded, the teacher carefully returned the flag to its usual place. She gave the little girl a smile as she returned to her seat so she knew she had done a good job.

In the discussion after listening to the story we tried to figure out what 'common sense message' is conveyed in the story. This was expressed as: "If you play by the rules, if you do what is expected, if you are patient, you'll get your reward."

We found that there is also an underlying assumption on which the story builds. This was expressed as: "School gets you ready for life." This was meant to depict the common sense theory that what one learns young stays for life and school is the place to do so.

Then we took up the text and started deconstructing it. We put the various elements into the table format. This looked like that:

	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Active subject	had been patient looked up knew thought had been practising walked wouldn't have dared to run wanted concentrated was poised was serious was bursting knew had seen willed glanced would have thought knew joined	teacher would not have been happy ⇨ therefore she does not run	hopeful eager enthusiastic
'parts' of active subject	(there) were butterflies in her tummy heart was beating arm locked in heart soared a part of her was sad		(there) were butterflies in her tummy heart was beating heart soared a part of her was sad

For the other subjects in the story we found:

Who	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
teacher	scanned would not have been happy placed (flag) extended (child's arm) was satisfied nodded returned (flag) gave (smile)	-	would not have been happy was satisfied
mother	had let her (wear bobbins)	-	-
children/class	turned looked on placed (hands) began singing applauded	-	-

Linguistic peculiarities	White spots	Contradictions
It was mentioned that a number of terms in the story are ‘metaphor-like.’ One may say that they contain ‘more’ than what is said literally, as if they are symbolic (‘pope, 1916 proclamation, Amhrán na bhFiann) – but the symbolic meaning is only detectable for somebody who has knowledge of this meaning already, i. e. is familiar with the specific symbolism. Strictly speaking we could not say that this is a ‘linguistic peculiarity’. It is in fact a rather common way of using language. *In this context the ideas of ‘construction of meaning’ and ‘politics of language’ play a role as tools for our analytical work. It may be interesting to consider how we use (not only) ‘symbolic terms’ in our narratives. I am going to attach an article of Basil Bernstein on ‘elaborated and restricted codes’ that may provide some further thoughts in this direction.*[160]	-	-

Based on the material that we listed we ‘reconstructed’ the active subject (main character) of the story. This was expressed: “The active subject is constructed as a person who is obedient, patient, conscientious. Yet her body does not ‘go together’ with this ‘personality’.”

We found that there is no spontaneity in the event - but inside the child:
The main character in the story is struggling ‘with herself’; presents a ‘façade’ that does not reflect her (true?) feelings; she actively suppresses her drive (don’t run – walk); she is constructed as all ‘mind’, knowing, thoughtful – while her emotions are ascribed to ‘parts’ of her body.
It is nearly as if these parts of the body seem to have their own life (i. e. an emotional life) that needs to be kept in ‘check’

The other children/class are constructed as physically active. In contrast to the main character: they are not thoughtful, knowing; they have no emotions; there is no struggle for them
they are constructed as ‘matter of fact, do the business’; even the applause has no further quality, it is as if they simply ‘fulfil a task.’
(it is also interesting to note that the main character ‘joins’ them ‘enthusiastically’ in their singing, something we did not specifically refer to in our discussion, but yet it is part of the text)

The teacher is constructed as a person who is efficient, controlled, ‘cool’, perfectionist.

160 The *italics* are my own comment which I included in the summary after the session. The attachments referred to here were: Bernstein/Elvin/Peters (1966) “Ritual in education”, and: Basil Bernstein (1964) “Elaborated and restricted codes”

With reference to our initial impression of the story ("If you play by the rules, if you do what is expected, if you are patient, you'll get your reward") we found that this statement does not fully capture what we derived from the text-analysis.

We did not find a new formulation to express this. From our discussion however, may I suggest something along the lines of: "If you play by the rules, if you do what is expected, if you are patient, you'll get your reward – but it costs you! You have to censor your impulses, emotions, drives, wishes. You have to disconnect from your feelings and make sure that they are not seen."

The underlying assumption that is contained in the story: "School gets you ready for life" was seen as a rather short and unspecific statement, nearly a passe-partout formula that can be used to support whatever one wishes, e. g. it was understood that just as much as it may be necessary in life to sometimes 'hide' your feelings, at other times it is similarly necessary to 'show' them.

At the end we had a very brief look at the actual text of the anthem that the children sing and found that it has a rather martial (and thus physical, dynamic) character, which again stands in contrast to the control that the main character exercises over herself.[161]

Comments on the session:

I felt that during deconstructing the text we drifted away from the literal content of the story a lot. We frequently started to discuss 'what was meant' rather than 'what is said.' This is a normal occurrence when engaging for the first time in this particular way of looking at a text.

We all have learnt to work with texts differently, i. e. to 'empathize' with the author, to 'put us in the shoes of the actors' etc. However this rather prevents us from looking analytically at the stories. What is required here is the application of a new technique. We also see what is gained from applying the technique and how separating the various elements is a step to see them in a different relation to each other, and by doing so enhance our perception and consequently our means for reflection.

In our next session we will already be more 'tuned in' to this specific way of approaching a text. This will allow us to also get through with the actual deconstruction faster and provide more time for the discussion afterwards … i. e. reconstructing the characters, referring back to the original 'common sense understanding' and also relating to the overall context of our discussion on rituals. Particularly the last aspect could not be addressed yesterday for simple time constraints.

There are a number of avenues that offer further discussion, e.g.:
a) re. ritual on a general level ⇨ Can we come to a consensus of characteristics that make this activity a ritual?
b) re. the specific ritual ⇨ Can we detect elements in this ritual that we identified in our initial discussions over the last two weeks?
c) re. ritual in school ⇨ Take up the questions 'what role does ritual play in school' and try to answer it for this particular ritual. Then: does the main character learn something through/in this ritual?
d) The 'flag-story' was written as a ritual in school that the author liked ⇨ is it clear from the story what it is in the ritual that she liked? And what evidence is there in the text?

[161] See appendix 10

e) re. the 'common sense message/theory' ⇨ Can we (after reconstruction) detect the specific ideological content in it, i. e. what are the thoughts that are hegemonic here? Are there alternatives? If not, is it possible to formulate them?

In our further proceedings we will inevitably also have a look at aspects of ritual theory (and its application to school). By developing our own material via the deconstruction, reconstruction, and discussion of our stories we will have a rich source of reference.

At our current stage I would encourage you to have a look at theoretical material on rituals (or rituals in school). I am sending you a file with the text of an article on 'ritual in education.' Bernstein/Elvin/Peters' article is the first one in the English-speaking world that specifically deals with 'ritual in education.' Written in 1966 there are obviously a number of more recent publications also, however it provides a very good starting point for more theoretical considerations of rituals in school.

If you feel like even more food for thought … from an abundance of books on rituals let me suggest two books of Catherine Bell:
Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual practice,* 1992 (new release also 2010)
Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions,* 1997 (new release 2010)

8.4.4.
Session Four
Parent/Teacher meeting

We worked on the story about a parent/teacher meeting. This is the actual text of the story:

A ritual that I did not like

He went to the first parent-teacher meeting in the secondary school that his son attended for half a year. It took place in the gym of the school, a dreary place, particularly on a dark and dull evening in late January.
When he arrived he stepped into the gym and saw that along the walls on both sides of the hall there were small tables put up. Behind most of the tables a teacher sat. Placed in front of the tables there were always two chairs. The hall was cold and most of the teachers wore coats or thick jumpers.
He was not familiar with the procedure and asked another parent whom he knew as a neighbour how this all would work. The man told him that he should simply wait in the entrance area and have a look from time to time if one of the teachers of his son would be free. In this case he should go to the table and talk to the teacher.
In the entrance area there was a table with tea and biscuits set up by the caretaker, and also an electric fan that provided a bit of heat. So he decided to stay there as suggested by his neighbour. He looked interested at the coming and going of parents to and from the teachers' tables. The situation seemed rather strange, the whole atmosphere reminded him of a cowshed.
After a short while he had seen enough to be able to understand the system of access to the teachers. He now kept an eye on three teachers of whom he knew that they taught history, English and maths in his son's class. The history teacher was free first so he went to his table. He was curious what sort of conversation could be had in this atmosphere.

He introduced himself to the teacher. The teacher then told him that his son was a rather good student, that he had no problems with him and that everything was more or less fine. Having a keen interest in history himself he would have loved to engage the teacher in a discussion about the history of schooling in Ireland but he felt that was completely inappropriate, in particular in face of the number of other parents who were swarming around the place waiting to get a chance to talk to the teacher. So he decided to ask no further question and rather move on to the maths-teacher. The situation was a repeat of the first one, no real conversation developed between him and the teacher. Within five minutes everything seemed to be said and he moved on. The English-teacher was not free at this stage, so he went back to tea and biscuits. Here at the table with the electric fan no serious conversation took place either. While sipping their tea parents were always with one eye luring for the next free table.
When the English teacher was eventually free, he went to her table. She was also the class mentor and he expected a bit more from this conversation. He heard that after a couple of weeks at the start of the school year she now felt that his son had settled in rather well and that he got on with the other students without trouble.
He would have loved to force her into a discussion about the school uniform and how this was a constant topic for potential struggle at home, but he felt there was no chance to get his thoughts across in this atmosphere. So he left it and played along in being nice to each other.
After this he had no desire to stay any longer in the cold and dreary place and he made his way back home.

In the initial discussion we tried to figure out what 'common sense message' is conveyed in the story. This was expressed as: "Parent-teacher meetings are not worthwhile. They (teachers) don't listen to you anyway."

As an underlying assumption we found: "Teaching is just a job like any other – therefore one can not expect any real interest from teachers." We also found that this assumption is connected to the idea that teaching is a vocation. Therefore the standards on which teachers are measured are set 'even higher' and consequently if they don't live up to those standards they are looked at as 'not proper' or 'uninterested'.

Then we took up the text and started deconstructing it. The various elements were:

	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Active subject	went arrived saw was not familiar with … asked stepped knew should wait should look should go should talk decided to stay looked had seen was able to understand kept (an eye on) … knew went was curious introduced would have loved to engage felt (it was inappropriate) decided (to not ask) moved went went expected heard would have loved to force felt (there was no chance) left played along had not desire to stay made (way home)	Motivations in the text appear only in form of implications. e. g. 'decided to stay at the table' ⇨ because of the electric fan?	Curiosity

For the other subjects in the story we found:

Who	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Son	attended was (a rather good student) had settled in got on with others	-	-
Neighbour	Told	-	-
Teachers (in plural)	Sat	-	-
History Teacher	was free told	-	-

Parents	swarming sipping (tea)	-	-
English Teacher	was not free was eventually free was (class mentor) felt	-	-

Linguistic peculiarities	White spots	Contradictions
In the text there are numerous ‘animations’, that is subjects that are not actual persons, but rather things or abstract terms: It (meeting) took place Chairs were placed Hall was cold Electric fan provided heat Table was set up Situation seemed strange Atmosphere reminded him No real conversation developed Everything seemed No serious conversation took place	-	-

Based on the material that we listed we ‘reconstructed’ the subjects of the story. “The active subject is constructed as a person who internally and externally is active without changing the environment. His activities have no material effect. He appears like a person who walks through the forest but does not pick up a leaf. He does what he should do – not what he would like to do. All of this happens without a motivation or emotion.”

“The other subjects have no real qualities - the teachers are like cardboard cut-outs.
Only the parents (as an amorphous group) show some level of activity (swarming, sipping), although without motivation/emotion.”

We found that there is a striking difference in the activity level between the active subject on the one hand and the other subjects on the other hand. In fact after the active subject the animated environment seems to act much more prominently than the other persons. In this context also: the funny construction about ‘no conversation taking place with the electric fan’ underscores the importance of the ‘things’ in the story.

In an attempt to rephrase the initial statement about the message of the story we found:
“Parent-teacher meetings are not worthwhile, there is no engagement going on in them.”
The idea that ‘teachers don’t listen to you anyway’ is not supported by the elements of the story, there is no attempt made by the active subject to actually say something to the teachers, consequently there is nothing they could listen to. However the teachers don’t make any attempts to engage either.

We spoke about expectations, here: what expectations the parent brings into the situation/meetings with the particular teacher/s, and what expectations the teachers have in relation to the situation.

We found that no exchange takes place between the partners in the situations about their expectations. This is captured in the term 'no real conversation' – although in fact there is 'real' conversation, i. e. persons speaking to each other. But this conversation has obviously a quality that makes it be experienced as 'unreal', this quality being the lack of engagement.

We touched on the question why there is no engagement. In this context we found that it is actually quite difficult for teachers in parent-teacher meetings to engage with parents. Usually time slots of 10 – 15 minutes are calculated for the parents of each child. In such a short time it is hardly possible to have a conversation that has any significant depth.

The situation in secondary schools was seen as putting even more strain on teachers, because they usually teach a subject in a number of classes, thus dealing with a large numbers of students during the course of a week. In parent-teacher meetings there is simply not time to pay extended attention to any one student. From the teachers perspective thus it makes sense to 'play along' and fit in with the conveyor-belt system of parent-teacher meetings.

We also moved into an exchange of personal experiences and found that parent-teacher meetings in primary and secondary school seem to differ somehow. It was noted that in primary schools the physical set-up is different. The meetings take place in the teacher's classroom. Parents also have an allocated time-slot, i. e. they are invited to come at a set time to a set place. For secondary schools the physical set-up as described in the story was found to be a realistic picture. A change in the actual way how teachers and parents communicate was also noted for primary schools. Experiences were reported of a rather satisfying communication in parent-teacher meetings.

In one case a development was also described that took place over the last number of years in the particular primary school in which parents were included in school activities more often and more consciously (cooking classes for parents were mentioned as an example). This was related to a better communication between parents and teachers.

A few additional remarks:

In our discussions we usually do not come to a 'final answer' – we rather find ourselves again and again confronted with 'a new question' or with contradictory results. The lack of the 'final answer' can be experienced as frustrating. It is not easy to live within contradictory situations. You may remember one of the basic assumptions in memory-work is that we (i. e. human beings as social beings) have a tendency to eliminate contradiction. This is not rocket science and it is pretty much a 'survival strategy' also. However one of the gains from memory work is particularly to shed a light on the contradictory situations in which we find ourselves in society – and come to a more conscious way of dealing with them. As social actors we become agents of our own will rather than pawns in the hands of others (or if you like: victims of circumstances). This does not mean that the contradictions would 'go away', they are still there and we may also find that in certain situations we are 'alone' and a realistic assessment of the situation may suggest 'no action' at a given time. Yet if there are options to 'be active' we will actually be able to see them and we can also make strategic moves to change a situation so that such options do actually arise.

In our meetings I get the impression that you in fact enjoy this search for 'new questions' and that you don't find it a tedious procedure that you hesitantly endure. Surely it would be interesting for me to get a feedback on this.

Let me also say a few words about the connection to our overarching topic of rituals in school as it was mentioned yesterday a couple of times. We will bring together the results of our discussions after all four texts were analysed and relate them to rituals. At the end of the day we all wrote a story about a ‘ritual in school.’

In our initial discussions (in the first two sessions) we have identified a great number of elements that play a role in rituals (in school). If you find the time you may have a look at the summaries of these two sessions again. I am sure you will recognise and identify certain topics from our general discussions in the two stories and in our analysis of them also.

8.4.5.
Session Five
Inspector's visit

We worked on the story about an inspector's visit. This is the actual text of the story:

A ritual in school that I disliked

It was the day of the incidental visit prior to his second diploma, in those days you had the inspector for an entire day in each of your two probationary years. The date had been flagged in advance so it was a tense time preparing notes, the pupils and the classroom. It was also his first encounter with this particular inspector – a divisional inspector who was filling a gap as the school no longer had a district inspector. Still, when the day dawned he was reasonably relaxed. He had, after all, gone through teaching practice in college with no difficulty. He had, successfully, undergone his first diploma with an inspector who had a very bad reputation. He had had no problem with him.
The inspector arrived early on the day of the visit. He was a big man, physically, and had obviously no time for small talk. In fact he had a superior, almost disdainful, attitude. Not a good start. The morning progressed slowly. No comment from the inspector, no glance that could be interpreted as conveying approval let alone encouragement. He just wrote furiously in his notebook which had a green cover. Just before the break he called the teacher to look at the roll book. It was completed as per instruction, black ink, correct symbols entered in the correct spaces, totted and cross totted, no errors that had had to be corrected. Yet these facts were not commented on. Oh no, the handwriting was not of the correct standard. In his words there was an absence of ‘perseveration’. The day was getting worse.
Lunch time came. Usually a time for quiet words of encouragement from the rest of the staff. Not today. There was nothing positive to report, no sign that things were going to plan. The afternoon stretched out long in the mind. The next disaster was a history lesson. Inspector, had had enough. He invited the teacher outside so they could talk out of earshot of the pupils – sounded ominous. And ominous it was. The inspector was not going to undertake the diploma examination as, he said, the result was a foregone conclusion. He would report to the Department that he was deferring the diploma which wouldn’t look as bad on the teacher’s file as a failure in the diploma. Then he shook hands with the teacher commenting that he was not a teacher and never would be. He added that he would be with the inspectorate for a long time to come and would be closely monitoring the teacher’s progress.

A dismal end to a dismal day. It had been a crushing experience offering absolutely no hope. One old Brother did say he had had a run in with the same inspector many years before. It has lived in the memory of the teacher for over thirty years and, in a few dark moments, led to the question – was he right?, should he have pursued a different career?

The common sense message that we found in the story was expressed as: “Might is Right.”

We also found that such a phrase implies that: Where there’s no structure, no boss, no chain of command … chaos prevails.

The deconstruction of the text led to the following entries:

	Verbs	**Motivations**	**Emotions**
Active subject	was (relaxed) had gone through had undergone had no problem	-	Relaxed

For the other subjects in the story we found:

Who	**Verbs**	**Motivations**	**Emotions**
Inspector	arrived was (big) had (no time for small talk) had (attitude) wrote called had (enough) invited was not going to undertake said would report was deferring shook hands added would be monitoring	(talk out of earshot) (make file look not as bad)	-
Old brother	Said		

Linguistic peculiarities	White spots	Contradictions
Questions at the end	The inspector's reasoning, rationale for 'having enough' and for deferring the diploma is left unclear.	The diploma is deferred – yet there is "absolutely no hope"
Animations: It was Date had been flagged It was Day dawned Morning progressed It was completed Facts were Handwriting was Day was Lunch time came Nothing positive Afternoon stretched Disaster/History lesson It was It had been It has lived		
There are a number of sentences without any subject: - Not a good start. - Not today. - A dismal day to a dismal end - Usually a time for quiet words of encouragement		

Based on the material listed the subjects of the story can be 'reconstructed' as:

"The active subject is constructed as a person who does not do anything"

"The inspector is constructed as a 'matter of fact' person, who does his job, is competent and efficient, with a trace of 'human touch'."

In our discussion afterwards we were surprised about the discrepancy between the impression that the story evokes when read out and the results of the deconstruction/reconstruction process. Initially the inspector seemed to be a 'big bully' – but the deconstruction did not at all support this image.

We also found that the animations play a prominent role in the story, and amongst them there are repeated references to time-related terms: There are forces at play in the story that are beyond human control.

The fact that the active subject does nothing in the story in combination with the 'matter-of-fact' efficiency of the inspector then implies that 'man-made structures' are as powerful as natural ones. At the end of the day, an inspector coming to a school is something different than day dawning or morning progressing - but they are presented in a fashion that allows for them to be regarded as similarly unavoidable.

The earlier idea of ‘might is right’ was found not supported by our deconstruction. We rather found the message of the story could be: “There are structures at work that are beyond control. They run their due course regardless.”

We discussed about structures as such and found that the idea that ‘chaos prevails’ where there is no structure is a rather simple construction that does not really say a lot. In fact, there are structures everywhere and the story points to them: natural ones, but also man-made ones.

The use of an idea like ‘Where there’s no structure, no boss, no chain of command … chaos prevails’ confuses the two. Natural structures can in fact not be criticized: there is no point complaining about the fact of gravity, it won’t change anything for the apple will still fall down from the tree. This is different for man-made structures. A boss, or a chain of command are in place as a man-made structure. They are to be questioned, scrutinized, their rationale to be understood and a position in relation to them to be developed. The question then for man-made structures is always: which structures, why those and not others, who implements them, how did they appear in the first place, whose interests are served.

We also turned our interest back towards the idea of rituals and looked at the question, why the stories that we analysed so far where written as ‘stories of rituals’. Elements that we found:

- formalisation of behaviour
- Standardization of behaviour
- Routinisation of behaviour
- Status differences of actors / (authority)
- Standards/rules are set or represented by authority holders
- Interaction does not provide honest engagement
- Expression of an unquestioned/unquestionable order
- Rules/order/expectations are not explicitly verbalized, they are (supposed to be) ‘known’

The question came up, what relation is there between ritual and emotion, is there a connection between the two?

We found that as human beings we can not not have an emotion, be it as fleeting as it may, there is at any given moment of our lives an emotion. However we recognised that rituals may in fact ‘do something’ to/with our emotions. This thread was not followed any further (we were at the end of the session) – but it should be kept in mind and taken up later again.

Addendum – on the way home two thoughts went through my head and I wish to share them with you.

a) The stories that we wrote were written as ‘a ritual in school that I liked’ or ‘… that I disliked’
In fact the two stories of the male participants were rituals that they ‘disliked’, while the three of the female participants were rituals that they ‘liked’. I wonder is there a pattern in how males and females actually experience rituals?
Granted, we are a tiny group, however it would be interesting to simply collect more stories from other people and find out, whether this initial observation is in any way supported further.

b) I thought about the white spot in the story that we analysed, i. e. the lack of rationale given for the decision of the inspector to defer the diploma.
I wonder if this 'white spot' is a 'strategic white spot'? Don't get me wrong here, by strategic I don't mean a consciously chosen strategy, but rather a certain way to make the story 'round'.
Say, the reasons for the inspector's decision were stated – they would also be open for investigation, for critique, could be scrutinized, found to have substance or not. But it would also imply that the actions of the active subject would be open for the same investigation, critique, scrutiny, having substance or not.
As the active subject in the story 'does nothing', it seems to necessarily follow that the rationale of the inspector can not be mentioned. In this way the impression of forces beyond critique being at work can be created.
If something was 'done' (by the active subject) and 'reacted to' (by the inspector) it would suddenly open the whole story to a new dimension of thought, i. e. if the situation was found to be unjust, unfair, prejudiced the logical consequence would be that one could also think about 'what else could be done' in the situation/about the situation etc.
It may be the case that only without mentioning the inspector's rationale (and the actions of the active subject), the impression can be upheld that 'nothing can be done' anyway … which we subsequently translated in our first thesis as: "Might is right"

And yet, whenever we use a notion like this, is there not a certain element of ambiguity in it?
On the one hand, we resign to the fact that 'might is right' (nothing can be done); on the other hand, we also implicitly express that this is very much 'not right', that 'might' should not be the decisive factor for what is 'right' and what is not.

Wandering from these thoughts I found myself thinking about situations that I remembered from my own life in which I felt, 'nothing can be done here' – and I came across a good few of them. What I found also was that this 'nothing can be done here' was (often) connected to the fact that I felt 'alone', i. e. if I had had support, solidarity, help in situations in which 'nothing could be done' I am sure that in fact 'something could have been done'.

I remembered that not only the active subject in the inspector story 'does nothing'. We found for the active subject in the parent-teacher meeting "He does what he should do – not what he would like to do," while the active subject in the flag raising story "Presents a 'façade' that does not reflect her (true?) feelings. She actively suppresses her drive (don't run – walk)"

Is the helplessness that is part of the impression that the stories about the inspector and the parent-teacher-meeting evoke related to the presentation of the active subject in the story as 'isolated'? In fact, the presentation of the girl with the flag is one that also presents her as isolated in the activity – until she "enthusiastically" joins in with the other children singing the anthem. In the parent-teacher-meeting the other parents are an amorphous mass that "swarms around". In the inspector story the colleagues appear as a group that does not appear (no encouragement).

In all these cases the active subject is portrayed as 'alone' facing a 'force'/'power'/'authority'/'structure' as represented by a person (or persons) who is in a position of 'official authority'.

I wonder what that tells us when we try to find answers to the questions:

- What is the role of rituals in school?
- What is our role in rituals in school?

8.4.6.
Session Six
The medallion

The text of the story that we looked at:

A ritual in school that I liked

In a large national school in the city's most modern housing scheme in the 1960's the following occurs.
The roll book had to be collected every morning from the principal's office. It was a responsible job. She and her friend were about eight years of age and in second class, the highest class in that section of the school. To go to third class meant going to an entirely different building which had two storeys. It was a long walk from the classroom down a narrow corridor to the principal's office. They tapped lightly on the principal's office door and waited.
Mother Mary was a woman small in stature but could be sharp of tongue. Her office had a hushed warm comfortable feel to it unlike other parts of the school the pupils and teachers inhabited, which were clean but functional and had a tendency to be noisy even at the quietest of times. Wooden furniture on stone floors makes for a cool and noisy environment.
The routine of collecting the roll book was as follows: you knocked, waited, were handed the roll book (a very important document, to be handled with care and not dog-eared for this must be passed on to the inspector) and you returned to class. Later the same journey would be made to return the roll book, completed by the classroom teacher, to the office.
On this particular day the two girls were invited into the office and asked to wait. It was warm and cosy with a hushed silence and a smell of books and paper. The nun rummaged in her desk drawer and finally brought out two chocolate medallions covered in silver paper. Imprinted on the paper was a nativity scene. The girls each received a medallion for work done in an efficient and reliable manner throughout the term. They were then told they could take the roll and return to their classroom.
One of the girls thought so highly of that piece of chocolate she refused to eat it. She saw it as recognition of her work, of her responsibility, of her reliability. She kept it in a drawer for months and looked at it. Her brothers taunted her to eat it and laughed at her for not doing so.
Finally, months later when the sun shone and the nativity seemed far away, she did eat it and was very disappointed with its taste. However, the sense that she and her friend were to be trusted with an important task was not so easy to diminish.

The common sense message that we found in the story was expressed as: “Children respond to praise – it incites pride.”

We also found that underlying to such an opinion is the conceptual idea, that sanctions/rewards work (in education), that in teaching (education) one gets a (desired) result out of applying sanctions/rewards.

In the course of our text-analysis we found that there are in fact two episodes in the story.
a) the scene in the school (role book)
b) the scene with the brothers
The text-elements of the two may be looked at separately

a) the first scene

Here the active subject appears together with her friend, all verbs relate to the two together:

	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Active subject & her friend	were (eight years) tapped (lightly) waited were invited were asked to wait received were told	-	-

There is one other person appearing in this part of the story:

Who	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Mother Mary	was (small) could be (sharp tongued) rummaged brought out	-	-

Also in this part of the story, we found a significant number of animations:

Animations
The roll book It 'To go to third class' It The office Other parts of the school Furniture makes Routine Journey It Nativity scene

We further found that there is an entire paragraph in which the perspective changes from narration to explanation, and in it the reader (listener) of the story becomes the active subject: "you knocked, waited …" etc.

In this context we also found that the first part of the story contains relatively little description of the actual happenings when compared to the surrounding explanations.

b) the second scene

The active subject here appears on her own.

	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Active subject	thought refused (to eat) saw kept looked did eat was (disappointed)	Thought highly of piece of chocolate – thus refused to eat	Disappointment

Who	Verbs	Motivations	Emotions
Brothers	taunted laughed	-	-

There are only three animations in this part: the sun, the nativity scene and the sense.

In contrast to the first part there are no further explanations or changes in perspective in this part.

Reconstruction

We treated the two sections of the story separately:

a) The active subject and her friend are constructed as passive, deferential, (docile), who act in routine manner without emotional engagement. The principal is constructed as active – in opposition (and addition) to the girls.

b) The active subject is constructed as a person who is internally active. The brothers are constructed as externally active.

We also found that in both scenes an 'actual interaction' is missing.
In the first section while there is a 'receiving' – there is yet no 'giving'.
In the second section while there is a 'taunting' – there is yet no immediate reaction to it.

In discussing the findings we found that there is a pattern of 'opposites in addition' in both sections. I was stuck for the terms yesterday, but this can be expressed as 'complementary opposites'.

This term refers to communication theory. Paul **Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Donald D. Jackson** developed the terminology of 'symmetric' and 'complementary' in relation to communication processes. Two little passages on this. The first is from:
http://www.wanterfall.com/Communication-Watzlawick's-Axioms.htm

"Inter-human communication procedures are either symmetric or complementary, depending on whether the relationship of the partners is based on differences or parity."

A "symmetric" relationship here means one in which the parties involved behave as equals from a power perspective. The chance of airing all the relevant issues should be greater, but it certainly does not guarantee that the communication will be optimal. The parties could simply be equally submissive, or equally domineering. However, communication between equals often does work well.

A "complementary" relationship here means one of unequal power, such as parent-child, boss-employee or leader-follower. This is much more efficient in some situations. For example, the unequal (complementary) relationship between soldiers and their officers means that soldiers are very likely to obey a surprising order, such as "Get out of the truck and jump in the river!" without delay – rather than debating it, perhaps with great interest, but quite possibly at fatal length.

The second one is from:
http://www.breckenridgeinstitute.com/building-blocks-of-organizational-culture-article.htm

“Symmetric versus Complementary: Watzlawick argues that every relationship must be consciously or unconsciously defined (negotiated) by the participants as being either symmetric or complementary. In symmetric interactions, people tend to mirror each other’s behaviour and emotional responses. Symmetric interactions are based on an assumption of equality that has been tacitly agreed to by the participants that tries to minimize the differences between the participants. In complementary interactions, one person’s behaviour and emotional responses complements (is different than) the other’s behaviours and emotional responses. Complementary interactions are based on an assumption of difference that has been tacitly agreed to by the participants that tries to maximize the differences between the participants. Differences can include being assertive-submissive, superior-inferior, primary-secondary, or as Watzlawick refers to them, being one-up or one-down.”

If communication is analysed for its symmetric/complementary character, the topic that is underlying is obviously that of power-relationships between those who take part in the communication processes.

I am wondering if it is possible to relate this approach to our investigation of rituals (in school). Questions then could be:

How is symmetric or complementary communication related to rituals?
Can both be found in rituals?
Does the terminology provide a means to explain what goes on in rituals?
Can the terminology be a means to understand one’s own behaviour in rituals?
If yes, how …?

At the end of the session I handed out two articles about rituals in which the main theses of Franz Wellendorf and Catherine Bell were presented in a condensed form.

8.4.7.
Session Seven
Does it matter if something is a ritual?

On the basis of the two texts that were handed out in the last session (summaries: Wellendorf, Bell) the question was raised: “Does it matter if something is a ritual or not?”

As an observation it was noted, that in relation to rituals there seems to be always somebody in a power role.

The role of the audience in a ritual was highlighted. We found that in our stories there was always an ‘audience’. Even if we as the writers of the stories did not particularly focus on their being there, effectively the ritual unfolds its symbolic and expressive quality always in its reference to the audience. Whatever is happening in the ritual is at the same time an interaction of those involved in the particular activity and a demonstration to all those who are ‘in the audience’.

They are also part of the ‘expectation’ and in our individual considerations part of the ‘expectation of expectations of others’ – that all adds up to a rather important role of the audience in a ritual. This aspect is mentioned briefly in the summary of Franz Wellendorf’s text.

We also discussed the terminology as suggested by Catherine Bell, i. e. ‘ritualisation’ rather than ‘ritual’. We found that there may be an advantage to look at ‘ritualisation’ rather than ‘ritual’ due to its more dynamic concept.

In discussing greeting rituals we saw that a ritualisation can be used in a strategic way to express something and yet avoid saying it so that one can not be held ‘liable’ for it afterwards. (“Yes, I have hugged you, kissed you, but so what: I have never said that I am your friend …”)

We discussed the example of girls in a secondary school ‘negotiating’ the dress code (by wearing pink t-shirts, sticking out under the obligatory navy jumper). Understood in terms of ‘ritualisation’ this can be seen as a ‘strategic intervention in a negotiation of power relationships’ – seen as such it can gain a new quality also in the eyes of teachers. With the ‘tool’ of knowing about ‘ritualisation as a strategy’ teachers need not simply dismiss it as a ‘provocation’ or ‘deviant behaviour’ – but rather can try to enter into the ‘negotiation’ on a different level, i. e. try to effectively communicate with the students about what is the core of the ‘problem’, not the symptom.

We found that the pink t-shirts are an expression that says ‘something’ without the girls actually verbally expressing it. *(It would be an interesting exercise to ask the teachers of the respective school to write in their terms what they understand the girls are actually ‘saying without saying it’ …)*

We found that there are a lot of aspects in school life in which the actors within the local/particular school have leeway for regulating their own affairs (dress code is one). For a school then it is a question also how the ‘negotiations’ of these affairs take place and that each school in fact has a ‘school culture’ in this regard that allows for more or less ‘open negotiation.’ The question in it is who makes decisions on which matters, and how are these decisions established, i. e. which processes are involved in decision-making.

What we forgot in the discussion of the pink t-shirt is that there are various social 'networks' in which the ritualisation has effects. It is not only a 'negotiation of power-relationships' between students and school officials; there is at the same time an aspect of 'negotiation of power-relationships' amongst the students (e. g. who is the most 'daring', the most 'rebellious', who is the most successful in negotiating with the teachers, who gets away with whatever is seen as most prestigious etc.)

The observation that there "seems to be always somebody in a power role" sits quite fine with such an example – however power in the concrete situation is obviously not necessarily the same as 'official authority', it is more a negotiated front-line between two counterparts.

Is it the case that 'ritualisation' is a way of 'low intensity warfare' – initiated by either side with the intention to:

- shift the front-line,

or

- confirm the front-line in case of it being 'threatened' (or also reaffirm the front-line in a bid to prevent it being threatened)?

At any rate, we saw that ritualisations can be seen as indicators for real contradictions, or for conflicting interests – that is contradictions or conflicting interests that are not openly verbalized, dealt with, but rather are negotiated via ritualisations. If they are 'monitored', i. e. if they are observed as 'ritualisations' the actual conflict can be addressed – the contradictions or conflicting interests made open (verbalized) and negotiated in a conscious manner.

This would account for a school culture with a certain way of dealing with conflict in which the power-relations are open to scrutiny themselves.

We found that in those aspects of school life that are regulated on local level, the establishment of such a school culture should in fact be possible. However there are aspects of school life that are not accessible to open negotiation between management/teachers/students. We mentioned the curriculum as an example, another one mentioned was the number of lessons, school days as regulated by education law.

In this context it was mentioned that for teachers the 'front-line' actually can be felt as 'running through oneself' – that is pretty much in line with the idea of acting in ritual 'without conviction', doing things (and as teacher: requesting others, students to do things) of which one is not convinced that they are right.

At the end we turned again to the initial question 'does it matter if something is a ritual or not?' – In a way we have actually addressed this question to some extent already in our discussion on the concept of ritualisation, but we may take it up again in our last session next week.

8.4.8.
Session Eight
What is school?

This was our last session. At the beginning of the session we spoke about the fact that in literature on rituals in school the authors regularly go through all sorts of trouble to find a definition of ritual, while there is no similar attempt made to define 'school.'

Some authors refer in their texts to the functions of school – particularly where rituals are also looked at in terms of their 'functions.' Yet there seems to be a common assumption that everyone knows anyway what school 'is' so that no further effort is made to define it.

However we found that what we experience as school is a rather 'young' phenomenon in historical terms. While there were systems of conveying knowledge and skills from one generation to another in all societies at all times, the particular form of school as we know it was developed only over the last approx. 200 years.

In an attempt to define school then we found that this is not an easy task at all. Obviously it is a place where teaching and learning are supposed to happen. However it is not the only place in society where teaching and learning happens. Children learn in families before they go to school. They learn in peer groups, in sports clubs, in orchestras, by watching TV, by using computers etc. (and in all these circumstances it is similarly possible to find the counterpart of teaching, i. e. in parents, siblings, older children, coaches, tutors etc.). Furthermore there is an awful lot more happening in school besides 'teaching and learning.' In fact school is as much a living environment as any other place where people are – and by being in school they simply 'live their life' without constantly 'teaching and learning'.

It was mentioned that schools should be places where children are allowed to live their lives 'as children' – but it was similarly mentioned that the status of a 'child' is equally historical, that in fact a number of centuries ago the concept of 'children' as we have it today did not exist. Children, i. e. young persons, mixed and mingled and were not separated from adults.

We found that school as we have it today can be seen as 'a building, an enclosure' – without this physical base it would not be thinkable, or at least it would be something 'different.' We also found that there is a continuum based on this physical presence of building/enclosure that is supra-personal. The individual child and the individual teacher are only necessary for school to 'be' in as far as they are momentary 'inhabitants' of school. The organization has its own life over and beyond the individual 'inhabitants'. In fact there is an administration side to school that guarantees for this 'own life' probably even more than the actual inhabitants at any given time.

We tried to capture this in the notion 'school is an institution.'

We also found that school is a field that is constantly contested. This idea referred to the observation that within a number of years dominant topics 'come and go' in school. Recent examples from our own experiences were 'integration', 'differentiation' or 'literacy and numeracy.' There is obviously a connection between lobbying on politicians, political decision making, educational science and educational practice that has concrete influences on the everyday practice in school. It effects the lived lives of the inhabitants of the institution.

In a way it is as if a number of topics 'lie around' in educational science, ready to be taken up whenever they seem opportune. We found that talking about education in terms of ritual can be just as well seen as one of these topics that are 'lying around.' The decision however which topic will become 'dominant' at a given time is one that is made in the dynamics as mentioned: between lobbying on politicians, political decision making, educational science and educational practice.

We did not explicitly go down that route yesterday, but it is worth noting that teachers (just as much as pupils, or parents) are players in this dynamic field.

We then turned towards the discussion from our last session that ensued about decision making in schools. Taking up the notion of 'articulated alternatives' as put forward by Catherine Bell we watched a film about 'democratic schools'.[162]

In the discussion about the film we found that the idea of 'democratic schools' is quite appealing. We discussed the idea of implementing elements as presented in the film in the practice of conventional schools. We found that this would be in fact possible, but it could lead to further developments, probably of a conflict nature.

We used the example of allowing children to decide whether or not they take part in lessons, or else play on the yard. We found that a teacher who wishes to introduce such a practice for her/his class in conventional school would have to defend it within the team, principal, board of management, probably parents.

We related the film to our topic of rituals in school and found that the first impression that sticks out is the near complete absence of rituals in the schools portrayed. We discussed this in relation to the idea as promoted in the film of having a 'rule of law' rather than a structure in which certain people (according to the echelons of the hierarchy) can make amendments. Ritual thus was in fact identified as distinct to explicit rules. What was striking in the film was that the 'rule of law' is applied to all members of the school community (inhabitants, to use the term from earlier …) alike, that is students and teachers.

The question came up whether there are no rituals at all in 'democratic schools' and we found that there are certainly rituals, too. The assembly (school meeting) as shown in the film can be understood as such a ritual. In it the power relationships amongst the members of the school community are negotiated. The character of the outcome of this negotiation, or the style in which the negotiation takes place may be quite different to comparable situations in conventional schools – how and ever there is still a ritual element to the procedure even where power relationships are negotiated with the aim of equilibrium between all participants.

Eventually we ran out of time. Thus we took up the question as posed in the last meeting 'Does it actually matter if something is a ritual or not?'

In response we found that the concept of ritualisation (as 'strategic intervention in negotiation of power relations') as derived from Catherine Bell can be a useful tool for understanding certain activities in school that otherwise are difficult to interpret.

[162] In the film the principles of schools are explained in which children decide when, what, with whom they are going to learn and in which models of collective decision making on the basis of one person one vote are applied. The film title is simply "Democratic Schools". It was produced in 2005 by Jan Gabbert with support of the German Federal Ministry of Education and research. (http://www.en.democratic-schools.com/) It has recently been uploaded on youtube, too: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUZU-NHxa9c

Furthermore we took it that the point is not so much to be able to 'define an act as ritual' for the sake of 'defining it' – but rather it is necessary to gain an understanding of the act that allows to win agency in relation to it. At this point the conceptual ideas that are part of the discussion that we had on rituals may be a helpful tool as well. If we take 'ritual' as a concept to analyse activities we come to different results than where we use other concepts (or worse: have no concept at all). And in this sense it matters, whether something is looked at through the lenses of 'ritual' or not.

8.5.
Memory work applied for reflecting on rituals – an appraisal

Memory-work was employed in my research as a method in addressing the specific aspect concerning the question of the accessibility of rituals and ritualisations for critical reflection. It was also seen as helpful in potentially developing suggestions for improved conceptual inclusion of the complex of rituals/ritualisation in critical reflection processes.

The most obvious finding from the memory-work groups was that there is in fact nothing inherent in rituals that renders them inaccessible to critical reflection. Quite the opposite, due to their character as social action that is essentially centred around social order, norm, values they are in fact an area of life that seems predestined for critical analysis.

There are however issues that are worth a closer look. I will do so in this section with reference to the second group, the one whose discussions was documented in the previous passages.

The group was made up of teachers from different schools. The fact that there were no institutional bonds between the participants meant that there were also no negotiations about the own workplace going on in the memory-work groups. In this sense the setting was clearly laid out to provide for the necessary distance as depicted earlier. There was no interference of the "usual hierarchies," or power-relations anchored in the concrete situation in the schools of the participants coming into play in the group discussions. In a way this mirrors the situation that would be normal for reflective group supervision (see section 5.4.7.).

The time frame for the meetings was clearly set and adhered to. There was a clear purpose for the group: reflecting on rituals. The meetings were about this topic only, there was no interference of other topics (as would be common for staff meetings). Thus a concentrated engagement with the topic was possible.

The summaries presented, in 8.4., are evidence of a discussion process that reached an intensity that would be rare for reflection on rituals in professional settings of teachers. The actual text-analyses are based on the input of the particular participants. The same holds for the problem transfer and the ensuing discussions after text-analysis. It may well be possible that in a group composed of different members different aspects might have become more prominent in the discussions. It is important here to keep in mind that the discussions (and results) are not 'right or wrong' but rather provide a set of arguments that can be used by the participants to make sense of reality in a way that was not available beforehand.

In relation to the scenes that were written by the members of the memory-work group it is observable that all scenes are written from the perspective of 'ritual participants' and not from the perspective of 'ritual experts'. At the time when the memory-work group was held this was not seen as a problem. However, with the findings from the interview-analysis being available now it would be a rather interesting project to also write and analyse stories from the perspective of the position of authority. At any rate this would be an immediate link for a follow-up project after this study.

I just said that the purpose of the group was clearly set: reflecting on rituals. And yet, can it be said that the purpose was to critically reflect? As can be seen from the flyer that was used to advertise the group (see appendix 11) the term critical reflection is not explicitly mentioned in it. At the same time the method of memory-work is inherently critical. In this sense the purpose of the group was surely critical reflection, even if it was not explicitly named in the announcement. From the side of the participants in the memory-work group then all that was required was an interest in “the investigation of the construction of social reality” and the openness to engage in the processes as suggested by the method.

The task for me as the facilitator in this regard was first of all to make sure that the participants felt safe enough in the group to bring in their personal contributions. The second task then was to also bring my own input into the discussions without taking on a lecturer's position. There will be more to say on the general idea of leadership in memory-work groups in the next section. At this point it may suffice to note that the two tasks seem crucial for the success of the group.

Success here refers not to the achievement of a set result. That would be impossible. Success rather refers to the accomplishment of the process as such, going through the various steps of the process, coming to the point where a problem transfer is actually possible and where social dimensions of the personal constructions as included in the stories are up for scrutiny.

Memory-work as a method is more than text-analysis. For being a critical tool of reflection or research the basic assumptions are far more important. It is only on their basis that the text-analysis comes into play. Without the basic orientation in approaching a topic text-analysis leads nowhere. On this issue Frauke Schwarting, one of the members of *Frauenformen*, reports about groups who “came up with something that was of interest to them (...). And these were genuinely self-organised groups who worked on a topic (…) who started with memory-work and how well or how bad that worked for them I can't really say, but we received relatively often requests, where they invited us after 9 months and said, now we have an awful lot of paper and an awful lot of analyses, what are we to do with it? What was missing there was the entire framework, the basis. They did not know what to do with it.” (Schwarting/Mescher 2011)

Hence applying memory-work requires a certain approach. As a method of critical inquiry it rests on the critical attitude as depicted above. In the case of the practical application of the method in the course of my study it was part of my role as the facilitator in the group to bring this attitude into play. This is in parts reflected in the summaries as documented above. At the same time the participants in the group were involved quite actively in driving our investigations along the route of critical reflection. It was only on the basis of their contributions that we arrived at the point of looking at 'articulated alternatives' (see section 1.6 and 1.7.).

Irrespective of the particular direction that the discussions in the group took what is important in the context of my own research project is the finding that rituals are in fact accessible to critical reflection for teachers, given the situation in which the reflection is going to happen facilitates for it. I will come back on this in the concluding chapter in the context of expansion of action possibilities.

For me employing memory-work for critical reflection during my research necessarily involved an engagement with the method as such. It seems warranted to also include a few passages about the application of memory-work in other contexts, particularly because of its origin as a method for research in social science and not specifically as a method for reflection in professional contexts.

The following section looks at experiences with memory-work as a research tool. In this sense it is more a contribution on the methodology of memory-work and could have also been part of chapter four. I felt however that it adds to the coherence of the current chapter to include it here. What I am presenting is not meant to be an exhaustive overview, but merely to highlight some aspects in applying the method that would be worth fleshing out in a theoretical framework of memory-work. Obviously a theory of memory-work has not been written yet and if it was to be written at all it would have to be approached with great care. Any such attempt would have to balance between the unavoidable prescriptive effects of a theory and the desired openness for experimentation as intended from the outset when the method was developed by *Frauenformen.*

8.6.
Experiencing memory work

8.6.1.
Group dynamics, roles and setting – aspects for further consideration

Memory-work as a method oscillates between critical inquiry of ideology, scrutinizing and consequently further developing existing theory on the one side and a process of participatory research in which the participants gain an increase of personal knowledge and ability to act.

An important part in scrutinizing and further developing existing theory is the presentation and publication of results. In this regard the numerous articles and books that were generated in the course of studies using memory-work give ample proof of its significance.

In a historical development a shift concerning the application of memory-work can be noticed. The original process of inventing the method out of a social movement in a collective engagement of women as an attempt to overcome shortcomings of traditional masculine theory on the one side and a politics of consciousness-raising on the other is to a great deal history by now. The method has proven to be applicable in numerous contexts.

For a researcher who wishes to employ the method it is now possible to refer to a pool of literature and tailor it to her/his own needs. Yet what is not extensively covered in the descriptions of projects using memory-work is the area of group dynamics in applying the method.

Aspects of this topic are considered by Mariette Clare and Richard Johnson who draw particular attention on participants' experiences of recognition and misrecognition in their memory-work group.

“Memory work as process showed us how the construction of a collective identity under conditions where power relations are untransformed, always involves the differential recognition of identities. Some identities are recognised as exemplary, some are recognised as long as they ‘behave’ and stay in their place, and others are marginalized, subordinated or expelled to become the demonic/desired Other. The dynamics of the group itself can now be understood as manifestations of the dialectic of identity and recognition.” Engaging in memory-work for this group at CCCS obviously led into a direction which they had not foreseen or intended: “(…) starting out on memory work set in train unpredictable processes which were intellectually generative but personally troubling and destabilizing. These included the splitting up of the group with major and unequal consequences for individual careers and prospects. Paradoxically, however, the break-up of the group taught us further lessons in the dynamics of knowledge/power and in the formation of social identities.” (Clare/Johnson 2000, p. 220)

They problematise in particular the power relations amongst the members of their group and here the role of one member who “was in a position to offer significant recognitions and practical support to the individual academic projects and identities of other members of the group” which meant that “the different power relations within the group were often condensed in the teacher/taught relation.” (Clare/Johnson 2000, p. 209)

In my account of the two groups above I have pointed to the problems of leadership, modes of entry, trust, collaboration all of which are connected. In the actual work process influences stemming from these areas are easily obstructive to the overall process of cooperation.

Triggered by my experiences with the two groups and the discussions with Frigga Haug I conducted another series of interviews with teachers from alternative schools in Germany who took part in a memory-work seminar with Frigga Haug a few years ago. The group worked on the topic of ‘learning from experience.’ In the conversations I traced their experiences concerning the work processes in their project. A report on their research is publicised in book format. It is a good example of the potential of the method for the participants to generate a process of critical investigation. In a summarising statement Frigga Haug notes: “At stake is not so much the relationship of experience and theory.[163] It is more about two different avenues to knowledge, the first spontaneous, immediately subjective, the second reflective, looking for generalisability. They are referential to each other. (…) Both areas are contested and in multiple ways permeated by dominance and submission, and they determine each other in this manner. To find a way through this jungle requires a collective project in which one learns to work tirelessly self-reflective, to sharpen all senses, rediscovering the abilities of perception and narration and most of all the ability to contradict oneself.” (Lehrende aus Freien Alternativschulen 2007, p. 30)

In the case of the group of teachers from free alternative schools their collective project comprised of five meetings during a period of three years. Four of these meetings were weekend-seminars. There were twenty teachers involved in total. 11 teachers took part in all meetings. I interviewed six of them.[164] The reports of the teachers, i. e. participants in the memory-work seminar and co-researchers, suggest that in the actual work process the leadership played an immensely important role for the success of the project. This relates to the intellectual engagements but also to giving directions and guidance in terms of structuring work tasks, time-keeping, moving or summarizing of discussions.

[163] As mirrored in the method in the common sense understanding of the self-generated texts (experience) and their critical reflection on the basis of deconstruction and reconstruction (theory).

[164] These interviews were transcribed in the same manner as those that were held with the teachers about their reflection processes on rituals.

Frigga Haug describes the role of the researcher in memory-work vis-à-vis the co-researchers in terms of Gramsci's organic intellectual. "I call the person leading memory work an organic intellectual. Coined originally by Gramsci, it denotes the figure within the group who assumes the intellectual tasks for the group. When doing memory work, there is no division of labour when it comes to writing the remembered experiences. Because the leader has had the same experiences, she should be free from the expert feeling and be able to participate in mutual discussion. This arrangement stirs up imagination while avoiding elitist judgement. No matter how much insight we think we possess, it is only when we have learned to see ourselves as children of these circumstances that we are equipped to work with others as we work about ourselves." (Haug 1999b, p. 7)

While the concept of organic intellectuals is quite appealing, in concrete situations of working with groups it requires a common understanding and acceptance of such a role definition on the side of all involved.

For a researcher engaging with a group in a process of memory-work then it is also necessary to be aware of group dynamics derived from potentially varying role definitions. While memory-work can certainly be applied in a great number of circumstances like university-contexts, adult education settings, social movements, community groups or philosophical circles to name but a few, it is yet necessary to be aware of the specific context in which one applies the method.

The demands on the researcher in terms of necessary input regarding structuring of work processes, regarding safeguarding personalities of participants, regarding intellectually challenging participants, regarding providing theoretical material as points of reference etc. can change significantly from one to another setting.

Participants in memory-work get accustomed with the method relatively fast. Once the initial reservations and anxieties are overcome in the actual process of writing scenes and analysing them together with the group participants get attached to the method, and in fact develop an eagerness to continue with it, or apply it in other circumstances. "But now I have done it also with a group of office holders of the Left Party. They are downright addicted to it. They want it over and over again, because now they naturally find out why they don't solve so many questions, why a great many problems are so overwhelming to them, for example that they question that politics have to be emotionless for otherwise one gets nowhere and so on." (Haug 2011)

In the interviews with the teachers who took part in the group on 'learning from experience,' all of them stated that they were eager to also apply the method in their professional context with their respective teams in school. "And the three of us who took part [in the memory-work seminar, RH], off course we were completely intrigued by it, and it constantly went through our heads. And we wanted to continue memory-work here also." (Gayed 2011) But as unanimously as the teachers stated that they wanted to use the method in their teams they also reported that this did not work for them. Not in one case was it actually possible for them to do it in their own school. The reasons for this were seen in a lack of interest on the side of colleagues to engage with the method, but also in a lack of self-confidence on their own side in terms of applying and guiding the process.

The latter can be overcome by further exposure to the method, or also by self-directed learning in voluntary circles. The former however presents an obstacle to memory-work that simply makes it impossible.

Memory-work can not be done with people who do not want to engage in it. In the interview with Frauke Schwarting she reports from her experience as a lecturer in a compulsory seminar on research methods. She tried to use memory-work as a practical example of an applied research method and found “I did it again in the university. It was a disaster. (...) One doesn’t believe how strong the influence of the basic conditions is. I mean, that was a compulsory seminar. They had to do an assignment. The whole thing takes place irrespective of their interest. The number of participants wasn’t right either. I could not choose in this context, there were thirty, thirty-five. You can forget it, simply forget it.” (Schwarting/Mescher 2011) Therefore situations in which participants find themselves compelled to take part are a recipe for failure from the very outset. For those however who choose to engage in a process of memory-work on a topic of interest, this process can have transformative quality. Whoever is ready to part from the dullness of clichéd certainties will find in memory-work a handy tool to gain new perspectives on her/himself and the social.

8.6.2.
Memory-work in the tool-box

As a research tool memory-work has proven to be fruitful in numerous projects (see Small 2000 for an overview). There is a close relationship between research and reflection. We remember the attempt to depict the processual scale of reflection made by Morwenna Griffiths and Sarah Tann. Their model of reflection processes includes the categories or review, research and retheorising. (see section 2.4.)

In this sense research could be subsumed as a category of reflection. On the other hand it is common sense that good research will always imply reflection in the sense of deliberative rationality as referred to earlier (van Manen, see section 2.7.). Using memory-work as a method for reflection then implies that the respective processes will fit the category of research as suggested by Griffiths/Tann. Furthermore due to its character as a method of critical analysis it is obviously as good as purpose-built for critical reflection.

In relation to the professional reflection processes of teachers on rituals it is also clear from all the above that there is a need for the particular negotiations of power relations in respect to the particular school being suspended for the critical reflection process to happen at all. In the reality of teachers' professional life reflection remains a social act that connects other acts. Is it possible at all to break out of 'social acts'? Not really, but it is possible to leave certain fields, enter other ones, thereby suspending certain power relations. They may be traded for other ones, or in the other fields there may be new ones developing. However for teachers who wish to critically reflect on rituals to come into a setting where the particular negotiations that dominate their work situation are – at least temporarily – suspended opens up the necessary space. Once this condition is fulfilled memory-work provides a remarkable tool.

“All my books are (…) if you like, little toolboxes. If people like to open them to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged (…) so much the better.” (Foucault 1996, p. 149) As much as a screwdriver or a spanner may appeal to social scientists after Foucault, memory-work adds yet another dimension to the toolbox: a scalpel to dissect constructions in an act of social searchery.

9. What *is* - what *is possible*

When I started thinking about my research project the question of its use-value was a vital consideration. Accordingly I aspired to provide through my research useful tools for the actual practice in the field of education. I will pick up on this point in this final chapter. Here it is important to attend to the idea of generalizability.

9.1.
Generalizability: Transferability – Expansion of action possibilities

The issue of generalizability was touched on in chapter four, but it was not further developed. In taking up the thread again I will refer to two concepts that are relevant in the context of my study. The first concerns the concept of transferability, the second one relates to the expansion of action possibilities. The reason for referring to those concepts is that they address the question of generalizability of findings of small scale research and qualitative research. I will turn to transferability first.

Transferability

Martyn Denscombe highlights that the idea of generalizability is derived from a statistical probability of certain aspects found in empirical data. General claims about these aspects to be found elsewhere are then based on this probability. Such probability normally relies on a suitably large representative sample of the wider population. For small-scale research and for research that relies on qualitative data Denscombe finds that an alternative way is needed to address the issue of generalizability. “This alternative way is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) have called ‘transferability’. This is an imaginative process in which the reader of the research uses information about the particular instance that has been studied to arrive at a judgement about how far it would apply to other comparable instances. The question becomes ‘To what extent could the findings be transferred to other instances?’ rather than ‘To what extent are the findings likely to exist in other instances?” (Denscombe 2007, p. 299)

Andrew Shenton in his contribution on strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects also refers to the concept of transferability. With reference to Lincoln/Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993) he points to the onus on “the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer.” Invariably it is for the readers to “determine how far they can be confident in transferring to other situations the results and conclusions presented.” A researcher can only know the context from which her or his study emerged, but “cannot make transferability inferences.” (Shenton 2004, pp. 69-70)

Thus transferability becomes possible if there is enough information provided in the documentation of the research to allow a reader to make an informed judgement about how far and how well the findings may apply in other situations.

"Part of the researcher's role is to interpret and evaluate the findings – but the readers of the research are not passive recipients who merely soak up the analysis presented by the researcher. To a greater or lesser extent (...) the readers themselves engage in interpreting and evaluating the findings. They (...) imaginatively transfer the findings to other situations, relying on their own knowledge and values in doing so." (Denscombe 2009, p. 189) For examples of research in which the concept of transferability is explicitly referred to see Mishna (2004), Prigoda/McKenzie, (2007), Finger/Houguet (2009), Jönsson/Skärsäter/Wijk/Danielson (2011).

Expansion of action possibilities

In the context of Critical Psychology a view has been developed that looks at the concept of generalizability from another angle. I have already quoted Morten Nissen (see chapter four, FN 80) who provides a good summary of this view. He states that: "Empirical claims are about the action possibilities of subjects. A practice that expands the real scope of action delivers experience about objective action possibilities beyond the immediately recognisable. Since the relevant life conditions of humans are societal, the direction of expansion of action possibilities is also the direction towards generalizing action possibilities." Important in the current context then is the conclusion that generality "is thus achieved, not by standardizing experience into some average, but by creating, communicating, and using common action possibilities, and by suggesting relevant aspects of the subjective situations of the people involved as typical, to be tested, enriched, and revised by people to whom the research is relevant." (Nissen 2000, p. 153 ff.)

The approach that underlies the understanding of generalizability in terms of expansion of action possibilities is rooted in the definition of science from the standpoint of the subject (see above, section 8.2.1.). Such an approach includes a liberating element. Ute Osterkamp and Lorenz Huck explain this when they write that science from the standpoint of the subject is not about "the delivery of knowledge for influencing individuals according to 'general' necessities and interests, but rather for the conscious exertion of influence on one's own conditions of life based on one's own knowledge and interests." (Osterkamp/Huck 2006, p. 26) They point out the closeness of such an approach to Foucault's notion of an "art of voluntary insubordination" (Foucault 1997, p. 47). Scientific projects in this sense are not – and can not be – neutral endeavours. They are always interventions into existing practices themselves. (Haug et al. 1987, p. 35) As these practices are social practices the interventions refer to action possibilities of a general nature even where a research project takes as its point of departure the standpoint of the subject. In this regard Osterkamp/Huck find that the subject-scientific approach possibly goes beyond Foucault's notion of insubordination in that it "makes clear that insubordination is possible only by overcoming restrictive conditions which in turn is possible only (…) together with others whose self-determining interests are to be considered, too." (Osterkamp/Huck 2006, p. 27) The publications of the *Frauenformen* collective provide examples of the concrete application of such an approach (e. g. Haug et. al. 1987, Haug/Wollmann 1993) but also the documentation of the teachers from free alternative schools referred to earlier (Lehrende aus Freien Alternativschulen 2007, see section 8.6.1.).

From these descriptions we can conclude that the concepts of transferability and expansion of action possibilities are not mutually exclusive of each other. They rather depend on differing orientations. Expansion of action possibilities can be seen as a concept in which generality is immediately related to possibilities for (liberating) interventions. Transferability as a concept does not presuppose such an orientation towards the immediate area of practice.

9.2.
New perspectives – Possibilities

9.2.1.
The complex of reflection

The context from which my research emerged is the field of professional educational practice, narrowed down to the specific area of primary schools. In my research project I looked at reflection processes of teachers on rituals and ritualisations. In doing so I dealt with three different school types. The description of the currently used reflection settings in these school types as derived from the data sets of the questionnaires and the interview series was presented in chapter five.

In the presentation of the results I was aware of the reminder issued by Morus Markard: “Subjects exist in the plural, but not in the average. Individual cases can be put in relation to each other, but they can not be set off against each other. What is of interest are the individual specifications, not however the levelling effects of the average.” (Markard 2000). I have consequently refrained from presenting aggregations of data depicting averages, be it in terms of durations, frequencies or participation rates. Nevertheless it was possible to come to a general conclusion. The most remarkable finding in this regard concerned the amount of time spent in formal reflection settings. (see section 5.5.) In free alternative schools there is in general an engagement of teachers in such settings that is normally not matched in German mainstream or Irish primary schools. I have also traced back this fact to the specific conceptual elements of free alternative schools, in particular role definitions of adults and children, radical democracy and flat hierarchies.

For the reflection processes on rituals as reported by the teachers in the interview series I found that the analysis of the data on basis of theoretical contributions on reflection relating to processual scale, functional and orientational character brought about rather mediocre results. Consequently I developed a framework for (re)analysing activities understood as reflection processes of teachers on rituals. By consistently including the character of reflection as a social act in the data analysis I arrived at a description of the reflection processes that opened a new perspective. (see section 6.5. ff) They could be identified as negotiations of legitimacy of definition, articulation and shaping reality. Various themes as found prevalent in the reflection processes could be subsumed in a number of rubrics:

Negotiating harmonised practice
Confirming demarcation lines
Negotiating non-conforming position
Undercover rumblings
Discussing scripts and choreography of ritual
Negotiating ritualisation (formalisation) of activity

Negotiating de-ritualisation (de-formalisation) of activity
Defining teachers role in community
Negotiating ritual leadership
Trading tips and tricks (old – new teachers)
Review practice against conceptual ideas

These were understood as a descriptive tool without a claim for a typology of pure categories. Their application however led to an expanded account on numerous examples of reflection processes on rituals.

What is clear from the findings in my study is that there is nothing inherent in activities understood to be ritual that renders them inaccessible to reflection. What is however also clear is that it is necessary to be far more specific in talking about the issue of rituals and reflection in the context of professional reflection than was done in educational science yet. My study provides the means to address this problem. In this sense the suggested framework can help overcoming a certain "speechlessness" (Knauer 2006, p. 54) that prevails if one relies only on the theories of reflection referred to earlier.

For all the insights which these theories provide into processes of mental operations they do not do justice to the professional practice of teachers who enter into reflection processes with others. The lack of a perspective that acknowledges the essentially social character of these processes constitutes a substantial gap within educational science. I have demonstrated how this gap can be filled by systematically taking into account the idea of reflection as a social act. For educational science it paves a way to get closer to the reality of practice.

An abundance of literature on reflection of teachers is actually written by teacher educators (e.g. Hatton/Smith, Ovens/Tinning, Korthagen/Vasalos, Rodgers, Griffiths/Tann). Here the processes of reflection that are in focus are conceptualised as processes of individual development, that is personal development understood as professional development, thus reflecting the particular perspective that is common to teacher education seminars. The actual practice of teachers who are working in school environments however can not be sufficiently brought in sight on this basis only. If one aims to do this it has consequences for research, methodical and conceptual.

Methodically it is inevitable to go into the field, engage with the teachers who are in the real situation of depending on the income of *this* job in *this* school with *these* colleagues, not with student teachers who are in a training situation in college or at best in a practicum, an internship or work experience. It is understandable that teacher students are much more accessible partners for investigations, surveys, research projects. It however does not suffice to inform about the actual practice of teachers.

Conceptually, the notorious repetition of the rhetoric of teachers as reflective practitioners remains an equally noble as burdensome demand on teachers to perpetually work on their self-perfection. Just recently Becky Atkinson has provided an analysis in which she states: "The normalized reflective practitioner (…) consistently appears as an individual acting alone in response to the world of teaching experiences. This challenges us to further examine ways in which we can conceptualize, research, and teach more critical and collective approaches to reflective thinking that respect it as a mediated and deeply contingent, collectively and historically produced process rather than an independent and autonomous action of a single individual. The reflective practitioner idealized in the reflection literature may itself be more of a "reflective fiction" created in academic scholarship and teacher education curriculum and pedagogy than a reality experienced by practicing teachers." (Atkinson 2012, p. 84)

Once the field of educational practice is taken into account, hence the reality of education as institutional practice is acknowledged, a conceptual shift is necessary. In using the framework developed by me this shift is made possible. It genuinely pays tribute to the experience of teachers who find themselves in their practice engaging in negotiations of legitimacy of definition, articulation and shaping reality. On this basis educational scienctists investigating reflection processes of teachers can no longer ignore the reality of reflection as a social act.

What is more, as a result of my study there is a concept available not only for educational science but also for teachers themselves. As can be seen in the numerous examples provided in sections 6.5, 6.7., 6.8. teachers in their practice have a working concept of reflection as a social act. They know when to address which topic. They pick their moves in the negotiations careful and make strategic decisions according to situational circumstances.

So far if teachers look at their own practice in relation to reflection, they are prey to an idealistic concept that does not adequately fit in with their professional experiences. Not having an alternative concept however leaves them in a state where they can not look at their professional reflection processes in a manner that would adequately fit in with these experiences. Here is where my suggestion provides a way forward.

The significance of my proposal for teachers can not be underestimated. For any practitioner being able to name the processes that are ongoing in their professional practice is an essential aspect of gaining agency in a conscious manner. Therefore for teachers to take recourse to the concept of reflection as a social act, and it's character as negotiations of legitimacy allows them not only to individually think about their own reflections, but also communicate these meta-reflections.

In terms of transferability the finding that professional reflection should be depicted as a social act is based on results of investigations in three different school types. While the actual topic of the reflection processes may differ according to the ritual culture in each of these school types they yet all share the same character as negotiations of legitimacy. This in itself supports the proposal put forward by me, however following Denscombe it is also necessary for “readers themselve to engage in interpreting and evaluating the findings.” (Denscombe, see above)

At the same time the provision of a new framework to look at professional reflection processes is a timely intervention in the general debate within the field of education about the role of teachers as reflective practitioners. In this sense it is a genuine expansion of action possibilities for teachers as “people to whom the research is relevant.” (Nissen, see above)

Thus far in this section I concentrated on the findings of my research mainly in relation to the complex of reflection. These findings however emerged in the context of a topical engagement with reflection processes on those elements of educational practice that are understood to be rituals or ritualisations. Here specific attention was given in the research to critical reflection. The following section 9.2.2. will turn to those latter areas.

9.2.2.
The complex of rituals/ritualisations and critical reflection

In this section I will turn to the area of rituals and ritualisations, and their critical reflection in the field of professional education. Locating the findings of my study in the framework of existing social relationships within the field of education will also lead to conclusions in relation to action possibilities that have the potential to result in an increased inclusion of the complex of rituals/ritualisations in processes of critical reflection on educational practice.

As a first observation it is evident from my research that national backgrounds influence teachers' understanding and use of the term ritual. (see section 6.2.) It was possible to identify distinct ritual cultures prevalent in the three school types. The German mainstream schools were found to be characterised by more contradictory value systems, norms and beliefs than the free alternative or the Irish primary schools. (see section 6.3.)

Considering educational practice in terms of rituals or ritualisations automatically leads into the area of such value systems, norms, beliefs, and social order. Consequently reflection processes on those elements of educational practice that are understood to be ritual or ritualisation will have to deal with questions of these norms, values, social order. Any process that is not purely affirmative of order, norms, values or strategically blinds them out will necessarily include the potential of posing critical questions, and thus has the potential for becoming a critical reflection, an investigation and externalisation of power relations and uncovering of hegemonic assumptions.

Power relations however are always relations between concrete persons, actors in a field of action. Ritualisation as a strategy implies the avoidance of explicit speech and narrative (Bell, see section 1.6.). Hence reflection on ritualisations runs counter to this strategy in that it makes explicit what was meant to remain subsurface.

We have seen how a re-interpretation of the terms reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön) can explain the empirical experiences of teachers when they try to reflect on rituals or ritualisations in school. The analysis of the examples in sections 6.5., 6.7., 6.8. demonstrated how the strategic assessment of the social situation in which the reflection takes place dominates the reflection processes. In chapter seven I have thus suggested to take away the dashes from reflection-in-action so as to arrive at 'reflection in action' which is just what the teachers in the examples do. And I used the metaphor: Even while they reflect they develop the plot *on stage*.

For critical reflection to take place there would be necessary a real distance between the actors and their acting. To remain in the picture: they would have to leave the stage, at least temporarily. As long as the situation in which the reflection happens is still determined by the system of power relations that are otherwise acted out and negotiated in the rituals it is very unlikely that these very power relations will be examined, investigated, externalised, hegemonic assumptions being uncovered and scrutinised.

In a remark made earlier I pointed out that the purpose of the analysis applied in my research was to address: what *is*, not what *should be.* This remark preceded the presentation of the descriptions of the various themes developed in the examples reported by teachers in their interviews. Throughout my study I held on to this principle in a rather strict manner. Constant anchoring point were the research questions that guided the study. The various steps in analysis and interpretation were thoroughly checked against their fit with the data and information collected. Subsequently I arrived at those results that were presented in chapters five to seven.

The application of memory-work as reported in chapter eight adds another dimension. In it there is also an element that goes beyond the description of: what *is.* In practically demonstrating how a process of critical investigation on the topic of rituals in schools can be achieved it actually shows also: what *is possible*.[165]

This has been referred to just now as expanding action possibilities and a quality of research in terms of generalizability.

In applying memory-work in my study as a method in which "a practice that expands the real scope of action delivers experience about objective action possibilities beyond the immediately recognisable" (Nissen, see above) I have shown how spaces can be created in which critical reflection on rituals becomes a realistic option for teachers. In working with the self-generated texts about rituals in schools new perspectives on the agency of the actors in the rituals were found. It is obvious from the set-up of the method that the discussions as documented in full in section 8.4. are specific to the particular group. At the same time they can be seen as typical simply due to the fact that the members of the group in their individuality yet represent the ensemble of social relations from which this very individuality is derived. Generality "is thus achieved (...) by creating, communicating, and using common action possibilities, and by suggesting relevant aspects of the subjective situations of the people involved as typical."

Obviously social reality is in flux and it is not even the same at the same time at different places. As we have seen there are different facets to the complex of rituals in schools depending on school types. In the context of the fields of both applied pedagogy in educational institutions and educational science, it would be of benefit to further the studies of practice in terms of rituals and ritualisations. I have demonstrated how memory-work as a method of critical investigation is quite suitable to address this topical complex.

If teachers or researchers wish to initiate other projects focussing on particular ritual practices as prevalent in schools they find in my thesis a broad basis laid out from which to approach their topic. There are ample opportunities depending on the ritual cultures in given schools. Considering the concrete school types that were in focus in my study there are obviously areas of overlaps: (self-)governance in its ritual form (circle-time, class council, assemblies) is a common theme in free alternative schools and mainstream schools in Germany; the entire area of behaviour management, status confirmation and regulation of bodies in space is common to Irish primary schools and German mainstream schools.

[165] While the description of the memory-work groups are a report on: what *is possible* – they are at the same time but *one possibility*. There may be many others when it comes to reflection processes on rituals in schools. It is however beyond the scope of my research to comment on such further possibilities. They would have to be tested and reported in their own right.

That ritual analysis can be succesfully applied to educational practice has been demonstrated sufficiently already. The comprehensive overview presented in chapter 1 is witness to this. The memory-work group however demonstrates that ritual analysis does not need to remain a domain of educational theory and academics only.

In my appraisal of the memory-work group in section 8.5. it was stated that rituals are in fact accessible to critical reflection for teachers, given the situation in which the reflection is going to happen facilitates for it. Such a situation obviously requires a suspension of "usual hierarchies," at least temporarily. It further requires the willingness of participants to actually engage in a process of critical reflection.

Situations that fulfil such criteria are not restricted to memory-work groups. Steve Seidel initiated a regular meeting called 'Rounds', modelled on the medical rounds in which exchange between students of medicine and a practitioner takes place over a specific case. For Steve Seidel "Rounds was an attempt to create a space in which educators at all stages of their careers could gather together in dialogue without any obvious hierarchical structures or privilege." (Seidel 2010, p. 304) What he describes is basically a meeting, a gathering, a symposium. The composition of the group plays a big role in 'Rounds'. Participants come to the group on basis of personal connections. Emphasis is laid on collectivity and inquiry as two pillars on which the groups come together.

Members in general accept the assumption that foundations of educational practice are more philosophical than technical or scientific. (Seidel 2010, p. 304) It is not necessary at this point to further discuss the "values embedded in Rounds [as] reflected in various aspects of the structure and rituals of the sessions." (Seidel 2010, p. 306). The point in referring to 'Rounds' in my context is simply that it is an example of a setting that would facilitate for critical reflection. However one aspect in it is important as it supports an argumentation I put forward already.

The composition of the group in 'Rounds' is consciously chosen as one that represents a rather homogeneous group. This homogeneity is not so much in terms of professional status (we understand that "educators at all stages of their careers" take part), but rather in terms of attitudes and basic assumptions about the character of education. Stephen Brookfield and Sabine Knauer have pointed to the need for teachers who wish to engage in critical reflection in their institutional context to find others who share this desire. (see above, chapter seven; similar points are raised by Mechthild Hart 1990, p. 60).

For teachers who wish to engage in critical reflection on rituals with others it seems to be one option to look for others with a similar interest and *organise exchange outside of the institutional context of everyday practice*. From the contributions of Seidel, Brookfield, Knauer and the teachers of the free alternative schools (Lehrende aus Freien Alternativschulen 2007) it seems possible to even generalise this and conclude that this applies to critical reflection as such, not only in relation to rituals. Such an observation highlights the importance of offers that originate from outside the institutional contexts.

There is an onus on the scientific educational community also to provide such opportunities by initiating forums for critical exchange. In this regard an initiative like Steve Seidel's 'Rounds' gains a particular significance. It can even be understood as a practical interpretation of Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual. The example of the memory-work group as documented in my thesis can be seen as a practical application of this same idea. (see also section 8.6.1.) It establishes a space for the participants that is sufficiently distanced to the power relations that are prevalent in their workplace so as to allow for critical investigations to actually take place.

Another example for a setting that fosters critical reflection is the extra-curricular women's seminar that was organised by the *Frauenformen* collective from which memory-work originated. “It is probably necessary to explain that memory-work was not a part of the normal mainstream curriculum. The main generator, I guess, where it was done always, is the famous Tuesday evening seminar at the sociology department. That was simply a tutorial that I think Frigga Haug and Kornelia Hauser did on a fixed term contract. That went extremely well and perpetuated itself. When the contract ran out Frigga continued with it every Tuesday without being paid or anything, for more than ten years. And from there all these *Frauenformen* publications originated. (…) And there were not typically people from the sociology department. It was more like internally everyone knew that this seminar is on. And people from all faculties took part. There were people coming from the town, women, that was a women's seminar. And the women who were active in the surroundings of the 'Argument'. Women came who knew us from the women's week, the feminist university which we had founded.” (Schwarting 2011)

In absence of a structure that is readily available for teachers outside their institutional contexts, and in which they can engage in critical reflection on their professional practice (not only) on rituals and ritualisations, what other option is there but self-organisation? To bring elements of critical investigation into the institutional context of one's own school, to ask critical question without the risk of committing cultural suicide (Brookfield) implies a strategic approach.

Critically questioning rituals that are prevalent in one's own school necessarily means initiating discussion about the social order, norm, values that are underlying these same rituals. It effectively ignites a questioning of ethical, political, pedagogical foundations of the concept on which the given school is built. From all that is observable in the empirical situation of teachers in schools at this point in history, in such an endeavour following a strategy of making allies seems indispensable. (see chapter seven)

At any rate for teachers who wish to critically reflect upon their professional practice by looking at it through the lenses of ritual and ritualisation it is crucial that they have a set of tools at hand that allows for such reflection to happen. I have referred to Michel Foucault's metaphor of books as toolboxes at the end of the last chapter. Tools in this sense include methods like e. g. memory-work. They however also include theoretical concepts. In the previous section I have developed this thought in relation to the concept of reflection as a social act.

Similarly thinking and talking about school practice in terms of rituals will necessarily rely on a concept of ritual. On this plane the various contributions in the literature referred to in chapter one play a role as points of reference. To engage in critical reflection processes about rituals in school it is however helpful to take into account the shifted perspective presented by Catherine Bell. In her concept a theoretical tool is available that incorporates an inherently critical approach already. Taking her concept of ritualisation instead of ritual as a screening filter in a reflection on the own practice immediately leads into critical investigation. As a practical suggestion for an increased inclusion of the complex of rituals/ritualisations in processes of critical reflection it therefore makes sense to call for a dissemination of her ideas within the educational sector.

In this regard educational science plays a role, too. So far there has been no research on matters of schooling (or practices in other educational institutions) that took Catherine Bell's concept as starting point or main point of reference. It would be desirable to fill this gap. In this regard I wish to repeat a statement made earlier (see section 1.7.) that sums up the expansive potential that lies in the concept of ritualisation: What the perspective of ritualisation opens up is a new level of questions. These questions are asked not of ‘ritual’ but more so of the actors in ritual.

What is on the table is the whole complex of questioning their acting as reasonable, grounded or explicable. Also on the table is their acting in its ambiguity within a wider social context. But further than this, what is on the table is the question of articulated alternatives.

9.3. Applying knowledge – Implications

This thesis originates in the field of education. The research project that led to the thesis was a response triggered by first hand experiences within institutionalised professional educational practice. The investigation based on the empirical data and the theories available in educational science for the complex of rituals and the complex of reflection moved the level of engagement into the academic arena. In section 9.1. I have attended to the concepts of transferability and expansion of action possibilities. In section 9.2. these concepts were concretized for the topical areas of reflection, rituals/ritualisations and critical reflection as they appeared in my thesis. In this last section I will specifically turn to the implications that can be derived from my study. To some extent they have been touched on in the previous passages already.

The framework of reflection as a social act is the most central outcome of my investigation and I will return to it soon again. Nevertheless there are a number of elements that came up in the thesis that also need to be referred to.

For practitioners in the field of institutional education the comprehensive description of the contributions on rituals in school provides a perspective for looking at their practice that allows for a new consideration of topics like classroom management or hidden curriculum. Looking at life in educational institutions through the lenses of ritual studies brings into focus the social order, norms, values, belief systems – and the shift towards Catherine Bell's concept of ritualisation adds a decisive transcendence of boundaries in that it puts the actors central stage. Educators who are genuinely looking for an understanding of their practice that goes beyond the regurgitation of clichéd catchphrases find in ritual analysis a lever to expose dimensions of institutional practice that are normally not open to review.

The compilation of data about the reflection settings as used by teachers various schools shows that there are notable differences between different school types when it comes to reflection as part of the work schedule of teachers. For teachers and school management alike these findings highlight the need for a conscious approach towards integration of reflection in the planning of work schedules. The obvious discrepancy between mainstream schools and free alternative schools in the times spent on reflecting brings to the fore questions about the character of teachers' work in terms of cooperation, collaboration and team work. For anyone who wishes to develop these areas in their practice to have more than rhetorical meaning the database presented in this thesis and the interpretation offered with it provides a crucial underpinning for the relevant debates.

The depiction of the ritual cultures in the three different school types shows how it is possible to generate a picture of normative cultures via ritual analysis. An important aspect here is the comparative element that was part of my study. By looking over the boundaries of one's one experiential field it is possible to see as problematic those practices that are habitually incorporated in institutional education. There is an onus on educational science to provide more comparative analysis, also across national boundaries.

For educational practitioners it is similarly implicated to look for opportunities to get insights into other cultural realms than their own institutional world. By doing so an understanding of the relativity of normative systems becomes a realistic chance, which in turn can lead to a more conscious practice in one's own work environment.

Using memory-work as a method to approach ritual practices in schools in a collective reflection process showed that there is nothing inherent to rituals that renders them inaccessible for critical reflection. What in fact makes rituals inaccessible for critical reflection is the situational context in which reflection is supposed to happen. In my study memory-work has been used as an example for a setting that provides the necessary organisational frame for critical reflection to happen. Given the fact that critical reflection is strongly promoted as an important element of educational practice[166] it may be tempting for teacher educators or for providers of continuing professional development to look at memory-work as a method to include in their programmes. In this regard a strong warning needs to be sent out. Memory-work relies on the voluntary participation of all members of a group, unhampered by institutional hierarchies. Wherever such hierarchies come into play memory-work will not produce the desired results. As a method of critical investigation it relies on a collective effort. Any sort of formal dependency amongst members of the group has to be strictly avoided. This includes those persons or person who take on the role of facilitator or organic intellectual for the group. Formal dependency relates to institutional status, the gratification of credentials, but also to financial dependency. Where such dependencies can be ruled out memory-work offers a setting that is genuinely prone to incite transformative learning experiences and critical reflection. Where they can not be ruled out one should consider other approaches.

Finally I wish to come back to the framework reflection as a social act. This suggestion has played a central role in my thesis and it is suitable to conclude with a few remarks on the implications derived from it. For teachers to understand reflection as a social act and identifying the empirically experienced reflection processes as negotiations of legitimacy of defining, articulating and shaping reality means that they will more consciously position themselves in their institutional context. It is not compatible with such an understanding to see oneself as a pure victim of circumstances. The self-concept that is implied in the framework of reflection as a social act is that of a conscious actor amongst other actors who are in a constant process of negotiation. Reality itself becomes a matter of conscious influence within a social arena. The situatedness of one's own professional practice is inherently part of the framework of reflection as a social act. Hence the historical trajectory and the present state of affairs in the wider discourse on education will always be already part of the considerations of teachers when they look at their practice, but also when they try to understand their reflections in a process of meta-analysis. The framework reflection as a social act therefore is a way towards an understanding of education as a political practice.

Taking into account the social character of reflection has implications particularly for programmes in which educators are educated. In teacher training courses, but also in courses for early childcare workers the idea of the idealised reflective practitioner can no longer be promoted in the same way as has been done for the last number of years. With my proposal there is provided a way to conceptualize reflection processes “as a mediated and deeply contingent, collectively and historically produced process rather than an independent and autonomous action of a single individual. (Atkinson 2012, p. 84) In turn the reflection that is demanded from students and trainee teachers has to be also understood as situated and determined by the institutional context in which they find themselves.

[166] The concept of critical reflection applied in my thesis is based on the approach suggested by Stephen Brookfield (see chapter seven). In discussions and publications from other sources critical reflection is also used with different theroretical underpinnings as referred to in chapter two.

Strategic misrecognition of one's own situatedness does not stop at the doorstep of academia. The framework of reflection as a social act offers teacher educators, lecturers in education and teacher training a chance to take off the blinkers and position themselves in a more conscious manner.

For educational science eventually the framework of reflection as a social act means that studies on reflection processes of teachers, educators have to always take into account their situatedness. Where this is ignored the resulting focus will always fall short of the empirical experience of professional educators in their institutional context.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Housekeeping exercise

Appendix 2: Sample page questionnaire

Appendix 3: Hand-out at interview

Appendix 4: Reflection settings used

Appendix 5: Examples for reflection processes on rituals (Excerpt of table)

Appendix 6: Rubrics and notes

Appendix 7: The traffic light system (example 416, section 6.5.2.)

Appendix 8: New York Times 23. 08. 1995

Appendix 9: Article in 'The local – Germany's news in English' 17. 11. 2010

Appendix 10: Irish national anthem

Appendix 11: Flyer memory-work

Appendix 1: Housekeeping Exercise

There have been a number of aspects along the way during the course of my study that would be well worth further engagement. While progressing in the direction that my study took they have been 'left behind' at the various points of emergence. In a brief "housekeeping exercise" I will come back to them now, more or less picking some of them up and simply putting them on display as topics for potential further research. I will start with two aspects relating to the field of free alternative schools.

- The history of the free alternative schools in Germany provides a fascinating field of study. In their being linked to wider social developments the establishment of each school can be seen as giving witness of a particular time/space related historical constellation. By institutionalizing the ideas about education that were dominant at the respective point in history these ideas in a way become 'frozen'. In this regard the institution remains constantly in 'the past' while it is at the same time developing in the concrete present of the actions of its inhabitants.[167] Furthermore due to their connectedness as a specific layer within the educational system there is a constant exchange also between these schools. All of this accounts for rich material for research of (contemporary) history of free alternative schools.

- Another topic specific to the free alternative schools that was mentioned as worth a study in its own right concerns the claim of "schools of negotiation." It is obvious that in the context of my own study only in one particular strand of free alternative schools teachers actually engage in collective negotiations about the rituals in school together with children. These schools are those in which there is a secondary section included in the school, and the children with whom these negotiations take place are those who are at the upper end of primary school age (5/6th class). While there is a strong element of common sense in stating that this is no surprise, it yet raises the question about the actual character of negotiations that are going on with children of younger age. This question is of relevance in a far wider context than only free alternative schools. It touches on the concept of childhood that enjoys hegemonic status at a given time in a given society.

A third topic appears in the context of Irish primary schools.

- For teachers in Irish schools the introduction of the "Croke Park agreement" in 2011 brought a change. They are now obliged to spend an extra hour every week in school with "non-class contact activities." (see section 5.3.) It would be interesting to find out if that has an impact also on the reflection processes of the teachers. Is there a repercussion of qualitative nature from the quantitative regulation[168] as far as reflective cultures in a school are concerned?

[167] The term inhabitants could also be replaced by other terms, occupants, users, owners, etc. … each of which would come with a different slant.

[168] Irish teachers in the interview series referred to an 'extra hour' that was put on them. The same view was repeatedly stated by other teachers in private conversations outside the context of my study. This view is debatable. One can similarly argue that the elements of work that are supposed to be happening during "Croke Park hours" have always been part of the teachers work schedule. The difference being now that there is an onus on teachers to spend the respective time at school while earlier they could decide themselves where and when they were to do the respective work. At the same time it is not questioned that the number of hours in class has been increased by the "Croke Park agreement."

In the context of my own study one aspect was mentioned in relation to reflection settings that was not elaborated at the time. However:

- For an innovative reflection setting the idea of peer evaluation as used by free alternative schools (and promoted in German mainstream schools, see section 5.4.8.) certainly deserves attention as an alternative to traditional school inspections. A transfer of the concept of peer evaluation into the Irish primary (and secondary) schools would be a project with great scope. It could bring a truly democratic element into an area that has gained a prominent position in discussions about quality of education.[169]

As a stringent follow-up based on my own study another potential topic emerges in relation to memory-work as a method.

- The micro-physics of memory-work are a topic that has not been looked at intensely yet. While results of applying the method have been successfully published and derivations of the method have been developed already, there is no systematic appraisal available of the actual processes in memory-work groups. The report of Clare/Johnson (2000) can be read as a step into this direction. Particularly the role of 'organic intellectuals' in memory-work who are essential part of those groups would be worth a separate investigation.

As mentioned earlier I am involved on management level in a primary school in Ireland. Viewed from this perspective it would be desirable if the gap between academic research and actual educational practice could be bridged in relation to the suggestions contained in my research. For teachers who wish to engage in a critical appraisal of their own practice, using the frameworks of 'ritualisation as a strategy' or 'reflection as a social act' would make a real difference.

[169] For a contribution on the effects of school inspections on primary teachers, see: Woods/Jeffrey (1998). In a summarizing statement they note: “The general culture of inspection that teachers now live in acts as a constraint independently of any particular inspection, such that teachers' 'positioning' formulates long in advance of the inspection week itself in response to the general trend. Compared to this influence, the inspectors' humanistic touches appear cosmetic. The general managerial trend continues, with inspectors and teachers coping as best they can, making little real contact across the structural divide.” (Woods/Jeffrey 1998, p. 12)
In this context see also the project under way at present as a collaboration of researchers in Austria, Czech Republic, England, Ireland (Gerry McNamara, Joe O'Hara, DCU), Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland. The title of the project is: “School Inspections – Studying the impact of school inspection on improvement of schools.” For the interim report of results from Ireland see: http://schoolinspections.eu/summary-of-results-from-ireland/

Appendix 2: Sample page questionnaire

Section 3

Reflection setting: Staff meetings

In staff meetings: do you discuss situations that are over, to ***examine your own actions/practice in them, gain a better understanding of your own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations?***

☐ Yes - Continue in field below	☐ No - move to next section

1) **How often** do staff meetings take place (e. g. weekly, monthly)?

2) **How long** are staff meetings on average?

3) Please rate the **intensity** of staff meetings in relation to reflection processes:

☐ Very low ☐ Low ☐ Average ☐ High ☐ Very high

4) Please rate the **productivity** of staff meetings in relation to reflection processes:

☐ Very low ☐ Low ☐ Average ☐ High ☐ Very high

5) Please rate the **satisfaction** that you get from reflection in staff meetings:

☐ Very low ☐ Low ☐ Average ☐ High ☐ Very high

Appendix 3: Hand-out interview

Anonymity

Consent for recording

Teacher

Age
Have you worked in other jobs than teaching
Teacher since
Training – which, when, where
In current school since
Contract permanent or temporary
Current role in school

School

Patron
School environment (urban, suburban, rural)
How many children in school/how many classes?
How many members of teaching staff?

Professional Reflection Structures

Professional reflection as understood here means that you **engage in discussion about situations that are over**. In the discussion you **examine your own actions/practice** in these situations **to gain a better understanding of your own actions/practice and** you **consciously learn for future (similar) situations.**
Reflection in this sense is a check on your own actions/practice.

While it is possible to understand a process in which you 'think about a situation on your own' as reflection, in the context of this questionnaire we refer **only** to reflection processes in which you **engage with others.**

This engagement should take place **in a professional context.** This includes the various settings as listed below, but excludes reflection e. g. in the private context of your family or friends.

We will briefly mention a number of reflection settings. Please indicate if these settings play a role in your own professional reflection practice.

Do you **engage in discussion about situations that are over and examine your own actions/practice** in these situations **to gain a better understanding of your own actions/practice and consciously learn for future (similar) situations –**

In the following settings:

Staff meetings
Professional support
Meetings with Principal
Staff Planning days
Other meetings with colleagues (informal)
Meetings with children
Meetings with parents
Other settings, structures

A)

In any of the settings that you use for professional reflection are there or have there been topics (activities, behaviour) discussed that were named 'ritual' of 'ritualisation'?

Example/s?

B)

In any of the settings that you use for professional reflection are there or have there been topics (activities, behaviour) discussed that in your understanding are 'ritual' or 'ritualisation' – but in the discussion these terms were not used?

Example/s?

C)

In case you have no examples for A) or B), let us try to collect the topics that you reflected upon over the last period of time.

If possible we will try to identify topics that could be interpreted as 'ritual' or 'ritualisation'.

Please let us try to
Reconstruct the discussion/reflection as detailed as possible.

- In which setting, who took part
- Who brought the topic up
- Why, what was the problem
- Which arguments were put forward
- Who said what in the course of the discussion
- How did the discussion end
- Was there a result, if yes: which
- What consequences had the reflection
- Where you satisfied with the discussion, the result

Appendix 4: Reflection settings used

Reflection settings used by German mainstream primary school teachers. Included are those settings of which the IVs themselves report that reflection happens. Hence, where a teacher explicitly states that e. g. in a staff conference there is NO reflection happening, this is consequently not included.

	RS 0513	RS 0515	RS 0516	RS 0519	RS 0603	RS 0606	RS 0607	RS 0608	RS 0609	RS 0610	RS 0614
Number of children	230 children	366 children	340 children	250 children	100 children	400 children	250 children	300 children	260 children	?	340 children
Number of adults	11 adults	21 adults	25 adults	22 adults	20 adults	?	10 adults	13 adults	16 adults	34 adults	24 adults
Team meetings (Jahrgangsteam)	Weekly 60 min	Monthly 60 min	Every 2 weeks 90 min	Weekly 4 hours	Monthly 2 hours	Every 6 weeks 60 min	Weekly 60 min	Monthly 3 - 4 hours	Weekly 60 min		
Staff conference	monthly		Every 2 weeks 90 – 120 min				Every 2 weeks	monthly			
Class teachers conference (SEK1, 5th class)										On demand	
Whole staff meeting (not conference)	Weekly 45 min			Every 2 weeks				2 per year		Weekly 60 min	
Sectional Staff meetings (Subject-specific)			On demand			On demand 60 min					
Professional Support	On request			Every 3 weeks 20 min – 180 min (as needed)	Monthly 2 -3 hours (on offer, no must)				On demand with school psychologist	Monthly 2 -3 hours (on offer, no must)	
Supervision	-	Every 3 weeks 90 min									
Meetings with principal	Annually & on request			2 x per year in formal meeting & daily informal	Monthly 2 hours (administration team)	Annually	Annually			On demand	Every 2 years

Other meetings with colleagues		With trainee teacher daily		Daily informal 15 – 20 min	Daily during break time		Occassionally iinformal	Informal with one colleague (per e-mail & after school)	Informal with one colleague (phone, or at early arrival)		
Fortbildung	occassionally				occassionally						
Staff planning days	annually	annually	Two per year	annually	annually	2 per year	2 per year	1.5 days per year	2 days per year	2 days per year	2 days per year
Klausurtagung	4 days / year for planning for amalgamation										
Meetings with children	Weekly (Klassenrat)	Kindersprechtag annually	Occassionally - informal					Occassionally (circle time or also in 1 : 1)	Constantly	A couple of times per week (Klassenrat)	Rarely in class on his demand
Meetings with parents	On request	On request	2 x annually in parent-teacher meeting					In parents meeting	On demand	Parents meeting 2 x annually	Parents meeting 2 x annually & informally

Appendix 5: Examples for reflection processes on rituals (Excerpt of table)

FS	RS	IE
Morning Circle 508 * discussion on transferring morning circle from primary to SEK 1 510 * discussion on having morning circle on daily basis or not 507 * new teachers in school find morning circle (meeting) 'chaotic' with participation of all children (class 1 – 6) and push for separate meetings * children 'rule' * discrepancy between two new teachers who start at the same time * status problem between the two teachers also 505 * 'morning circle saga' … the reflection process that led to introduction of morning circle at the time of setting up the school * morning circle as part of discussion on 'coming too late' 530 * should morning circle be obligatory or voluntary * morning circle as a 'point of stability' in changing environment (SEK 1) * alienation in morning circle through presence of visitors (violation of 'privacy' ...) 526 * discussion between teacher and children about the way how morning circle is 'done' (abhängen vs. Action …) 513 * should morning circle be obligatory or voluntary (in preschool for 2 – 6 yrs olds) 503 * morning circle saga … how it was introduced when school was set up * discussion on 'self-regulation' vs.	**Morning Circle** 410 * discussion in staff meeting about advantages / disadvantages of morning circle * teacher tries to promote morning circle amongst colleagues 407 * morning circle as an obstacle in reaching targets in subject matter * boundaries, autonomy in classroom vs. cooperation/coordination amongst teachers * pressure to perform (on teachers and children) 412 * 'Monday morning story writing' does not work as teacher would like to see * discussion with colleagues about their experiences in attempt to synchronise practice * 'Ich-Buch' as practice obligatory for another colleague who has problems with it 405 * introduction of 'how are you round' in morning circle as result of trainee teacher's influence (reflection with him) 424 * morning circle is used for personal story telling, children talk about TV * teacher doesn't like talk about TV * solution found in discussion in (Jahrgangs)team 426 * discussion in staff planning day on rituals/morning circle * part synchronisation of practice	**Morning Circle** 310 * circle time as a means to enhance 'positive behaviour * establish circle time as common practice in all (4) classes in school (circle time here is an occassional intervention, at the start of the school year, and as a conflict-solution [and prevention] mechanism).

'structure' 514 * children resist singing in morning circle * how the singing was introduced in morning circle * discussion on children's right to chose participation * adult's discrepancies acted out in new composed team		
	Greeting ceremony at start of lesson (school day) 409 * troduction of 'get up and choral 'good morning' * her arguments … but no discussion with team * practical negotiation	
		Dismissal of children at the end of school day 314 * children rollick around when school day is over * pushing and shoving on the bus * teachers establish set order for dismissal (age related)

Appendix 6: Rubrics and notes

<table>
<tr><td>Reflection as: negotiating harmonised practice

Reflection as: Review practice against conceptual ideas

Note: these conceptual ideas are not 'official school policy'</td><td>415</td><td>Teachers in parallel classes have an agreement that seating order is shuffled regularly by the teacher. This is harmonised between the section team members. In the class the teacher has a monopoly on putting children into a seating order. She shuffles this order every 4 weeks in a little ritual (having cards with names, putting them to tables …)

After a parents meeting the topic is brought up in sectional staff meeting. In the parents meeting voices were raised that criticised this practice, children would be confused by it. In the staff meeting the three colleagues try to assess the 'weight' of the claims and conclude that it is only few parents who see the shuffling of seats as problematic for the children. One of those parents is furthermore identified as a 'problematic parent' who has trouble with her own children.

The teachers still discuss the topic. This is a review of their practice, they try to analyse how it works in the various classes and how the teachers cope with certain elements of the process (is the time of shuffling as loud in your as in my class …). It is also put up for discussion whether the principle of teachers monopoly should be maintained as strict, or if there should be exceptions for children who seem to absolutely not 'gel'.

Teacher A leads the discussion with her arguments, being aware of adult authority, but using it to establish (democratic) values in class: tolerance, equality, respect, inclusiveness – a negation of cliques and bitchiness. Teachers B and C are d'accord with this view.

The general decision to have the practice in the parallel classes is confirmed.
Compare the way of arguing
424 – children act in certain manner:
“Stört's dich? Dann mußt du handeln – restrict the act/acting.”
to here;
415 – children act in certain manner:
“try to allow for the process to take place – observe it, try to find out, what is underlying, do not act hastingly – consider your role in terms of legitimacy of authority”</td><td>Does the ritual do what we want it to do (efficiency)?

Is the ritual in line with our own conceptual views, here: authority; can we stand over the ritual?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reflection as: Negotiating De-ritualisation (De-formalisation) of activity</td><td>514</td><td>In newly established school, before the school started, Adults decided that during morning-circle a song is sung by everyone. This was meant to strengthen the coherence and feeling of community.
Children resisted the singing, mourned and complained. One teacher took their complaints into staff meeting. This teacher functions as voice for the children. This teacher argues that children feel under heteronomy, and that the singing is disfunctional because they don't want it and will always bastardise it anyways.
Other teachers get 'emotional' – for them the ritual is important. They insist on importance of strengthening</td><td>Does ritual curtail rights of children?

How can contrasting interests be appeased in ritual?
(here: some adults – children)</td></tr>
</table>

		group coherence and community. In staff meeting an 'opening clause' is agreed: singing will happen 'when it fits' – in practice it is more or less abandoned. Occasionally (birthdays) it happens, not otherwise.	Ritual experts one of them giving children a 'voice'
Reflection as: Ritual experts confirming demarcation lines ***Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating harmonised practice***	**416**	She teaches two subjects in a class (not her own class). The class teacher in this class has a system of 'demerits' – (a child who is 'unattentive' or 'disruptive' gets a tick on the tally sheet). The subject teacher does not like the tally sheet. In her opinion it is 'negative conditioning' *(should be: conditioning of negative behaviour)*. However she uses the system while teaching her subjects. After a while she finds, it does not work for her. She introduces instead her own system: traffic lights on tables. (this as a good example for different orientations in mainstream and in free schools … parents as last resort etc.) In exchange with class teacher both confirm that for each of them their own system 'works' and thus they both 'leave each other alone'.	Will you – colleague – accept me doing my ritual in your class?
In succession: **Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating individual non-conforming position** **Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating harmonised practice** **Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating individual non-conforming position**	**418**	In the school the (unwritten) rule is that classes line up after yard break. One teacher reports in staff meeting that with her class this does not work – the children are constantly fighting in the line. Staff meeting discusses the issue. Other teachers confirm that lining-up is 'messy'. It is interpreted as a matter of supervision. There are two parts to the yard that are separated by a building and children are lining-up in different parts of the yard. The solution for the problem is sought in having children all lining-up in the same part of the yard where they are easier supervised by one staff member. (Technical fix) This is tried and it works better, but the teacher with the original 'problem class' brings the topic up in staff meeting again. She reports that is still does not work for her class. This time an agreement is found amongst staff for her class to be allowed to go to classroom already. That it does not work in the particular class is the children's 'fault', they are not 'able' to do so. Other class teachers are approached by their own children and they explain the exception on basis of the deficiency of the 'problem class'. The question of lining-up as such is not discussed. The topic is discussed also in terms of supervision (can children be 'unsupervised'). In this context also: the supervision of supervisors, parents observing over the wall what happens on yard during break.	How can the ritual be made funtioning, better: how can the participants be made functioning within the ritual? Supervision – o.k. for some. Can those who don't function get released from ritual duties? (that is: children – but also the adults who are responsible to make the children function ... effectively they fail, too ...)
Reflection as discussing choreography of ritual	**315**	550 children school – 24 teachers At end of yard break children are supposed to line up. There are children however who still run around and do	How can ritual be restructured to remain functioning?

Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating harmonised practice		not get in line. A teacher brings up the topic in staff meeting. The reporting teacher does not remember arguments in discussion. The staff meeting decides to set up an incentive. The teacher on yard duty is supposed to give points for lining up to classes with an award for the best line of the week. This improved the situation. Reporting teacher finds awarding points difficult (technical: classes don't remain in shape for long time … give points and line dissolves – remove points or what? …; fairness: teachers have different standards, how do children know what is 'good line'? ...) She does not communicate this. At the end of the school year the principal retires. "*It didn't follow through with the new principal"* The lining up remains, but the points disappear – as an element of the ritual it is not carried through. If teachers were bothered, it would – make principal responsible for not following through ???	
Reflection as: Ritual experts negotiating harmonised practice – transfer into collective negotiation via 'uprising' ***Reflection as: Collective negotiation of practice, including ritual experts and participants (****shared ownership***)**	**526**	There are different morning circles with different adults and children can chose to take part in any or also in none. One of the teachers creates a choreography for morning circle in reflection with a colleague. The idea is to 'make people active' by playing a game, singing a song or other activity. Children take part but do not bring in any activities themselves until the teacher also stops activities, too, rather makes announcements. Children say that they don't really like the format. When the teacher is away on a course, the children create a new format. They have a 'sleep and chat' circle. When the teacher arrives back, the children tell the teacher that they she is not needed because the children have found what they want to do. The teacher asks if she can participate in the sleep and chat circle. The children agree. The children also agree for her to make announcements if she feels it is really important. These children are 5/6th class.	a) How can ritual be made effective (here: 'make people active') b) How can ritual be made effective (here: 'allow for sleep and chat') this is claiming ownership c) How can ritual serve all included (here: allow for sleep and chat, but also for announcements)
Reflection as: Ritual experts defining their role in community	**318**	The school stages a public play at christmas time for the entire community. This is as much a fundraiser as it is promoting the school. After one of the plays the teachers talk (informal lunch break) about the performance. The amount of work put in by teachers and the time used for the preparation are identified as a problem. There is agreement amongst the teachers that they would not like to continue doing the extra work every year. Also the amount of time that is lost for curriculum delivery is mentioned. On both reasons the teachers base a decision to have a two-year rhythm for the public performances. The decision is then also recorded in the staff meeting.	Does ritual take away from curriculum? Do we want to be ritual experts for THIS ritual? How much are we prepared to ritual without extra pay? Will we ritual at all? In it there is potential for discussion of role of teacher in society/community (professional, medicine women)

		In the discussion arguments are mentioned also highlighting the value of the performances for self-esteem of children, and for community (social coherence), however there is consensus amongst the teachers that it is too much for them every year.	here answered with a compromise ... every two years Dominant: It is 'giving to the community' – and 'what does the community give to me/us'? (Söllner: Hey Staat ...) The fact that it is *christmas* play does not play a role – the religious layer that is put over 'community' is at the same time – a given absolute – irrelevant

Appendix 7: The traffic light system (example 416, section 6.5.2.)

A – I have introduced these cards, green, yellow and red cards, ahm, which the children get when they work. And that goes in both directions. They get a green card if it works well. It can turn to a yellow one if it it is not so, but they can also get the green one back. Back and forth, I would say, in both directions.

(...)

Q – Could you explain to me, what exactly you do with these cards?

A – Well, I have a set of cards. And when the children work, or also at circle-time, at circle-time I show them, ahm. Because I found that when I tell off a child that is, I would say, a bit like stored somewhere. But if the child has a green, yellow or red card lying on the desk (...) then it is visually in sight for the child.

(...)

Q – Let us take a situation, a lesson (…) the children sit there everywhere.

A – Exactly, the children sit at their desk, and I give them a task. They start working. (…) And then there are children who sit and work silently with a partner, or on their own, whatever, they work. And then I put a green card down.

Q – While they are working?

A – While they are working.

(…)

A – Then there are children, who sit at the sides, ahm, I don't know, or shout, well, I have, I have a couple of children in this class who on principle shout through the class. (…) They get, like, a yellow card put down.

Q – Yes, and what do they do then?

A – Then they are quiet and try to contain themselves, most of them. Obviously sometimes it also fails, but most of them really get it, that they say, O.K., 'uuuh, now I have yellow, I am going to work better'. (…) Then they get a green one again.

(...)

Q – How many children are in that class?

A – Twenty.

Q – O.K., now :

A – Do you say, how to organise? [laughs]

Q – Yes, how then do you get [laughing: all these cards out there? I mean /]

A – That works well. It does not work well at all times, but usually, ahm, once they have a green card, they want to keep it, too.

Q – Well, does that really mean, I find it fascinating, does it really mean, all twenty children have a card lying in front of them.

A – Mhmh. Then at the end of the lesson they enter into a list, that is how I do it in my own class, in the other class I do it for them, ahm, and that works. And then they are like, they want to collect as many greed cards during the week as possible.

Q – They collect them, yes, O.K. And you said, there are red cards also. What are they for?

A – Well, red is then, on the card it says: time-thieve. These then are those children, where it simply didn't work at all. And with these children I have a chat, and, ahm, see, how can we improve this, that it works better. And that can be then that I, ahm, give the child a task: 'now you please write a report, what happened today, how did you behave wrongly'. As in, where the children basically are supposed to reflect upon their behaviour again.

Q – Mhmh.

A – Ahm, and depending on the child, sometimes I also say: 'please, parents signature'. Ahm, yes, and mostly that works well again, too. And if not, I will go to talk to the parents again.

The ideas of 'traffic lights' or variations thereof as a means of classroom management are virulently spread amongst teachers. In the interviews teachers from German mainstream and Irish primary schools made reference to their use. Manuals are readily available via the internet. See e. g.:

http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/behaviour/behaviour.htm

http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/management/trafficlights.htm

http://www.redandgreenchoices.com/

Appendix 8: New York Times 23. 08. 1995

Crucifix Ruling Angers Bavarians

By STEPHEN KINZER
Published: August 23, 1995
(New York Times)

The office of Bavaria's million-member Committee of Catholics was a bit more frantic today than its director, Elke Hummeler, would have liked. But the office was only a pale reflection of the upheaval into which this tradition-rich state has been thrown by a court decision that many Bavarians consider sacrilegious and hateful.

Germany's highest court decided this month that the Bavarian law requiring a crucifix to be hung in each of the state's 40,000 classrooms was unconstitutional.

"Because attending school is a general obligation, crosses in classrooms mean that the state confronts pupils with this symbol during their lessons, leaving them no alternative to learning 'under the cross,' " the Constitutional Court ruled in a 5-3 decision. "As a result, the presence of crosses in classrooms differs from the normal presence of various religious symbols in other areas of daily life."

Many people here, supported by like-minded citizens across Germany, are demanding to know why one of their most cherished symbols is being banished from schools.

"When I first heard the news, I was completely confused," Mrs. Hummeler said as she juggled phones and set fax machines. "I didn't think German judges could even consider doing such a thing. The cross is a symbol of the values we love most and want to transmit to our children. It's almost unthinkable that it can be taken away from us like this."

Mrs. Hummeler is helping to organize a protest in Munich at which she hopes 20,000 people will turn out. Senior religious leaders and politicians from the Christian Social Union, the heavily Catholic party that dominates Bavarian politics, are expected to attend.

The party chairman, Finance Minister Theo Waigel, has already declared himself "horrified and astonished" by the decision. Chancellor Helmut Kohl also criticized it.

"The crucifix as a symbol of Christian belief harms no one," Mr. Kohl said in a statement. "After this century's bitter experience with anti-Christian ideologies and their awful and inhuman effects, we feel a special obligation to pass these values on to future generations."

Educational policy in Germany, like most domestic policy, is shaped principally by the states. Bavaria, which with 11 million inhabitants is Germany's second most populous state, is the only one that requires religious symbols in classrooms. Other states ban them or leave the decision to local communities.

Politicians from Germany's left-oriented Social Democratic and Green parties welcomed the court's decision. A senior Social Democrat, Herta Daubler-Gmelin, accused critics of resorting to "demagogic populism and intentional falsehoods."

The head of the German teachers' union, Richard Sigel, said the decision "fits with the times."

"Ties that bind us to the Christian religion are not as strong as they once were," Mr. Sigel

said.

A Constitutional Court judge who voted with the majority, Johann Friedrich Henschel, suggested in an interview that the court had been influenced by the growing number of non-Christians entering German schools.

"How would a practicing Christian in a class with something like 80 percent Muslims feel if the majority suddenly decided to hang a verse from the Koran on the wall?" Judge Henschel asked.

Many prominent Bavarians have gone beyond protest and are urging that the ruling be ignored. Governor Edmund Stoiber said he would not order the removal of crucifixes "for the time being," and asserted that he was under no obligation to remove them in schools where parents unanimously opposed such action.

Friedrich Cardinal Wetter of Munich, the Bavarian capital, said parents alone should have the power to decide whether crucifixes should hang in classrooms.

"We guarantee tolerance for people who think differently from us, and we demand in return that same tolerance," Cardinal Wetter told pilgrims in the Bavarian town of Altotting last week. He declared, "Insist on your right and you will not err."

The court decision was on a case brought 10 years ago by Ernst Seler, a Bavarian artist and composer who did not want to send his three children to schools where the "image of a bleeding, half-naked male corpse" was displayed. A local court and then a Bavarian appeals court rejected his suit, ruling that the crucifix was a valuable symbol of "the general Christian-occidental tradition."

Mr. Seler is a follower of the philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), whose school of "anthroposophy" deals with knowledge produced by the spiritual side of man. Mr. Seler said that after years of abuse and anonymous death threats, he felt "tremendous relief and joy" at his victory.

Appendix 9: Article in 'The local – Germany's news in English' 17. 11. 2010

A Regensburg school's decision to honour a father's request to remove a crucifix from his child's classroom has reportedly sparked outrage among Bavarian conservatives.

Bavaria puts a crucifix in every public school classroom in the heavily Catholic state, but education officials are required to take them down if parents complain.

Exactly that situation occurred at the beginning of the school year at the Albertus Magnus university-preparatory high school, daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported Wednesday.

Taking down crosses is rare, but obligatory if someone complains following a court ruling in 1995, which found that the Christian symbols violated the religious neutrality of the school system.

"Usually it happens quietly and within the school community," spokesperson for the Bavarian Education Ministry Ludwig Unger.

But members of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) have been outraged since the incident came to light over the weekend. A Christian committee within the CSU led by state parliamentarian Thomas Goppel has demanded the cross be returned to its position immediately.

"I have no understanding for one parent's demand to take a cross out of a classroom if it defies the wishes of the majority of other parents," Mayor and CSU member Gerhard Weber told the paper.

Weber was apparently particularly miffed that the father concerned was not a native German.

"The question must be asked whether the hospitality that we gladly extend to foreigners has been worn out," he said.

The school has kept the father's identity anonymous, but Weber demanded the man step forward to discuss his complaint.

Another CSU member, Bavarian school minister Ludwig Spaenle, said he could "understand why people would shake their heads at the removal of a cross," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported.

But the school's director Wilhelm Pfaffel questioned whether the issue would be so controversial if the father's heritage wasn't in question. Though he remains anonymous, he has received death threats, Pfaffel told the paper.

According to regional daily *Mittelbayerische Zeitung*, the man is a university professor of physics who came from an English-speaking country in 2006.

As an atheist he took issue with a daily morning prayer in his son's classroom – which he

had not been informed about. When he spoke with the teacher about it, she agreed to reword the devotional as a “good morning circle” and recommended that they also remove the cross, the unidentified man told the paper.

But some of other parents were displeased with the decision, and the issue found its way to the media, sparking the debate, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* said.

Meanwhile local religious leaders have also weighed in. On Monday night Bishop Ludwig Müllers appealed to non-believers for tolerance of Christian symbols.

“The cross is our expression of a civilisation of love,” he said.

The Local/ka

http://www.thelocal.de/society/20101117-31229.html

Appendix 10: Irish national anthem

Sinne Fianna Fáil, Atá Fá gheall ag Éirinn, Buidhean dár sluagh tar rúinn do ráinig chughainn Fámhoídh bheírh saor, Sean-tír ár sinnsear feasta Ní fágfar fá'n tíorán ná fa'n tráil; Anocht a theigeamh sa bhearna baoghail, Le gean ar Gaedhí chun báis nó saoghail, Le gunna sgréach: Fá lamhach na piléar. Seo Libh canaidh amhrán na bhFiann. Seo dhibh a cháirde duan oglaidh Caithréimeach, bríoghmhar, ceolmhar. Ár dteinte cnámh go buacach táid, `S an spéir go min réaltógach. Is fionmhar faobhrach sinn chun gleo 'S go tiúnmhar glé roimh tigheacht do'n ló, Fa ciúnas chaoimh na h-oidhche ar seol, Seo libh, canaídh amhrán na bhFiann. Cois banta réidhe, ar árdaibh sléibhe. Ba bhuadhach ár rinnsear romhainn, Ag lámhach go tréan fá'n sár- bhrat séin Tá thuas sa ghaoith go seolta; Ba dhúthchas riamh d'ár gcine cháidh Gan iompáil riar ó imirt áir, 'Siubhal mar iad i gcoinnibh rámhaid Seo libh, canaidh amhrán na bhFiann. A buidhean nach fann d'fuil Ghaoidheal is Gall Sinn breacadh lae na saoirse, Tá sgéimhle 's sgannradh í gcroidhthibh namhad, Roimh ranngaibh laochra ár dtíre; Ár dteinte is tréith gan spréach anois, Sin luinne ghlé san spéir anoir, 'S an bíodhbha i raon na bpiléar agaibh: Seo libh, canaidh amhrán na bhFiann.	Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland Some have come from a land beyond the wave, Some to be free, no more our ancient sireland Shall shelter the despot or the slave; tonight we man the Bearna Baoghal In Erin's cause. come woe or weal; 'Mid cannon's roar and rifle's peal We'll chant a soldier's song. We'll sing a song, a soldier's song With cheering, rousing chorus As round our blazing fires we thong, The starry heavens o'er us; Impatient for the coming fight, And as we wait the mornings light here in the silence of the night We'll sing a soldier's song In valley green or towering crag Our fathers fought before us, And conquered 'neath the same old flag That's floating o'er us, We're children of a fighting race That never yet has known disgrace, And as we march the foe to face, We'll sing a soldier's song Sons of the Gael! Men of the Pale! The Long watched day is breaking; The serried ranks of Innisfail Shall set the tyrant quaking. Our camp fires now are burning low; See in the east a silvery glow, Out yonder waits the saxon foe, So sing a soldier's song.

Appendix 11: Flyer memory-work

Memory-Work School Rituals and Ritualisations

In the context of our memory-work we will look at the whole range of rituals and ritualisations which are often of secular nature. Our reflection will include interactions, routines, habits, ceremonies that are part of school life.

A particular focus in the memory-work group will be the investigation of the construction of social reality. We will reflect on the role of rituals, ritualisations, ritual-like activities in educational practice.

Reflection necessarily includes doubts, questions, uncertainty and surprise – in the memory-work group these are seen as a welcome starting platform for self-development. A common experience in memory-work is the enriching environment of the group. Diverse opinions are seen as an asset and an opportunity to gain new views on seemingly familiar issues.

Teachers are one of the most observed professions, with a lot of players involved: children, colleagues, management parents. All the more it is important that teachers have a feeling of solid ground in what they do. Reflection is crucial in gaining and maintaining this ground, and the more profound the reflection process, the better for the teacher.

Memory-work, the method in a nutshell:

i) We discuss the topic (here: rituals/ritualisations) to understand our individual points of view on the matter

ii) Each of us writes a short story of an event (surrounding ritual/ritualisation) which we experienced ourselves.

iii) The stories are analysed by the group in a set procedure of ‘deconstruction’. Each story will be treated with ample attention. Thus the entire process needs some time.

iv) Results of the text-analyses (step iii) and initial discussion (step i) are set in relation to each other.

By engaging in memory-work the links between individual experiences and social life can be made accessible in a way that is non-threatening, and yet deeply profound.

The result of the memory-work will be a better understanding of the own practice which becomes more transparent, more conscious and thus more open to self-evaluation. This is a crucial aspect for gaining self-confidence in all professions, but particularly in the rather lively social setting of primary school.

Not to forget: above all there is a lot of fun in the intellectual challenge that comes with memory-work, a wave of fresh air blowing through the mind.

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