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Justification and Critique of Educational Reforms in Austria: How Teachers and Head Teachers (Re-)Frame New Governance

- The article explores how teachers and head teachers make sense of a new education governance.
- It presents a pragmatic conventionalist approach to analysing actors' judgements of educational reforms.
- Results of a study, researching teachers and head teachers at three Austrian new middle schools, are discussed.
- A repertoire of seven conventions was empirically reconstructed, following the work of Boltanski and Thévenot, however, arriving at a differing typology.
- Results indicate a persuasion of the market-based convention; a dominance and subsequent economisation cannot be deducted.

Purpose: Against the backdrop of a new governance regime of schools in Austria, which combines policies of decentralisation and school autonomy with an accountability program of standardised outcome control, this article explores how the so called "agents of change" – teachers and headteachers – take up these ideas and corresponding governance instruments and frame them on grounds of moral considerations. The aim is to present a theoretical framework for analysing – at the individual level – moments of critical evaluation and affirmative justification of more general political actions as well as of every day's work practices.

Approach: Drawing on the concept of orders of justification and the pragmatist theory of conventions, a qualitative, interview-study with 15 teachers and head teachers in Austrian middle schools was conducted with the intention to discover a repertoire of educational conventions applied by the actors to criticise or justify reform-based decisions, expectations and subjective claims to work.

Findings: Besides presenting seven conventions, the article puts a special focus on arguments and corresponding conventions that – on one hand – characterise an economic perspective on schools and education (the market, industrial and flexible convention) and are thus important in deciding whether the new education governance regime is supported by an 'economised' constellation of frames that teachers and head teachers use to interpret their actions as well as others. One the other hand, the role of the civic convention receives special attention in relation to the aforementioned ones to include a further aspect into the diagnosis of an economisation of educational practices.

Keywords:
Austrian school system, economisation, new education governance, theory of convention, reconstructive research

1 Introduction: Economisation of education?

For at least two decades there has been talk about the marketisation, commodification and/or privatization of public services in academic as well as political discourses around the globe. Often used interchangeably these concepts point towards a dynamic of far-reaching ideological, political and analytical change in the organisation of different social fields such as education, science, health care and social services. The common denominator is the gradual increase (or even dominance) of economic mechanisms and criteria, economic capital or an economic rationality into social spheres that have formerly been operating on a non-economic logic.[1] Many diagnoses of an "economisation of education" (Spring, 2015) – for example the German-speaking discourse around the concept of "Ökonomisierung" (see Höhne, 2012) – are predominantly borne by a critical impetus,

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pointing to the manifold social consequences of an omnipresent economic logic. However, looking at another influential discourse within the field – the educational governance perspective on recent reforms within the educational and in particular the school system – the difference in and lack of a similar motivation seems striking. Based on the analysis of a "new educational governance" that can well be regarded in terms of an "Ökonomisierung" of education, leading representatives as well as many analysts steer well clear of such a label and instead employ a more functionalist approach to core elements such as quality improvement, output orientation, evidence based decision-making, school autonomy and accountability.[2] This paper is well interested in the analysis of processes of economisation. However, by asking what these transformations linked to the new educational governance mean to actors who face them on an everyday basis, and developing a more fine-grained heuristic for the moral deliberations that underlie these engagements, I attempt to further the understanding of the different 'logics' and their relevance to decision-making processes in schools.

So far, education governance research has had its focus on the question of how education as a specific good is produced through the cooperation and coordination

between a multitude of (individual and corporate) actors (see Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2010; Kussau & Brüsemeister, 2007). Thus, while much attention has been paid to look at different modes of coordination that allow for the 'successful' (re-)production of educational performances, the role of the normative dimension underlying processes of coordination and decision-making has not received equal attention. This, I argue, is mostly due to the educational governance approach's foundation in an actor-based institutionalism and the significance of micro-economic principles stated by Institutional economics (e.g. transaction cost theory, principal-agent theory, property rights theory). The result of such a theoretical (pre-)positioning is that action in general, but also the aspect of legitimation of educational decisions, governance mechanisms or larger bodies of policies are primarily considered a strategic or instrumental expression of an actors' interests (Graß, 2015a). From a utilitarianist vision of society this may prove adequate in certain research endeavours. However, in a more institutionalist and ultimately Weberian perspective there are collectively forged normative contexts to be considered, that underlie these actions which cannot be reduced to individual deliberations and calculations (Weber, 1985/1922; see Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010). This paper, therefore, proposes – not a shift, but – an extension to the agenda of educational governance research. It argues, that in order to comprehend the dynamics of educational change, the analysis cannot concentrate solely on the "end" of regulation and governance, on the outputs and their effects, but has to address the 'beginning', or what von Blumenthal (2014) has called "input-legitimation" of governance (see Dale, 2005).

To meet this conceptual as well as empirical desideratum the paper pursues two objectives. *First*, I propose the French sociology of conventions (see Diaz-Bone, 2011) and in particular the concept of modes of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) as a theoretical, yet also methodological framework for the research of changes in the educational governance. This approach stresses the normative, and in fact moral dimension of the institutional embeddedness of action. However, instead of focussing on legitimacy as a possible (and desirable) outcome, the theory of convention is interested in the processes of justification and critique. The educational field, its structure and the principles of organising the school and teacher-pupil-interaction can thus be analysed as the result of ongoing processes of evaluation based on normative orders or 'logics'. *Second*, the paper acknowledges that the analysis of educational governance regimes and corresponding institutionalised conventions, especially in light of vast political reforms and shifts in the cultural and socio-economic landscape, demands a close link to empirical research, thereby not only gaining new insights into field specific and more localised modes of governance and coordination, but also preventing the danger of reifying ideological assumptions about the nature of such diagnoses as the aforementioned economisation.

Taking the Austrian case, I present findings from an explorative, qualitative study aimed at identifying modes of justification and critique, employed by teachers and head teachers in *new middle schools* with regard to changing mechanisms of school governance. Such mechanisms encompass the expansion of elements of school choice, the promotion of school specific profiles, the introduction of performance benchmarks and their standardised testing as well as the hanging thread of comparative league tables for schools. Resting on the epistemological assumption that different (field-specific) conventions are available to actors when it comes to making sense of and in particular justifying their engagement with educational reforms (or the lack of it) special emphasis will be put on arguments and corresponding educational conventions that characterise an economic perspective on schools and education and are thus important in deciding whether the new educational governance regime is supported by an 'economised' normative framework that teachers and head teachers use to interpret their actions as well as others'.

2 A new governance in education

Perhaps in line with the dominant modes of regulation and control during a historical period, more traditional concepts such as government and steering assume a rather linear relationship between different levels of the political and subsequent organisational and individual levels, especially when it comes to questions about triggering change and impacting wanted behaviour. In contrast, the governance perspective has set out to widen the understanding of how different modes of interactions and in particular modes of coordination in a complex system shape its outcomes, i.e. the production of a system-specific performance (Benz, 2004; Bevir, 2013). Rooted in political studies and sociology the concept of governance was not widely considered within educational research until some ten years ago. In the German-speaking discourse, even though the language does not know any such word as governance, the term 'educational governance perspective' has since become the label of a considerable, continuously growing body of work that is in particular aimed at describing and analysing a multitude of recent transformations, such as "changes in the provision of education, changes in actors and actor constellations, and changes in the mechanisms of policy formation – from top-down, hierarchical models to more horizontally differentiated, network-like models" (Amos, 2010, xii; see also Maag Merki, Langer, & Altrichter 2014). The topical focus encompasses – apart from schooling – pre-school education (Neumann, 2010), higher education (Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007) and further education (Schrader, 2010).

Whereas critical voices in the international discourse have often pointed to the common position between the New Public Management program, a neo-liberal reform agenda and governance issues (Brownyn & Bansel, 2007; Dale, 1997; 2005; Davies, 2011; Lorenz, 2012), the proponents in the German-speaking context have chosen

to emphasise the analytical, non-normative program of the concept and its possible connectivity to different theoretical and methodological stances (Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007, p. 3). The debate has subsequently paid much attention to the conceptualisation of educational governance as an analytical tool or framework (Altrichter, 2015; Amos, 2010; Kussau & Brüsemeister, 2007). Despite the concept being used from different positions and the on-going conceptual debate between educational governance scholars, Altrichter and Maag-Merki (2010, p. 20) define the educational governance framework as a research approach that analyses the emergence, perpetuation and transformation of social order and performances within the educational system from the perspective of coordination of action between a plurality of actors in a complex multi-level system.

Looking at schools in particular, their governance has traditionally been described as a bureaucratic-professional hybrid. This refers to the twofold institutionalisation of schools as part of the hierarchical-bureaucratic structure of administration and control on one hand and to the expert-organisation that is dependent on the professional (pedagogical) autonomy of teachers on the other (Altrichter, Heinrich, & Soukup-Altrichter, 2011, p. 13). Critique has long been addressing both of these aspects: It was (and still is) thus argued that bureaucratic regulation by a distant public administration can never be flexible enough to match and react to the necessarily particular local situations of individual schools, their members and communities (Dumay & Dupriez, 2014). Regarding teachers' autonomy in classrooms it was (and again, still is) criticised that the actual teaching is rendered outside the public's view, is mostly unaccounted for and mainly depending on individualised skills and motivations which leads to a lack in 'quality control' (Graß & Altrichter, 2017).

In the Austrian case (for the transformation of the Austrian school governance see Altrichter & Heinrich, 2007) these critiques were first taken up in the mid-1990s and responded to in reforms that aimed at (slightly) increasing the schools' autonomy and their responsibilities at the same time. These initial endeavours were – similar to other countries like Germany – strongly propelled by the 2003's PISA test results, which were considered a shock and interpreted as a necessary wake-up call for policy-makers, practitioners and the concerned public. In search for a legitimate political reaction to this 'crisis' of the education sector (Odendahl, 2017; Tillmann, Dedering, Kneuper, Kuhlmann, & Nessel, 2008) the last decade has seen the introduction of a new governance ideal that is strongly influenced by international political trends and scientific debates (Lindblad, Ozga, & Zambeta, 2002; Mok, 2005; Mundy, 2007; Ozga & Jones, 2006). This new model of school governance integrates the ideas of a strong output-orientation, evidence-based decision-making and public accountability with the policies of decentralisation, the strengthening of a site-based management and school autonomy (Graß & Altrichter, 2017). From a political perspective it is proposed that

corresponding measures, especially the increase in autonomy will contribute to a school's overall quality, as long as certain system-wide requirements and standards are in place to align the school to fulfil its mandate. Böttcher (2002, p. 97) used the contradictory word pair "de-centralisation and re-centralisation" to account for these two distinct directions. Thus, like the bureaucratic-professional governance mode which it is put in opposition to, the new governance constellation is a hybrid, too (Maroy, 2009), that not only encompasses a plurality of instruments of coordination, but also rests on distinct governance principles. In line with works by educational governance scholars (Altrichter, Heinrich, & Soukup-Altrichter, 2013; Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007; Moos, 2011; Pavolini, 2015) the system, that is currently being pushed, can be characterized by the following three logics (Graß & Altrichter, 2017):

1) A logic of autonomy and site-based *managerialism*: Reforms focused on giving more autonomy to individual schools and in particular to the school's heads. Provided with more powers and the opportunity to make certain decisions alone or in consultation with authorities the latter are urged to apply principles of organisational management to their schools and efficiently economise with the allocated resources.

2) A logic of *output-orientation* and accountability: In line with the concept of autonomy regulation is effected by communicating certain expectations regarding pupils' and teachers' performances as well as the overall quality of the school (e.g. educational standards, national curricula, targets and quality agreements). Compliance with and fulfilment of these goals are subject to monitoring by (more) centralised authorities, for example through standardised testing of pupils' performances and regular school and teaching inspections. Characteristic for the new use of instruments of evaluation is that their results are supposed to be fed back to all levels of the educational system and expected to trigger a rationalised process of school improvement. Again, the school perceived as an autonomous unit of (re-)action is then considered responsible to take consequences based on the evidence provided (Bergh, 2015; Pogodzinski, Umpstead, & Witt, 2015).

3) A logic of *competition*: The fundamental argument for the introduction of markets to the field is that in choosing an attractive school for their children, families are better prepared to exert power over schools than a centralised public authority. Following Le Grand and Bartlett (1993), this approach, first, depends on the ability of families to freely choose a school. Second, schools in turn need a high degree of autonomy to "specifically adapt to their respective situations and to differentiate their provision from that of competing schools" (Dumay & Dupriez, 2014, p. 511). Third, the funding has to be pupil-based, that is proportionate to each school's population and, therefore favours the ones that are successful in attracting higher numbers of students. Though with a different intensity than in other countries, e.g. the UK, the introduction of elements such as (free) parental choice of school, individual school programs and specific profiles as well as the aforementioned standardised testing and evaluation accompanied by the publication of the respective results points towards the growing relevance of mechanisms that enhance the coordination of action via competition

between individual actors or whole organisations (Altrichter, Heinrich, & Soukup-Altrichter, 2013).

3 The legitimacy of school reforms: insights from the theory of conventions

Whereas the previous paragraph looked at instruments and the 'logics' that seem to inspire the current mode of a new governance of the (Austrian) school system, the focus of the paper now shifts towards a more actor-based perspective and the question of how teachers and head teachers (re-)frame these policies of 'modernisation' and evaluate their 'worth'. This is of importance, as these two groups of actors are sometimes indirectly, often explicitly addressed by the proposed reforms and widely considered as relevant agents of change (Fullan, 1993). Their actual work practices as well as their professional identities are likely to be subject to change (Graß, 2015b).

Though there have been many studies trying to determine the impact of some of the latest reforms on teaching behaviour, students output and school development (for a comprehensive meta-analysis see Seidel & Shavelson, 2007) most have addressed the issue from a perspective of efficacy and efficiency of teachers' (and head teachers') actions. This paper argues to consider the sociology of conventions and, in particular, its variation in Boltanski's and Thévenot's moral-philosophical work on orders of justification (and critique) as an adequate theoretical framework that is able to integrate different levels of interest: the discursive level of educational policy and policy reforms, the level of institutionalised 'logics' present in (educational) governance regimes, the level of the school and its organisation and institutionalisation of (learning and) professional action, as well as very prominently the level of the actor and its processes of evaluation and coordination. In the following discussion, I will review the keystones of the sociology of conventions and characterise the so-called orders of worth, as proposed by the two authors. Subsequently, the framework will be transferred to the field of schooling, before, in chapter five, I present an empirical reconstruction of conventions that was drawn from a study on teachers' and head teachers' justifications of governance issues.

The approach that became known as the theory or sociology of conventions[3] was first devised by a group of French heterodox economists, among them Thévenot, Salais and Eymard-Duvernay. Their focus was to develop an institutional theory of economics that allowed understanding "the exercise of rationality in real-world […] coordination behaviour" (Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010, p. 7). Taking as their starting point the fact that all economic life is inherently ambiguous in that "problems and their solutions are linked on a flexible and situational basis" (Knoll, 2013, p. 39) their central assumption was, that

"Economic actors […] rely on conventions as socio-cultural frames for mobilising a shared interpretation of the objects, actions, goals, and collective intentions involved in

situations of production, distribution, and consumption." (Diaz-Bone, 2016, p. 215)

Simultaneously a strand of French sociology – centred on Boltanski and the "Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Morale" – took off in a similar direction, distancing their work markedly from Bourdieu's critical theory which, then, dominated the French discourse. Drawing on early American pragmatist philosophers such as Dewey and Peirce and incorporating phenomenological and ethnomethodological traditions, their aim was to build an open concept of action which is grounded in a specific situation and directed by the actors' cognitive and evaluative capacities to overcome inevitable uncertainty that marks all action (Diaz-Bone, 2011, 2016).

To apprehend the theory of convention it is imperative to understand it as a comprehensive paradigm of social analysis rather than just a single concept or a "one-issue" approach (Diaz-Bone & Thévenot, 2010, pp. 4-5). The core idea is that conventions – understood as collectively established socio-cultural frameworks for interpreting a situation of uncertainty – are handled by actors in order to decide upon the validity and appropriateness of a given claim in a given situation, and thus serve to evaluate and coordinate actions.[4] In other words, conventions are "problem-solving procedure[s]" (Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010, p. 15); they are used to justify an actor's conclusion about how 'things' and persons *should* be. Given the relevance of conventions to an actor's evaluation of a given situation, it is necessary to stress the institutional nature of conventions. They are of universal validity, abstract and "relatively vague, of unknown origin and they cannot be enforced legally" (Knoll, 2013, p. 40; see also Boltanski & Thévenot 1999, p. 365). They precede the situation and individual deliberations about it.

Next to conventions, the idea of justification is pivotal to the approach, resulting in a shift in the notion of legitimation – away from a given status towards the ever ongoing evaluative processes that accompany its production. Following Boltanski und Thévenot, justification – a positive assessment in opposition to the negative devaluation that is associated with criticism – always sets in in undecided or conflictual situations where legitimacy is established on the grounds of arguments and public discourse (differentiating them from situations that are characterised by and ultimately deemed legitimate because of violence, tradition or love, see Bausare, 2011; Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 37f.). In justifying (and conversely in voicing critique), people refer to higher, value-giving principles, which sit at the heart of a convention and define notions of what is worthy and considered a social good. Thus, conventions, if explicitly used to justify or criticise, are also called *orders of justification* or *orders of worth* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999, 2006).

As a decidedly pragmatic approach that is "concerned with the analysis of how actors reflexively do different types of 'justification work', criticising or justifying particular orders of worth in specific situations" (Jagd,

2011, p. 346), the theory of conventions builds on a couple of connected positions. First, it is understood that there is a plurality of coexisting conventions. As real-life situations are generally considered complex and rooted in a specific and historic environment, they are also characterised by a specific constellation of conventions. Second, and perhaps most pivotal is the assumption that actors are considered competent, i.e. able to judge different situations and what is most appropriate in them. "Employing 'pragmatic versatility', they switch references from one convention to another in order to solve the complexity of situations." (Knoll, 2013, p. 40; cit. of Thévenot, 2001, p. 407). Actors, in being aware of different conventions as they are part of the socio-cultural framework, are able to communicate their approval or denial of a situation's justice through reflexively applying conventions, switching between them and even combining them in order to come up with new justifications. From this follows, third, that individuals (or groups) cannot simply be aligned to a single convention or a core value.

The plurality of distinct orders of worth marks an important contrast to both, other moral theories that attempt to find a universal procedure to decide upon the justice of a situation and also to other lines of sociological thought which view the plurality of conventions as the result of a plurality of social groups and their particular references to a single logic. Thus navigating between universalism and infinite pluralism, the theory of conventions regards the multitude of conventions, i.e. orders of worth, as limited, though not determinate (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999). Based on empirical studies *and* the analysis of a corpus of texts from classical philosophy such as Hobbes' *Leviathan* or Rousseau's *The social contract*, in their early work Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) identified six such ideal-typical orders of worth, that are employed to solve disputes about justice. In a rather particular diction they named these the *world of inspiration*, the *domestic world*, the *civic world*, the *world of renown* or *fame*, the *market world* and the *industrial world*. Subsequent collaborations led to an extension of this typology, including a *green world* (Thévenot, Moody, & Lafaye, 2000) and a *project*-based *world* (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005a, 2005b). Each of these worlds (conventions) is set around a core principle and characterised by a set of criteria, for example a typical object or subject that is considered worthy, a situation in which the worthiness is tested or a form of evidence that indicates success in each world (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 140 ff.)

Instead of going into these worlds and what constitutes them in more detail here, I concentrate on the application of the concept of conventions to the field of education. So far, the framework – even though employed to various contexts (as examples see Giulianotti & Langseth, 2016 or the manifold perspectives in Knoll, 2015) – has not been met with a big response from educational scholars. Some notable exceptions are Chatel's (2009) analysis of French social science education, Leemann (2014) who asks from an organisational perspective, "how schools deal with expectations of gender equality" and Imdorf (2011) who – also from an organisational point of view – uses the approach to explain the emergence and justification of ethnical inequality in school selection. The latter, drawing on Boltanski and Thévenot's concept of orders of justification and additionally building on Derouet's analysis of managerialism in schools' organisation (see Derouet, 1992), comes to differentiate four worlds within the realm of schools that are employed to justify selection modes and ethnic inequality. They are the market world, the civic world of a general interest and equal opportunity, the industrial world of efficiency and the domestic or familial world that values a community-spirit. Imdorf's premise, that schools as public organisations justify their selection of pupils (and already anticipate possible justification strategies while selecting) in way of referring to a common good, which is deemed fair and appropriate, comes close to the one presented here. Similarly, the argument leading my work emanates from the assumption, that by introducing reforms to the organisation of schools and ultimately to classrooms, head teachers and teachers are put into a position of re-negotiating their actions and justifying decisions, in particular, if these appear to break with previously accepted routines.

Boltanski and Thévenot (1999, p. 359) call a moment, when a person realises "that something does not work", "that he cannot bear this state of things any more" (ibid., p. 360) and/or "that something has to change" (ibid., p. 359) a critical moment (*moments critiques*). Subsequently, they argue that the person enters into a "scene" (ibid., p. 360), i.e. a dispute, in which they criticise the current situation or defend their own action by mobilising certain, socially well-accepted conventions. During the course of such a *scene* arguments are exchanged with the person that is criticised or that is criticising oneself until a "legitimate agreement" (ibid., p. 363) is found, meaning until a convention is established as appropriate to judge the situation or a compromise agreed upon, which is able to withstand further critique.

However, as teachers and head teachers may not enter directly into a dispute with policy-makers, changing arguments and searching for an appropriate compromise to a problem, critical moments might also arise from the (perceived) need to justify the school's action towards a broader public, in factual discussions with parents and other concerned parties – or as a result of an interview directed at change and transformation. As the faces of a school, embedded in the hierarchy of the education system, teachers and especially head teachers find themselves in a situation, where, on one hand, they might want to voice critique in respect to their own position as well as with view of their clientele, the school's pupils. One the other hand, they are the subject of criticism; addressed as individuals but also as representatives of the system and its political and ideological principles. It is therefore safe to assume that, asked about recent transformations within their schools, both teachers and head teachers will draw on a wide

array of justifications, often simultaneously, to frame their decisions and therein re-frame new policies and their implications. The leading question to be answered is thus: What does the repertoire of conventions look like, that teachers and head teachers mobilise in order to respond to school reforms, and here especially transformations linked to a new governance, such as school autonomy, a managerial organisation of schools, expectations of accountability and the role of markets in producing quality.

4 The study: A reconstructive approach to conventions applied by teachers and head teachers in Austrian middle schools

To answer this question an explorative study with head teachers and teachers in three Austrian middle schools was conducted in 2015/2016. Apart from the analysis of school documents such as online profiles and mission statements the data collection was based on episodic in-depth interviews – a method creating both narrative and evaluative sequences (Flick, 1998, 2000) – on the topic of individual experiences with recent school reforms, changing expectations of work performance and subjective claims to good work.

The schools in the sample underwent a more or less extensive organisational change within the past five years, experiencing a transformation from 'traditional' middle schools into the so-called "Neue Mittelschule" or *new* middle school.[5] Whereas in the beginning this conversion was left to the individual school, depending on the initiative and engagement of school leaders, teachers as well as in some cases on local authorities, the transition was made compulsory for all remaining middle schools in 2015/2016. Against this background, three new middle schools were selected that had implemented these changes at different stages – from the pilot phase to the mandatory conversion. The local situation of the schools was also considered, choosing schools in a rural and urban context. However, as the study's orientation was clearly explorative and aimed at reconstructing relevant conventions to the field of schooling, the selection of the three schools was not meant to be representative to the Austrian case nor directed at testing hypothesis about conventions and a schools' context. In total, 15 interviews were conducted, ten with teachers, five with head teachers.[6] All interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and followed a loose guide

containing aspects of school development, change and working experiences.[7]

In line with the theory of convention's roots in pragmatism the study was drawing on a qualitative methodology and applied a hermeneutic approach to the analysis of the interviews (see Diaz-Bone, 2011). According to the proceedings for an integrative approach to reconstructive research (Kruse, 2014) the analysis included five steps. First, based on an initial analysis of three interviews a coding system was developed inductively, comprising the topics raised in the interview by both interviewer and interviewee, but also including heuristic or sensitizing concepts drawn from theoretical considerations, such as conflicts and discrepancies, arguments and evaluations. Second, the corpus of data was coded accordingly, using the software MaxQDA. Third, each interview's initial sequence was analysed in detail, combining topical and text linguistic aspects to develop readings of *what* has been said and *how* it was said. This step led to the identification of varying numbers of orders of justification/critique, upon which, fourth, further sequences were analysed, then focusing on controversial situations where criticism was voiced or reacted to. Finally, the main orders, and the dynamics between them, were determined. Thus, the study resulted in a detailed reconstruction of the conventions referred to in the interviews, their relation both to each other and to reforms and particular modes of school governance.

5 Justifying governance reforms: Reconstructions of school-worlds and conventions

The empirical reconstructions led to a repertoire of seven different conventions, most of which played a part in all the interviews, though to a different extend. They are oriented towards the ones identified by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). However, as some of the conventions reconstructed in the data have a different direction, different names were chosen to prevent confusion and allude to each's distinctive feature. The conventions are briefly sketched in table 1. The focus of the account below is on the role of the civic convention and its 'relation' to other orders of justification, especially one that can be considered economic. Picking up central topics relating to changes of the educational governance, I will illustrate the nature and line of the arguments in referring to some interview excerpts.[8]

Table 1: Repertoire of reconstructed educational conventions

The industrial school and its industrial convention

The school's task is seen in teaching students a curriculum that is agreed upon and standardised and thus makes sure that every child is equipped with the necessary knowledge to lead a productive life. In analogy to a fordist-operating company a school is considered a successful organisation, if it guarantees its members an unobstructed, frictionless functioning according to the role inhabited. A teacher's function is the transfer of knowledge. A high significance is placed on objective knowledge, which is open to standardisation. The principal is viewed as a school manager; someone who makes sure that everyone and everything is in place, and functioning. The head delegates and commands from a hierarchical position.

The industrial convention values clear defined procedures and structures that allow for a reliable planning of action and effects. People, things and processes are judged on the basis of effectiveness. A reform is considered "worthy" if it helps optimising the running of the school.

The flexible school and its flexible convention

The school is treated in analogy to a modern company, which, like the industrial school, is (and should be) efficiently managed. Unlike a fordist-like organisation, the flexible school does not attain its effectivity from pursuing a fixed, standardised path. It is considered successful, when organisational and personal necessities, arising from changes to the inner and outer environment of the school, can be addressed locally and quick. Knowledge is considered fluid, therefore teaching, too, has to adapt to changing demands. Head teachers are described as school leaders; their task is to permanently adjust the conditions of "production" – technically and socially.

In the flexible convention people are positively judged if they do not rely on 'dusty routines' or set-in-stone rules, but instead assess situations or problems individually and come up with localised solutions. School reforms are thus justified if they allow for, or expand, decentralised decision-making structures.

The civic school and its civic convention

The school's task is seen in providing for every pupil being able to actively participate in society later in life. Therefore, a school must teach a body of general knowledge, but also emphasise political education and the transfer of core civic values such as equality, democracy and solidarity. In its present form the civic school is considered a social-democratic one, as it places high significance on social justice and the idea of leaving no child behind. As a sort of playground for society, democratic practices are represented in organisational structures; students (their parents) and teachers (formally) are involved in decision-taking processes.

The civic convention builds on equality, so decisions, practices and people are deemed worthy, when they consider and treat everyone alike, irrespective of their individual background. However, the notion of justice connected to the convention is oriented towards the collective rather than any particular interest. Thus, reforms are positively justified if they serve at least the majority. Perhaps more important, they are legitimate when they support the integration of students and thus allow for their equal participation in the school and in society.

The community school and its domestic convention

From the perspective of the domestic convention the school is the extended arm of family education. Apart from knowledge transfer the school's main task is to build children's characters, help them develop into 'whole' persons by integrating their bodies, personal sensibilities and affectivities into the educational practice. The school is a community, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds. It is viewed as a safe place for children to grow up; teachers take on the role as guardians. The preferred style of teaching is collaborative, so that pupils can learn with and from each other. Teachers evaluate outputs individually, based on their experience, taking into account developments outside the classroom.

The domestic convention is oriented towards the school's community and its culture; the latter being of one trust, security and harmony. Traditions are valued, but different from the characterisation of the domestic world by Boltanski and Thévenot, the socialising and community building aspect make up the core of the convention.

The creative school and its inspired convention

The school's task is to provide an environment that allows people to develop and express their individual uniqueness. As this can't be done following a standardised curriculum or strict patterns of learning and teaching, the creative school has to facilitate the particular experiences of its members by offering open forms that do not or least pre-structure the results of individual inspiration and intuition. Teachers take on the role of such facilitators to students' creative autonomy. However, the school is also a place of free creative experience and expression for teachers themselves. Teachers refrain from measuring and evaluating outcomes.

The inspired convention worships individual, creative autonomy. Therefore decisions are considered legitimate if they further the individual liberation and independence.

The performing school and its meritocratic convention

The performing school is above all oriented towards outputs. It is believed that the common good is achieved best when everyone's performance is considered individually and rewards are allotted accordingly. People are considered equipped with particular abilities and needs. Different from the creative convention however, these are seen as functional regarding a desired output and not an end to autonomous expression. The school's task is to address these individualities and support people based on their personal set of skills – their 'potential'. Curricula and didactics should be differentiated, or allow for differential treatment, to accommodate this plurality. Motivations are considered likewise; those who are willing to learn / perform should be especially promoted.

The core principle of justification in the meritocratic convention is differentiation. Inequalities are considered equitable if they represent different levels of (individual) performance. Reforms that enhance differentiated practices and judgements are deemed appropriate so long as they mirror different levels of performance (not however other ascriptive features such as class or gender).

The competing school and the market convention

The market convention rests on the belief that the common good is served best, when people are free to make choices based on their needs and desires. A prerequisite to exercising choice is the existence of differentiated offers to choose from. Therefore, it is a school's task to provide a palette of offers. It is considered successful when these meet the wishes of parents and children and are subsequently selected. Schools find themselves on a market and hence in competition with other schools, as people are considered to be competing with each other over positions and rewards as well. The competing school is one that provides a curriculum and a didactic program based on what there is a market for.

The market convention judges reforms according to whether they are able to enhance the market-like conditions of the school sector.

While all these conventions play a specific, though not equally dominant role in the interviews, certain configurations can be observed with regard to different topics. I will concentrate on aspects that address the new governance, and specifically the increase in output orientation and the growing importance of school profiles, while also including the issue of rising expectations towards schools, principals and teachers on a general level as well as in light of new modes of teaching.

5.1 Rising expectations

Most interviewees raise the question of what a school should, but ultimately can achieve within the current society. They ponder over the multitude of different expectations, name social circumstances that not only frame but perhaps limit their work as good teachers and principals and challenge their own responsibility in relation to other actors regarding the success of teaching as well as of running a school. Taking up this issue a head teacher draws attention to the tasks they and their colleagues are currently facing:

 "There is this transfer to the new middle school and a move from educational targets towards flexible skills, from an old to a new public service law, from a morning to full-time school, from an isolated to a cooperative school etc. The whole field is moving, we face massive changes. The requirements regarding the school's organisation change, new forms of evaluation and grading, team teaching in classes- Always more. With the same amount or fewer teaching hours we are supposed to support pupils individually, supposed to promote their language abilities, prepare students who don't speak a word of German to participate in class, we are supposed to teach pupils with special needs inclusively, provide vocational counselling, regularly talk to parents, come up with complementary student assessments. I could go on for minutes. (head teacher)"

Far-off from solely lamenting, interviewees address the increase in responsibilities, mostly imparted by official regulations, which to them seem hard to meet under the current circumstances of stagnating or decreasing financial resources.

Regarding the high workload and plurality in different tasks, many critical arguments are voiced on the basis of the *industrial convention* that refers to the efficient running of the school. Especially the introduction of new topics to the curriculum, the conversion to different styles of grading, new forms of teaching and the extra attention paid to students with special needs mean an interference with 'well-tried' routines; something that produces frictions in the short run. These changes are also described as hindering because they turn the teacher's focus away from the actual teaching in the sense of knowledge transfer, which, the interviews show, many consider the core of their professional identity. Teachers thus complain about a lack in reliability in their work. They want to be able to rely on experiences and trust that past investments into teaching practices are

not rendered invaluable in the future. In this, they criticise a certain level of flexibility that they see expected of them. Head teachers appear mainly understanding of this perspective that they sometimes refer to in the interviews on behalf of their staff. Their own criticism, however, is not primarily addressed towards the idea of innovations but towards the ineffectiveness of some of the reforms they experience. Thus, they also apply the *industrial convention,* criticising new processes that themselves draw their justification from the industrial world:

"These constant reforms are really tiring, nerve-racking. And you know, most of the time it's only new procedures where you have to fill out forms. It becomes a paper-war." (head teacher)

Taking a step further towards some particular reforms addressed in the interviews, the analysis reveals a marked differentiation of arguments and conventions that are employed. Again, looking at new teaching forms in particular, the most prominent issue arises from the question, whether all students should be taught together, irrespective of their level of skills and performance. This is associated with the fact, that the introduction of the new middle school was accompanied by an exchange of 'external' with 'internal' differentiation of pupils.[9] Though formally implemented in all schools, some teachers and principals question this alteration while some defend its introduction. Criticism is expressed on the grounds of the *meritocratic*, the *industrial* and the *market convention* whereas support combines justifications from the *market, civic* and *domestic convention*.

One argument often brought forward states that teaching all students together results in a decline of the general level of education. Based on the *meritocratic convention* it is said that – though everyone should have equal opportunities – not everyone is equally talented or motivated and better students should not be held back by weaker ones, in the same way that less apt pupils should not be asked too much of.

"I was really quite sad that we don't have the different performance groups anymore. At least you knew that everyone was more or less at the same level. And now it is quite the opposite and you have everyone, from really bad to very good in one room. So you have to think what to do with them. And then you just muddle through. For a very long time I was clueless how this can work, and actually I am still of the opinion, that you will never really succeed in bringing out the best in the best because you always have to look out for the weaker ones." (teacher)

This statement shows how the *meritocratic* convention is also supported by the *industrial* one in order to criticise a mode of school organisation that refrains from selecting pupils into different classes according to their performances. The teacher, in this case, argues that a classroom organisation, which doesn't allow for a differentiation between pupils of varying performance

levels, does not serve the individual student in developing his or her 'potential', but also makes it hard to teach efficiently as standardised procedures cannot be applied to all pupils in the same way. There is another argument that is more present in interviews with head teachers and that looks at the new situation from a *market* perspective of competition with other schools. It states that parents of relatively high-performing children are less inclined to send their offspring to a new middle school since they assume they won't receive the intellectual stimulation wished for, which in turn leads to a sinking of the measurable performance outcome and a decline in the overall attractiveness of the school.

However, there are also justifications pointing towards the benefits of new forms of teaching, especially new didactic styles, which also draw on the *market world*, but, in combination with other conventions, most prominently the *civic* and *community* one. It is, for example, argued that a school can profit and succeed in the competition by putting the benefits of these 'innovations' to the front – that is, in the school profile – and thus actively 'advertising' as a comprehensive school which serves the needs of all kids, integrating them into a big school community where values such as cooperation and social cohesion are important and where students are prepared for society rather than just the job market.

5.2 Governance by numbers
Aside the multi-disciplinary expectations towards schools and professionals, another source of pressure, that is prominent in the data, is the perception of constantly having to be "successful". However, interviewees rarely refer to their own ideas of what constitutes a successful working day or a successful engagement for students. Rather, success appears to be an abstract concept, which is a good in itself and mostly externally defined and judged. Especially head teachers point to the constant worry that missing certain targets might result in consequences such as reductions of staff or even the closing of the entire school.

"We are under permanent, constant pressure to be successful. Because only if we have enough pupils, and there aren't any catchment areas, everyone can freely decide which school he or she goes to, only with enough pupils the school can continue. There is the pressure to meet the standard, to keep the team together." (head teacher)

As indicated here, attracting students is a central worry to principals. The number of pupils attending the school is treated as a sign of its success (or the lack of it). This seemingly apparent correlation is referred to in all interviews with head teachers. Another measure of success that is often mentioned – and in the example above alluded to with the expression of meeting certain standards – is the score a school achieves in national or supra-national student assessment tests. The proclaimed line of argument, that high-performing schools according to test scores will be able to attract more and especially good students is, again, directly connected to the

amount of pupils. This number-based mode of evaluation of what constitutes a 'successful' school – though the foundation of interviewees' justifications of other decisions – is itself both treated as an inevitable reality and as a major object of critical contestation. As a principal puts it:

"It is wrong to say, that a school should be measured by how many good and excellent students they have and how many weak ones and then conclude, 'Oh, you have more bad pupils, this makes your school a bad one.' But that's the danger with teaching standards and assessment tests. We were absolutely against rankings based on the standards, because it's simply the biggest assumption. There are so many factors at work here. How can you blame the school, or the teachers, that they are in a particularly difficult part of town. Not that I blame the people here, or the parents."

And another principal takes up this last aspect and remarks on the topic of test scores:

"Of course, with the migration background that the students have and the difficult socio-economic position of families you have an expected range for the school. And you can't really expect that this school then produces students who out-perform and score disproportionally high."

The criticism expressed here arises from a feeling of injustice, that all schools – and with them the teachers – are regarded through the same lens of standardised tests, which downplays or even ignores the widely different situations of schools, deriving from the unequal backgrounds of their clientele. Teaching standards and student assessment tests are seen to belong to a *complex* combining the *market* and the *industrial convention*, seemingly allowing for an efficient comparison of individuals, classes and whole schools on one hand, while one the other hand taking on the form of a measure of equivalence to determine the position in a market-like environment. They are presented as precise, reliable and objective, that is independent of personal factors and less prone to errors due to teachers' judgement. The interviewees contrast this (mostly implied) justification with arguments that are based in the *meritocratic*, the *civic* and also in the *domestic convention* itself. The perhaps strongest critique, already quite visible in the excerpts above, draws on the meritocratic order. It is argued, by both teachers and head teachers, that schools – however good their work is – cannot compensate for the unequal skills of pupils, which are considered the result of their cognitive abilities and in particular their socio-economic background. Though social inequality, that makes it harder for some students to succeed in school, is in itself seen as problematic, the responsibility for pupils' outcomes is nonetheless rejected as something "that is out of my reach" (teacher). Teachers view themselves as supporters and sometimes even protectors of disadvantaged students – in line with the *domestic* school-world – but they emphasise individual and family responsibilities and criticise parents' lack of engagement;

effectively holding them accountable for their children's success or failure. Whereas this line of argument, which assigns tasks and also blame to students and parents, is present in various contexts, it is particularly explicit regarding student assessments and comparative testings.

Other criticism refers – mostly implicitly – to an educational ideal of general knowledge and the necessity to educate students in a wide range of topics as well as prepare them to be active and responsible members of society. Based on the *civic convention* it is thus argued, that a concentration on those subjects and topics, which are later tested (standardised) and thus the basis for a school's score, leads to the constriction of *Bildung* to an immediate usability of certain knowledge and to the idea that 'only counts what's counted'. A head teacher emphasises this relationship very pointedly. Its reference to the necessity of intercultural understanding is directly relating to the school culture and additionally points to the importance of the *community world* of the school:

> "We are supposed to be good all-around, but the standard's test is only looking at some cognitive abilities. If I say, we need to see that we bring together cultures and invest time in intercultural exchange, than I am convinced, it is important and good. But my evaluation only depends on the results of the test. So, yeah, if I want to score well and move up in the ranking and still invest time in important issues, I actually have to cut back on other classes, that aren't in the spotlight; social learning, biology, musical education."

The solution to this dilemma is often seen in more funds in order to flexibly include extra classes to the timetable when they are needed. But, as it seems very unrealistic that this demand will be met, principles 'juggle' with the given resources, basing decisions on their own perception of what the local situation requires (putting forward the *flexible convention*) as well as on what appears as inevitable exterior expectations, such as delivering best possible performance scores in a limited number of subjects in order to exhibit a high level of output-quaility (*market convention*): "Well, to react and take up these issues, I try to take [teaching] hours away from everyone at times, so that there is no discrimination. But sometimes, even if I don't like it, I have to stick with the plan and then good ideas get dropped."

5.3 School profiles, representation and competition with other schools

As shown, interpretations of a school's quality in light of its market position, in regard to performance assessments and even more so subsequent score-based rankings, are subject to various criticisms. However, there is also a sort of fatalistic approach to this output-oriented practice of evaluation. While the interviewees mainly agree that their hands are tight when it comes to actually improving their students' performance scores – thus delegating responsibility to the individual learner and its family (*meritocratic convention*) – the alternative to competing with other schools by way of output-

indicators is seen in creating a competitive school profile and culture, that enables the attraction of parents and students. Also perceived as a *fait accompli* one head teacher points towards the sheer necessity of being considered an attractive school to 'recruit' students, therein employing language that bears close resemblance to the world of dating: "We have to be visible out there. Of course, teaching comes first but you have to show what's going on inside the school. And more, you have to be interesting, attractive." Another principal allows an insight into what this entails, highlighting the need of visibility and shining a functionalist light on extra-curricular activities:

> "We have a folder, an open-door day for primary schools, we work with our website. We performed a play in the mall in town, just to be out of the school. We organized a boot sale in front of the school, we have had public appearances of our school choir and so forth and so forth."

Similar to the perception of a market-like situation created through performance scores and rankings, as shown above, the competition between schools in order to attract students on grounds of more 'qualitative' aspects of performance, such as creating an inviting school culture or offering a range of activities and extra-curricular classes, is not so much challenged in itself but seen as "natural": "Let's be honest, there are only so many students in this place and we are in a competition" (head teacher). However, whereas criticism in the first case mainly stems from the idea of unaccountability for students' performance based on the meritocratic convention, the competition based on a visible attractiveness appears less contested, but is in some interviews accompanied by doubts regarding the benefit of such measures to actually influence one's market-position. A teacher voices its scepticism towards "market conform" behaviour that she feels bound to participate in by alluding to the questionable effect of such efforts, thus drawing on the *industrial convention*:

> "Our principal is really nervous about the numbers. He believes we have to utilise any opportunity to recruit students; yes recruit. And the more elaborate and creative the better. He always asks us to perform publicly and act as representatives. You know, involve media and newspapers and so forth. Presentation is really really important. But I am not convinced, if that pays off, how big the benefit of an event is, even if it's perfectly conceived and carried out. But what can I do, the principal really cares."

Connected to this is complaint about the efficacy of tasks that promote only the visibility of the schools' work – and therein opposing what could be called an opinion-market complex with regard to the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006)[10] – is the criticism that "all this extra input" takes away time from the teachers "real work", which is understood as "being in class". Though not alluding to any particular convention, this points again to a professional identity that become under threat by the increased orientation towards creating a public image to succeed on the school market.

When it comes to signalling differences that should be considered by parents exercising a free choice, schools are urged to not only advertise, but first to develop a specific profile that sets them apart from competing schools. One school in the sample had an established music profile for some years that attracted a lot of students, also from outside the district. The interviewees in this case all defended the idea of specific profiles as a necessary prerequisite to any informed parental choice. In line with the *market convention* they argue that their particular position within the local school landscape allows them to successfully compete, not only with other middle but also with the grammar schools. In this case, there is a strong justification that connects school profiling to the positive selection of good students and subsequently high performance (as well as 'good' school culture). Contrary, there are strong contestations grounded in the *civic convention* that address the negative effects of such a student selection:

> "Well, the specific profiling has catastrophic effects. I know, because we tried that once, tried to create a media profile. So we had two distinguished classes, a media class, an integration class and a normal one. […] In our first year we more or less separated everyone who could properly write and count. They were all in the media class, whereas in the other two classes, you suddenly had the 'rest'. And you cannot do this. That's socially irresponsible. And so we gave up on it again and now offer an extra-curricular media course for everyone who wants to." (head teacher)

It is striking, though perhaps not surprising, that the evaluation of tasks that are oriented towards a perceived market, such as profiling and outwards representation, differ markedly with the interviewee's perception of how 'successful' the school actually is. Teachers and pricipals who feel or know that their own school "attracts" a lot of pupils, and in particular "good students, nice ones" (teacher), relate this to their own and the entire school's engagement. The market then seems to work in their favour. If, however, a school finds itself in a rather precarious situation, struggling to keep student numbers stable, market mechanisms are criticized as inefficient, socially selective and thus irresponsible.

6 Conclusions: Conventions at work in schools

The study aimed to show how teachers and head teachers – two important groups of actors within the realm of a school – interpret and judge ideas and instruments associated with recent reforms. Educational governance research points out that these reforms are carried by a new constellation of modes that coordinate decisions and actions in the field. Of particular significance is the increased relevance of market-based forms of governance, the drive towards efficiently managed organisations and the introduction of standardised curricula as well as modes of performance evaluation. These external expectations are accounted for by actors in schools. However, following a pragmatic approach, people are not determined by them; they are considered competent to judge the appropriateness of

these expectations in a given situation. What does that mean? Teachers and head teachers "show responsiveness to the expectations of educational reform as they go about teaching and carrying out organisational tasks" (Leemann, 2014, p. 232; see in particular Peetz, Lohr, & Hilbrich, 2013). But, far from simply being puppets of the reform agenda, they re-frame them, making use of socially accepted conventions.

1) The analysis so far revealed seven distinct conventions. They differ from the repertoire developed by Boltanksi and Thévenot (2006), but also from other subsequent works applying the approach within the field of education (Derouet, 1992; Imdorf, 2011; Leemann, 2014). For example, the *meritocratic* school world has not yet been considered separately, which is unexpected given the vast body of work connecting questions of justice to meritocratic arguments; especially within educational research on social inequality. The *flexible convention*, which I have only sketched here, is perhaps closest to what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) called the "project world". Its lack in other works is, again, surprising as it seems that, apart from market-related ones, many arguments advocating instruments of a new educational governance are based on a flexible convention. Furthermore, the *domestic convention*, reconstructed from the data, is characterised by a strong emphasis on community, whereas the notion of tradition, heritage and paternalism does not appear to be of much significance.

2) The new education governance is characterised by a partial retreat of the state when it comes to direct regulation and school management. This coalesces with an increase in responsibilities at the level of the school, especially for head teachers. In an environment of stagnating financial provisions principals understand that it is within their mission to manage as best as possible under the given circumstances. Fulfilling or missing targets (in terms of student enrolment and overall performance scores) is interpreted as the schools success or failure – more or less directly accounted for by the performance of the staff. Though this narrative is not at all fully supported by the interviewed persons it becomes clear that the conventions, on which justifications and especially critique are based, do not primarily address the state and its role as provider for schools. In contrast, the schools' need to attract (the right) pupils appears a commonplace; competition is taken-for-granted. Thus, the data suggests that schools are seen as responsible when it comes to the 'acquisition' of students. However, the same accountability is not taken in regard to pupil's performance. The interviews clearly show, how the meritocratic convention functions as a frame for critique, allowing teachers (and head teachers) to diffuse and refuse responsibility for students' in-school performance. This is especially remarkable as the interviews leave no doubt that both groups are well aware of issues of social inequality and its impact on students' performances. The pattern of pushing responsibility away from the

individual school and teachers therefore indicates that a core idea of the new educational governance policy, namely accountability, is rejected – with consequences to teachers' professional identity and their concept of self-efficacy.

3) Davies (2014) highlights that competition is the basic normative principle behind the neoliberal governance agenda. The study has shown, that competition and success in the context of a school-market is a very prevalent idea. It is presented on two levels: first, succeeding in attracting students and second, attracting high performing students. How to achieve these goals is less clear; success becomes the proof of success. Furthermore, there is a moral argument, that whoever comes out on top of the competition, must have done something right and therefore deserves the success. This perception is partly reflected in the interviews and seemingly depends on the position of the school. School profiles, work that enhances the visibility and outwardly-oriented attractiveness of a school are justified when they appear to have been successful, i.e. when the number-game is (temporarily) won in one's favour. Criticism, on the other side, emphasises that the playing field for the schools is not levelled, however much advertisement is offered.

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Endnotes

[1] The observation that all social fields, practices and discourses always incorporate some economic structures (for example time management) remains therefrom unaffected.

[2] This applies in particular to the German-speaking research discourse on educational governance, which is dominated by a so called analytical direction, whereas in the English-speaking context, especially in the tradition of Critical Education Policy Studies, there are numerous works highlighting the relation between a new education governance and processes such as privatisation, decentralisation, globalisation (Lindblad, Ozga & Zambeta, 2002; Mok, 2005; Moos, 2011; Mundy, 2007; Hall, 2005) or between new governance and the neoliberal paradigm (Davis, 2016)

[3] The approach is also known under the term *Sociology of critical capacity* (see Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999) as well as under the French title *Économie des conventions*.

[4] As Daudigeos and Valiorgue (2010, p. 14-15) point out: „The whole conventionalist stream hinges on the seminal work of D. Lewis (1969), who took the stance that there are three components to a convention: 1) a convention emerges in a situation of uncertainty where an agent's utility is indeterminate outside of their utility as pre-expected by other agents; 2) a convention offers regularity, making it possible to resolve repeat [sic.] problems that could not otherwise be resolved by hermetic individual calculation alone; 3) a convention is based on shared belief […]."

[5] This type was introduced into the Austrian school system following the idea of a comprehensive secondary school for all pupils between the ages of ten and 15. However, as the concept of a 'levelled' school landscape was (and still is) widely contested within the political sphere as well as by the broader public, the final reform didn't meet its original agenda and was effectively reduced to the creation of a new type of middle school which replaced the former one, without touching the position of the existing grammar schools. Despite this continuation of the two-track system, the new middle school was sold as a comprehensive school and a milestone towards a fairer system. This is because the curriculum was adapted to the one taught in grammar schools to enhance pupils mobility but also because it was linked to the expansion of day-care facilities in schools and integrated all-day schools.

[6] Two additional principals were interviewed at schools at which no teacher participated in the study.

[7] All interviews were conducted and subsequently transcribed in German. The quotas, included in the following section, were therefore translated into English.

[8] For epistemological reasons there will be no mentioning of the interviewee's gender or age, but only of the position as either a teacher or a headteacher. This is due to pragmatists' rejection of Bourdieu's structuralist approach. As Leemann (2014, p. 223) explains, "The advocates of a new pragmatic sociology […] do not trace the causes of complexity and conflict in the social coordination of action to the affiliation of actors with groups of different status and the struggles and conflicts of interest between them but to pragmatic processes of negotiating plural logics of action."

[9] *External differentiation* refers to the separation of pupils into three groups, depending on their performance. These groups were separately taught and graded. In contrast, *internal differentiation* refers to the new – that is, new to Austria – situation of all pupils being taught together, however coupled with the innovation of having pairs of teachers in some main subjects as well as the provision of extra finances for creating temporary learning groups. All interviewees were affected by this change, even young teachers who had still been accustomed to this practice during their formation.

[10] I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for pointing out, that the described criticism towards tasks that mainly increase a school's visibility, with the intention of attracting pupils in a market-like environment, can be understood as criticism towards practices that are justified on the combined ground of the market convention and, what Boltanski and Thévenot have called, the "world of renown" or opinion. So far, this latter convention has not received much attention throughout the analysis of my data. However, I will be taking up the role of reputation and visibility for school-based decision-making processes in an upcoming project.