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Education under National Socialism: Ideology, Programs and Practice

Educação sob o Nacional-Socialismo. Ideologia, Programas e Prática

La educación bajo el nacional-socialismo. Ideología, programas y práctica

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ABSTRACT: The article provides a condensed, introductory overview of National Socialist formation education in the Hitler Youth and school. It is based on the authors' own research and relevant presentations. Education under National Socialism was characterized by the interplay of a racist worldview and the regime's totalitarian will to rule. For Nazi education, this meant that the political took precedence over all social issues, including all issues relevant from the perspective of educational theory. In our analysis, we distinguish between two levels: the level of standardization and the level of educational practices in the Hitler Youth and school. Particularly during World War II, political demands were increasingly rigidly enforced, and adolescents were increasingly instrumentalized for their purposes. The National Socialists' aspirations for total control compared to the educational reality exhibited correspondences as well as discrepancies and contradictions. Against the background of traditional tasks of education, the verdict on Nazi education from a normative point of view is clearly negative. However, if one also looks at National Socialist educational practices, one notices numerous characteristic ambivalences – between the partly contradictory demands of the National Socialist regime, but also between its educational practices and its attempts at realization. On the one hand, National Socialists achieved comprehensive

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formative successes, while on the other hand they often failed because of their totalitarian objectives.

Keywords: National Socialism. Racism. Education. Hitler Youth. School.

RESUMO: O artigo proporciona, de forma introdutória, uma condensada visão panorâmica sobre a educação formativa do nacional-socialismo nas Juventudes Hitleristas e na escola. Sob o nacional-socialismo, a educação se caracterizou pela interação de uma visão racista do mundo e da vontade totalitária do regime. Para a educação nazista, o político prevaleceu sobre todas as questões sociais, incluindo aquelas de relevância a partir da perspectiva da teoria da educação. Em nossa análise, distinguimos entre dois planos: da padronização e das práticas educativas nas Juventudes Hitleristas e na escola. Em particular durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial, as demandas políticas se aplicaram de forma cada vez mais rígida e os adolescentes estiveram submetidos a uma crescente instrumentalização. Comparadas com a realidade educacional, as pretensões nacional-socialistas de controle total, apresentavam correspondências, assim como discrepâncias e contradições. No contexto das tarefas tradicionalmente designadas a educação, o veredito sobre a educação nazista a partir de um ponto normativo é claramente negativo. Entretanto, se olharmos também para as práticas educativas nacional-socialistas, nota-se numerosas ambivalências características, entre as demandas parcialmente contraditórias do regime nacional-socialista, mas também entre as práticas educativas e suas tentativas de realização. Por um lado, os nacional-socialistas conseguiram sucesso formativo, enquanto, por outro lado, fracassaram muitas vezes devido a seus objetivos totalitários.

Palavras-chave: Nacional-Socialismo. Racismo. Educação. Juventudes Hitleristas. Escola.

RESUMEN: El artículo proporciona, a modo de introducción, una condensada visión panorámica sobre la educación formativa nacionalsocialista en las Juventudes Hitlerianas y la escuela. Se basa en las propias investigaciones de los autores y en sus presentaciones más relevantes. Bajo el nacionalsocialismo, la educación se caracterizó por la interacción de una visión racista del mundo y la totalitaria voluntad de gobierno del régimen. Para la educación nazi, esto significaba que lo político primaba sobre todas las cuestiones sociales, incluyendo aquellas de relevancia desde la perspectiva de la teoría de la educación. En nuestro análisis, distinguimos entre dos planos: el plano de la estandarización, y el plano de las prácticas educativas en las Juventudes Hitlerianas y la escuela. En particular durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, las demandas políticas se aplicaron de forma cada vez más rígida y los adolescentes estuvieron sometidos a una creciente instrumentalización. Comparadas con la realidad educativa, las pretensiones nacionalsocialistas de control total presentaron tanto correspondencias como discrepancias y contradicciones. En el contexto de las tareas tradicionalmente asignadas a la educación, el veredicto sobre la educación nazi desde un punto de vista normativo es claramente negativo. Sin embargo, si se mira también a las prácticas educativas nacionalsocialistas, se perciben numerosas ambivalencias características, entre las demandas parcialmente contradictorias del régimen nacionalsocialista, pero también entre las prácticas educativas y sus intentos de realización. Por un lado, los nacionalsocialistas consiguieron amplios éxitos formativos, mientras que, por el otro, fracasaron a menudo debido a sus objetivos totalitarios.

Palabras clave: Nacionalsocialismo. Racismo. Educación. Juventudes Hitlerianas. Escuela.

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Meyer's Lexikon, one of the most renowned German-language encyclopedias of the 20th century, describes "education" in the 1937 edition as "the shaping of the *Volksgenosse*" with all his abilities and powers into a mature, strong-willed, and highly principled personality within the framework of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Bibliographisches Institut, 1937, 1068)[1]. The superordinate goal of education was no longer "a harmonious, all-round educated, but autonomous individuality" (ibid., 1068), but was now "the creation of a new type of human being" (ibid., 1069). Enumerated as "main goals of National Socialist education" are: "physical exercise, understanding of and certain feel for race, soldierly discipline, manliness, comradely spirit, readiness to take responsibility, willpower and determination, discretion, willingness to make sacrifices, loyalty, honor and other racially based and nationally bound character values", which "must be carefully cultivated"; girls' education, too, would "again receive its natural domestic motherly character" (ibid., 1070). The classical instances of education and socialization, the family, schools, and groups of people (in contemporary parlance, "community alliances"), were ideologically placed under the ideal of the "Nazi movement" and uniformly oriented, with the "camp and the community gaining an ever-greater stake in state education as well" (ibid., 1070).

Formation, breeding, type of person, race, Volksgemeinschaft, camp – these National Socialist terms, recorded here as publicly accessible encyclopedia knowledge about education, points to the ideological core of National Socialist education. At the same time, they show that even supposedly objective encyclopedia knowledge took on ideological perspectives. A break with traditions in education was claimed and a totalitarian grip on the field of education was formulated.

How were these totalitarian ambitions ideologically justified? Which educational norms and programs were derived from this ideological basis? Which educational practices have been handed down from the Nazi era? How did these educational practices relate to totalitarian norms? These

[1] Author's note: All originally German source material used in this article was translated to and cited in English by the authors themselves.

are the core questions of our contribution, which attempts to provide a highly compacted introduction to the topic of "Education under National Socialism" that is didactically reduced to central contexts. The basis of our contribution is, on the one hand, our own relevant research (Benecke 2013, 2015; Link 1999, 2011, 2015) as well as the introduced overall presentations on the topic (Horn & Link 2011; Keim 1995, 1997; Lingelbach 1987; Scholtz 1985). This article is divided into three sections, each of which differentiates between the levels of a normative ideology or programmatic and the levels of educational practices. First, we outline the ideological background and the pedagogy derived from it (1); in the following sections, we take exemplary looks at educational programs and practices in Hitler Youth (2) and school (3) and conclude by suggesting possible effects and impacts in each case.

1. Ideological background and educational consequences

1.1 On the ideological background

After rising to power in the spring of 1933, the Nazi regime sought an increasingly totalitarian grip on adolescents and adults within the propagandistically proclaimed *Volksgemeinschaft*. This was ideologically and politically predisposed on a superordinate level: On the one hand, from the claims of racial ideology (*Volksgemeinschaft* vs. "foreign races"), on the other hand, from the endeavor to permanently secure and ever further expand one's own rule. The interplay or interrelationship between the dimensions of selective racist ideology and an integrating and apprehending rule with a totalitarian design generated the specific horizon of all Nazi education (Benecke 2015, 27 ff.).

Biologically based racism is at the core of the National Socialist worldview (Schmuhl 1992, 215ff.), which differentiated hierarchically between "superior" and "inferior" races and attributed to them allegedly unchangeable racial characteristics. The regime's ideology shaped the programming and legitimation of the corresponding practices in all political spheres of Nazi rule. In varying speed and extent, the corresponding proclaimed patterns of interpretation systematically also infiltrated the fields of education (Keim 1995, 95ff., Harten et al. 2006, 66f., Horn & Link, 2011), without being able to predispose their contents entirely (Tenorth 2006).

The coexistence of terror and violence on the one hand and the almost frictionless enforced conformity of German "Aryan" society on the other characterize the ideological practice of rule by the Nazi system. The simultaneity of "beautiful appearances" and "violence of fascism" (Reichel 1994) led to a conflicted mixture of participation and distance among the population throughout the entire Nazi period. As a worldview that could be interpreted in many ways, Nazi ideology

simultaneously opened up options for people to interpret it subjectively as well as to actively integrate into the Nazi system of rule, thereby stabilizing the system (Steuwer 2017). The Aryan-defined *Volksgemeinschaft* was staged aesthetically and propagandistically. Examples of this include the Nazi Party rallies in Nuremberg. Against the supposed chaos of a modern world, the National Socialists relied on order and discipline, on leadership and loyal following, on registration, control, and selection, and staged these patterns of rule aesthetically in the public sphere as well as in ideological training camps in an aesthetic-educational manner. These training camps were established for almost every group of the population beyond everyday life, and the *Volksgemeinschaft* was respectively staged in a ritualized way on a small scale. The concept of the *National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft utopia* "aimed at the formation of an ideologically homogeneous, socially adapted, achievement-oriented, and hierarchically structured society by means of educating the 'well-behaved' and 'weeding out' the supposedly 'ill-begotten'" (Peukert 1982, 295). In this ideological-functional and greatly expanded conceptualization, *education* became an instrument for securing the rule of a dictatorship (Lingelbach 1987, 31) that wanted to "construct the entire society as an oversized educational space [...]" (Tenorth 2008, 267). The Nazi state therefore saw itself as an *educational state*. The introduction of this term as a designation in education as well as a corresponding concept of education was provided by the National Socialist pedagogue Ernst Krieck (1935) – along with Alfred Baeumler, one of the leading National Socialist educationalists. His term was often used by regime representatives to characterize the Nazi state.[2] Education was defined by its functioning dependence on political rule. Differences between educational and political objectives were to be completely overcome in the vision of an "educational state":

> The total, organic state (is), considered according to its effect on the state members, an educational state. Through its whole being and life, through its structure, its functions, and its institutions, it forms everything that lives and grows in it according to its norms and to its aims. Every political function of the state is at the same time an educational function. He testifies to himself as the most powerful and noblest educator. For him, shaping people is not a task alongside others, but a side of all his tasks (Sturm 1938, p. 93).

However, talk of the "educational state" should not be interpreted in the sense that its implementation was a uniform and unifying National Socialist formative education, which succeeded smoothly and actually led to the "enforced conformity" of a completely indoctrinated population. Although it had some effect as a propagandistic promise of the future (Schmiechen-Ackermann 2012), recent research on the *Volksgemeinschaft* has already shown that, where it was proclaimed to have been realized, it was mostly characterized by clear (often simply persisting)

[2] On the other hand, Scholtz (1998) is critical of the suitability of the term "educational *state*" as a historical-analytical designation of the educational reality of the time, citing normative concerns and a terminological misappropriation of the Nazi-specific processes of exclusion and selection.

social inequalities (Bajohr & Wildt 2009; Reeken & Thießen 2013; with regard to the HJ: Benecke 2015, Postert 2021). In this context, structural features specific to the regime could also have a reinforcing effect. For example, when disputes over competencies, as they regularly arose in the polycracy of the Nazi system of rule, led to friction losses in the implementation of a closed formation education, as there was competition between the claims to responsibility between the party (functionaries, associations, organizations) and the state (ministries, institutions). A vivid example from this context would be the ongoing conflicts between the *Reich* Youth Leadership of the HJ and the *Reich* Ministry of Education (REM) under Bernhard Rust (Nolzen & Schlüter 2011; Nagel 2012) or the competence disputes regarding the National Socialist training of teachers (Kraas 2004, 2011).

This "educational state" should also not be understood as if educational science had been "elevated to the status of a state-supporting science under the Nazi regime and systematically brought into line and expanded" after the seizure of power (Heinze & Horn 2011, 320). Rather, the opposite is the case, because "educational science [was] exposed to a process of decay during the period of National Socialism" (ibid.), which also manifested itself in job cuts at the universities.

1.2 On the educational consequences

Above all, stakeholders strategically used Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" as a programmatic basis and appellate authority for the intended regulations and measures in the field of education, particularly against the backdrop of the ideological and programmatic indeterminacy of Nazi ideology in the educational sector. Hitler's educational views can be summarized in a few statements, but they ultimately represented the argumentative guidelines for all measures in the field of education, no matter how generally they were formulated. His pedagogy can be reduced to the core statement that the "entire educational work of the nationalist state [...] must find its culmination in the fact that it instinctively and intellectually burns the sense of race and racial feeling into the hearts and brains of the youth entrusted to it" (Hitler 1943, 475-476). The educational work of the nationalist state was "primarily not to be gearing towards injecting mere knowledge, but to the breeding of healthy bodies" (ibid., 452).

An excerpt from Hitler's speech in Reichenberg (Sudetenland) on December 2, 1938, which is often quoted in publications on the history of education, exemplifies that the use of the formative influence of organizations represented a central approach in a transfer of ideologically derived claims into National Socialist educational practices:

> These young people learn nothing other than to think and act German. And when this boy and this girl, at the age of ten, come into our organizations and there, so often for the first time ever, get and

> feel a breath of fresh air, then four years later they come from the "Jungvolk" into the Hitler Youth, and there we keep them again for four years. And then we certainly don't give them back into the hands of our old class and status generators [audience reaction: laughter], but then we take them immediately into the party or into the labor front, into the SA or into the SS, into the NSKK and so on. And if they are there for two years or one and a half years and should not yet have become whole National Socialists [laughter], then they come into the labor service and are ground there again for six and seven months. All with one symbol, the German spade. [And then whatever class consciousness or class conceit should still be there or there after six or seven months, the Wehrmacht then takes over for further treatment [applause] for two years. And if they then return after two or three or four years, then we take them, so that they do not relapse under any circumstances, immediately back into the SA, SS and so on – and they are no longer free their whole lives! [Applause, shouts of "Heil"]. And they are happy to do so" (own transcript based on an archived audio document (source: Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA), archive no. 00 2590330)). [3]

This excerpt contains some of the systematic foundations of Nazi pedagogy. First, the pronounced educational optimism – the speech shows no doubts about the effectiveness of the propagated educational measures. Secondly, the indication of a target group through the indirect reference to the supposed *leveling* of all social inequalities by the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which was in fact never realized. The organizations mentioned in the speech were supposed to fit seamlessly into a homogenously formative overall structure of institutions directed by the regime or at least reliably acting in its interests.

The educational principle was therefore clear: a lifelong registration of all female and male *compatriots* by organizations and institutions, which all acted in a complementary manner to form the regime. Another characteristic of Nazi pedagogy was the abolition of all age limits and of the view that education was a social process that was in principle administered by representatives of an older generation to those of a younger generation. Continuous recording was intended to ensure one thing above all: lasting promotion and safeguarding of what was euphemistically called *education* in accordance with the political goals of the Nazis. Thus, one last central characteristic of Nazi pedagogy is mentioned: the unconditional primacy of the political over all conceivable social, including all educational, claims. Between this totalitarian attitude of entitlement and the realities of education there were correspondences as well as differences and disruptions.

In the practice of National Socialist education, these educational principles were to be applied in ways – as stated by the at the time contemporary Karl Friedrich Sturm (1880-1942), an academic student of Ernst Krieck,

> that let the pupil become active and stimulate spirit, soul and body in equal measure. Thus, it comes about that the enlightenment of the mind is no longer the first and foremost priority of National Socialist education. Mere enlightenment easily has a separating and disintegrating effect. Rich knowledge alone by no means compels to action. That is why nationalist and political education

[3] On the often – almost exclusively unconscious, through the uncontrolled passing on of older citations – erroneous reproduction of this passage from Hitler's speech, cf. Benecke, 2020, p. 45 ff.; probably the most conspicuous falsification is the fact that the female gender is often omitted and only "these boys" are mentioned. The latter abbreviation corresponds to a reception of Nazi pedagogy after 1945 that reflects gender-stereotyped Nazi propaganda, but not the reality of the time.

> rather work with symbols than by exercising the mind. The swastika and the Hitler salute, the belief in blood and soil and in the Third Reich contain binding forces. They form and shape people just as unerringly as the elemental force of rhythm, which is expressed in the marching of the storms behind the swastika flag, in the common singing of the Deutschland- and Horst-Wessel-song. The method of this education uses repetition, habituation, practice, rhythm and symbolism, and is thus first and foremost discipline (Sturm 1938, 107f.).

Here, Sturm describes very precisely the methods and means of National Socialist formation education (*Formationserziehung*). This can be defined with Herrmann (1994, 107) as (1) shaping the form of experience and thereby shaping the form of consciousness and (2) as education through and in the formations of the movement or the party and the National Socialist state.

National Socialist formation education thus worked with recurring staging of communal rituals and experiences in mostly public spaces, such as the roll call to the flag, the singing of certain songs, the performance of commemorative ceremonies or the Hitler salute at school, as well as musically accompanied marches, trips, cross-country games, or camp experiences in the Hitler Youth. Repetition, rhythm, and symbols shaped such staging of the world and one's own experience of the world, and thus also perception. Surviving photographs, for example, show a bird's-eye view of how a large, uniformed HJ formation lined up in the shape of a swastika in natural surroundings while symmetrical implementing swastika flags. Individuals of the uniformed persons cannot be recognized from the distance and the bird's eye view in front of the "German forest," only the flag bearers stand out from the masses. National Socialist formation education can hardly be staged and depicted more strikingly (cf. Arthur Grimm: HJ im Sommer-Ferienlager: Die angetretenen Teilnehmer bilden eine Hakenkreuz-Formation (1934), image no. 00005022, inventory no.: Gm NS00-30, available at: https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de/shop). Such staging affected the emotions and were presumably more sustainable than cognitively oriented ideological training.

For the realization of this National Socialist formation education, a visibly ubiquitous system of camp education (Kraas 2011) was established, which was expected to have a high inclusion effect. For in the camps, far from the potentially relativizing influences of everyday life, formative communal experiences could be ritualized and staged and experienced in a way that was oriented toward military forms, among other things. In contrast, the National Socialists attributed less formative influence in the sense of ideology to the classic socialization instances of family and school than to their own organizations (on the BDM: Miller-Kipp 2002; on the male HJ: Buddrus 2003, Benecke 2013) or the integration camps[4]. Their influence on the children and adolescents

[4] According to Krause-Vilmar, two fundamentally different categories can be distinguished with regard to the Nazi camps: The integration camps, which aimed at the comprehensive integration of the *Volksgenossen* into the Nazi system of rule, and the exclusion camps, which endeavored to keep "racial" or political elements judged by the regime to be detrimental away from the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Krause-Vilmar 1984, 36). The latter category would also include "youth concentration camps" (Neugebauer 1997; Limbächer, Pfefferle & Merten 2000). The third category would be the

could hardly be controlled to the same extent, given their evolved institutional structures (school) or their privacy (family) (Miller-Kipp 2010).

In analyzing and assessing National Socialist education, it is both useful and necessary to distinguish between different phases of National Socialist educational policy, which Harald Scholtz already correctly described in 1985 (Scholtz 1985) as follows: 1st phase: seizure of power and securing power (1933 to 1936); 2nd phase: display of power and preparations for war (1937 to autumn 1940); 3rd phase: expansion of power and internal disintegration (1941 to 1945).

All in all, the available research findings – unsurprisingly – show contradictions and differences between the formulated unmitigated claim and the different educational realities, which will now be examined by way of example.

2. Exemplary fields of practice I: the Hitler Youth (HJ)

2.1 Standardization and program: educational mission and structure of the Hitler Youth

After the National Socialist takeover, the HJ, as the youth organization of the "Führer", was ideologically, programmatically, and practically the central place for the targeted internal and external gathering of female and male youth from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. With their governance, the regime particularly hoped to establish its own power and maintain it in the long term. "The NSDAP and the government it supported created a system of youth registration and mobilization in National Socialist Germany that was unprecedented, at least in the Western world" (Buddrus 1993, 266). In an effort to integrate adolescents not only extrinsically, but above all emotionally, aesthetic educational experiences were consistently staged during service execution with formative intent. To this end, the Hitler Youth adopted and instrumentalized stylistic elements, symbols, terms, and manners from the bourgeois youth movement. They used precisely those that could be "excellently used to lure male youths in particular into the Jungvolk and the HJ (travel and camp life, fire romance, song material, dress, etc.)" (Reulecke 1993, 230).

The *formal* basic structure of the Nazi youth organization was established as late as 1933 under the name Hitler Youth (as an overall organization with its four separate formations). Female adolescents were initially to pass through the "Band of German Maidens in the Hitler Youth" as "junior girls" (*Jungmädel*, abbreviated JM) between the ages of 10 and 14 and then, at 14 to 18, become members of the "Band of German Maidens" (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*, abbreviated BDM).

extermination camps, whose inhumane mission during the Shoah consisted solely in the mass extermination of human life.

For their male peers, service as "rascals" (*Pimpf*) in the "German Youngsters in the Hitler Youth" (*Deutsches Jungvolk in der Hitler-Jugend*, abbreviated DJ) was planned from the age of 10 to 14, followed by membership in the "Hitler Youth" for boys (*Hitler-Jugend*, abbreviated HJ) until the age of 18.

With the dual objective of preparing young people for specific fields of activity in the event of war on the one hand and offering them specific organizational opportunities on the other, the Reich youth leadership also created a number of HJ "special units" from the mid-1930s onward that were intended to provide the respective German Armed Forces and SS units with specially trained recruits (Buddrus 2003, 186). Classic special units were "Motorized-HJ," "Flyer-HJ," and "Communications-HJ." Their strength was ultimately to amount to one-third of the total HJ (on the inclusion motivation resulting from the special units: Benecke 2015, 64). In keeping with the Nazi inclusion strategy of seduction on the one hand (see the offer of the special units) and leadership on the other (implemented in the HJ by means of the controlling and, if necessary, sanctioning forms of action: "record, monitor, regulate, punish" (Buddrus 2003, 368), the Reich youth leadership also established a supervisory instance within the organization: the organization's own "patrol service" (*HJ-Streifendienst*, abbreviated SRD), introduced in 1935 (ibid., 369). The SRD, too, had a dual strategic function: On the one hand, it exercised organizational control over its members and was also intended to provide the SS, whose structures it was modeled on, with pre-trained new recruits; on the other hand, it offered interested adolescents a field of activity that promised participation in power and suggested the special meaningfulness of their own actions. This example of "patrol service" leads to the general motivation for inclusion already mentioned, which was strongly effective among the adolescents, through the awarding of propagandistic recognition and real leadership positions in the youth organization. The subjectively perceived appeal of the offer to perceive oneself as politically active for the regime, thus a relevant part of the apparatus of power. By means of proven usefulness of outstanding importance for goals transfigured by propaganda, developed considerable emotional binding power. Thus, for example, the contemporary witness "Rudolf" in Dan Bar-On retrospectively stated:

> "I had some experiences in the Hitler Youth that were particularly striking for me – for example, when I was promoted. Those were moments when the soul was whipped up again. [...] There was always a very martial atmosphere, fire, torches in hand, and songs were sung in a minor key [...] The cord was attached here, and then you walked through the streets with your chest swollen with pride and felt like a little representative of National Socialism" (1996, 264).

The example not only exemplifies the effectiveness of inclusion promotion by means of seductive awarding of advancement experiences within the organization's own hierarchy, which produced a total of about two million young BDM leaders (Miller-Kipp 2006, 213). It also reveals

how smoothly a self-perception as politically active and effective could emerge given suitable patterns of experience.

Thus, quite a few adolescents felt strengthened by the propagandistic revaluation of "youth" in general and by means of its organized form in particular in the face of conventional claims to subordination (for example, on the part of a patriarchally led parental home or school and denominational authorities). Precisely for this reason, however, they rarely distinguished themselves from the Nazi youth organization. A vivid example is provided by the report of a former member of the Band of German Maidens (BDM) about her feelings at the time as a member of the youth organization:

> "I sang songs of freedom with a 'beaming heart' and felt free: free from the oppression of the dreaded father, free from the constraints of the old-fashioned upbringing of daughters, free from the pressure for good grades of 'politically unreliable' teachers, free from the imposition of having to think about political dissidents. The word 'freedom' had an effect on me, the twelve- to fourteen-year-old, like a drug that obscured its distorting content. Thus, I could feel free and yet be in bondage to every command" (the former Young Maiden and BDM leader Renate Finckh, quoted in Hübner-Funk 2005, 179).

Whether such patterns of experience – it should be remembered that for many female adolescents at the time, the BDM as a mass organization represented the first option to participate in youth organizational activities – constituted emancipation in today's understanding is certainly disputed in research on the history of education (on the topic as a whole: Benecke 2015, 172 ff.). Ultimately, the verdict depends on how one's own position with regard to the fact that, at least in terms of educational history, the experiences of the BDM members were a "release to new subjugation" (Tenorth 2008, 262).

For the regular HJ, the official definition of the target group was based on the fundamental categories of "race" and "blood" (Dietze 1939, 74f.). Since the mid-1930s, the so-called "Aryan certificate" was necessary to be admitted to the HJ or assuming a leadership function. Since the summer of 1936, i.e., even before the enactment of the HJ law, members had to prove by means of a comprehensive "proof of descent" "that there had been no 'ancestors of colored or Jewish blood' in their families since January 1, 1800" (Kollmeier 2007, 96).

To summarize the development of the HJ as a youth organization: Although there were deviations of the BDM from the "obligatory directive [...] of the history of the HJ" within the individual phases, especially with regard to the tasks directed at the female sub-association and its concrete service organization (Miller-Kipp 2002, 20), a common phase structure can be discovered for the association in its entirety. If one adds the period before 1933, it is possible to identify phases (cf. Benecke 2013, 28 ff. on the developmental steps of the youth organization that took place in each of these periods):

1) An antecedent to the period of formation or "struggle" (from 1922 or 1926 [for the BDM 1923 or 1932] to 1933),
2) A Phase of Enforcement (1933-1936),
3) A phase of youth work or "education" (1936-1939),
4) A final phase of the war period (1939-1945).

The development of the HJ before and during the Nazi era thus largely corresponds to the phase pattern presented at the beginning for Nazi rule and its educational staging as a whole. Since the popularity of the National Socialist youth organization among adolescents from the *Volksgemeinschaft* did not increase to the desired extent despite propagandistic idealization and social pressure, the regime initially reacted on a formal level. The culmination of the second phase of HJ development came with the passage of the "Law on Hitler Youth" on December 1, 1936, which the Reich youth leadership viewed, with some justification, as the key to realizing its own claim to totality (Buddrus 2003, 250). Of crucial importance was § 2 of the law:

> Apart from the parental home and school, the entire German youth is to be educated physically, mentally, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism for service to the people and to the *Volksgemeinschaft* in the Hitler Youth (quoted in Benecke 2013, 180).

Since this legal definition of the HJ as the only recognized youth organization significantly increased membership rates in conjunction with other influences. A steady increase in social pressure, but also economic constraints played their part: from 1935 onward, for example, it became noticeably more difficult to find an apprenticeship without belonging to the HJ. Since these measures still did not suffice for the regime's determination to seize total control, further measures followed. The increasing intensification of taking the youth into service through the HJ during this last pre-war phase found expression in a total of three so-called "executive ordinances" to the "Hitler Youth law" (Benecke 2013, 204 ff.). While the first executive decree once again reiterated the main points of the 1936 law, executive decrees 2 and 3 were crucial to the process of nationalizing the youth. The second decree, dated March 25, 1939, made membership in the HJ mandatory for all adolescents in Germany between the ages of 10 and 18, in the sense of what was now officially a "youth service obligation". Only with its establishment was membership in the youth organization de facto compulsory (Buddrus 2003, 277). This meant, at least legally, the final departure from the principle of voluntariness (ibid.). Section 9 of the second executive order specified the date on which every girl and boy born in the same year had to enroll in the Hitler Youth (March 15) and the date of closed admission (April 20, Hitler's birthday). At the same time, an official catalog of penalties for violations was formulated. Ultimately, neither before the enactment of the HJ law of 1936 can a complete voluntary membership actually be stated, nor for

the time after that or after the enactment of the implementing ordinances of 1939 can it be assumed that membership in the HJ was enforced, since after that and especially during the war – with simultaneous tightening of the sanctions for evasion of the "youth service obligation" – the logistical prerequisites for a complete compulsory registration of the relevant cohorts were often not fulfilled. This applied "only from 1941/42, comprehensively only from 1943 [...] at a time when there were only limited possibilities for the Reich Youth Leadership to act" (ibid., 250). In retrospect, therefore, the apparent paradox remains that, regarding membership in the HJ, there was never any real voluntariness for the target group between 1933 and 1945, and likewise an actually unavoidable forced membership could not be realized at any time until the end of Nazi rule. All in all, it can be said that after the Nazi takeover, the regime's youth policy was characterized by a steadily increasing desire to register young people across all phases. Accordingly, a considerable increase in the number of HJ members was achieved: About 30% (2.3 million members at the end of 1933) as an average for the first phase of Nazi rule (1933 to 1936); about 65% (5.6 million members already at the end of 1937) during the second (1936 to 1939); about 85% (8.7 million after the enactment of the "executive ordinances" in March 1939) during the third. In the last phase, certain constellations (concerning individual age groups) could also result in registration rates of over 90% (Benecke 2013, 41 f.).

The contradictions between the simultaneous demands of an ideology of selection (racism, "hereditary health") and a totalitarian will to record were characteristic of Nazi rule as a whole and were also evident in the HJ in the form of gray areas when it came to recording (Benecke 2015, 161 ff.). One of these gray areas was the HJ's own "Special Brigades" (*Sonderbanne*), meaning that members with certified disabilities were separated within the organization due to ostensibly "biological heredity" (*erbbiologisch*) criteria (VHB. HJ, vol. II, 1942, 55 and 60). In March 1934, the Reich Youth Leadership approved the "B-Brigade" (blind), in December 1934 the "G-Brigade" (deaf) was approved, and in July 1935 the "K-Brigade" (physically disabled).

2.2 Activities and pedagogical practices in the HJ

In its everyday practices, the HJ met its female and male members with an inclusion strategy tailored to gender stereotypes. This can be differentiated as external and internal inclusion. The *external* collection and formation were carried out through an increasingly intensified program of physical training. This was primarily oriented toward military competence requirements (Buddrus 2003, 224ff.) and, with the help of numerous competitions and the awarding of performance badges, endeavored to mobilize young people's willingness and ability to perform. In general, a well-founded training in shooting and cross-country service was to take place. In addition, the

aforementioned HJ's "special units" were to supply the respective German Armed Forces and SS units with specially trained junior personnel. To ensure that no psychological inhibitions would later stand in the way of wholehearted (wartime) deployment, tests of courage were repeatedly staged in the various contexts of organized education, including HJ service, which often led to physical injuries (broken bones).[5] Since 1940/41, the supply function for the German Armed Forces and Waffen-SS finally became the central task of the HJ service (ibid., 202) and the physical training there was tailored accordingly. Any educational responsibility for the individual youth members or the collective of adolescents was thus unreservedly given over to the primacy of the political, the priority of the ideologically based political goals of the regime.

The *Reich*'s youth leadership sought to lay claim to the "inner self" in various ways. A combination of indoctrinating and aesthetic-emotional overpowering strategies were used. Targeted indoctrination was the task of the HJ's training work (Buddrus 2003, 60), as it characterized its social evenings (*Heimabende*) in particular. Since 1935, the four-tiered system of ideological training (general unit training and three-tiered leader training), which was gender-specific in content, had been established. The center and basis of a mental ideological compilation of the HJ members was the social evening to be held on Wednesdays. For this purpose, the *Reich* youth leadership fortnightly issued social evening folders that were uniform throughout the *Reich*. Each folder focused on one topic; the contents were kept in a question-and-answer structure. According to the responsible department of the *Reich* youth leadership, these folders were not to be "overloaded with dry, scientific treatises," but rather were to be "lively" and completely worked through during the weekly meetings (ibid., 62). In addition to the transfigured presentation of the alleged racial roots of the "Aryan national community" (ibid.) and propaganda that was increasingly whitewashing the war (ibid., 68), which presented the "front experience" as a practical test worthy of pursuit, intensive racial-political training had already been part of the program of the social evenings and the HJ training work in general since 1934 (ibid., 69). The enactment of the "Nuremberg Laws" (Sept. 15, 1935) led to a radicalization here as well (ibid., 72). Through a steady expansion, this area became the central dimension of ideological training in the HJ by 1938 (ibid., 76). During the war, the social evenings lost much of their quality, partly due to the lack of HJ personnel, and in view of the immediate wartime deployments, they also lost importance. In the end, the social evenings took place only monthly, if they could be held at all (ibid., 87 ff.).

[5] During the peacetime years after 1933, more than 600 members of the youth organization died in regular HJ service (e.g., from drowning or colds, in traffic or sports accidents, during off-road games, or accidents with firearms) – outside of the conflicts that were ostensibly existential for the nation and the race. In the eyes of the *Reich* youth leadership, they represented above all a propagandistic nuisance (Benecke, 2015, 107 ff.).

These elements of mental engagement were supplemented by the messages of a massive propagandistic media work specific to the HJ (Buddrus 2003, 91). This included a pronounced commitment to the HJ press, HJ-specific youth literature, HJ oratory, HJ radio activities, HJ film work, and HJ cultural work, and its content was always closely aligned with the general HJ service (Benecke 2022a). During the war, it took on increased importance as a multiplier of Nazi propaganda (Buddrus 2003, 125). The HJ relied even more one-sidedly on an emotional engagement in the context of its formation education through a pronounced use of aesthetic educational arrangements: "In festivals and celebrations, cults and rituals, images and symbols – in these ritualizations, the regime conveyed its reality in an effective way, with the result that *this* reality was often no longer distinguishable from reality" (Herrmann & Nassen 1994, 9, emphasis added by the author). In addition to its mediation agitation via the above-mentioned media channels, the HJ also established an abundant array of symbolic staging in which young people could and should actively participate in order to experience "comradely" community and to perceive themselves as effective in the process. In addition to the larger marches and mass rallies, the festivities of the National Socialist liturgy were also adopted and celebrated in the ranks of the HJ (Reichel 1994, 116 and 209). The HJ uniform possessed great symbolic powers of inclusion, as it conveyed belonging and social status. Recent research has shown that the emotional "legacies" resulting from all this remained much more stable after 1945 than was the case for the after-effects of ideological indoctrination (Welzer 1997).

The wartime missions of the HJ of both sexes, especially the active military missions in direct combat, continue to be a blind spot in many accounts of the youth organization (on the BDM: Miller-Kipp 2002, 303; on the male HJ: Buddrus 2003, XIII). As the above remarks already indicate, however, they can be seen as the actual programmatic target dimension of all HJ practices (Benecke 2013, 42). At first, the focus was on pre-military training and the promotion of willingness to serve, and later the direct wartime deployment of increasingly younger members of the organization. The abdication of all educational responsibility mentioned above reached its depressing climax here. The consequences of the wartime missions and thus the proof of the unreserved political functionalization of the youth in the sense of the first motive of the above systematization, which was always pushed by the *Reich* youth leadership (Buddrus 2003), were ultimately clear: "Of the 'typical' HJ cohorts, i.e., the boys born between 1921 and 1925, an average of 34.8 percent of a year died in the Second World War" (ibid., XXXII).

Like the active wartime missions, the numerous and diverse participations of the Nazi youth organization in the crimes of the regime – from defamatory attacks on political opponents, dissident youth or "foreign peoples" to active participation in the murder of Jews in the context of

the so-called "final phase crimes" during the last years of the war – represented a persistent desideratum in the history of education (ibid., 55). These references alone, however, lead any subsequent talk of an allegedly apolitical organization, the HJ, ad absurdum.

2.2.1 The subjective perception of the HJ by its members

The subjective perception of the HJ by its members can be subdivided – in a highly simplified way – into the antagonistic categories of attractiveness and distance-creating experiences. The individual attitude toward the "youth organization of the leader" was shaped by very different factors, such as age, one's own dispositions, the milieu of origin and the socialization experienced there, as well as the timing of service and the concrete form in which one encountered it (for example, in the form of the respective local leaders). As a rule, a conglomerate of several influencing factors came into play that was difficult to resolve, in which gray areas could be identified that were characterized by the superimposition, juxtaposition, and succession of seductive and repulsive moments of perception. The appeal of Hitler's youth to the children and adolescents of the time can ultimately be broken down into four dimensions, which must be further differentiated in individual cases. They sometimes reinforced each other, and their effectiveness could be increased by three age- or society-specific factors (Benecke 2013, 82):

1) *Life prospects*: Participation in the youth organization of the NSDAP seemed to offer adolescents an increased potential for experience and, in some cases, considerably improved prospects for the future. The latter went hand in hand with a perceived improvement in their own status, i.e., their social standing and the recognition associated with it.
2) *Meaning of life*: Membership in the HJ was often associated with the feeling of standing up for a cause of superordinate value and making an important contribution to it oneself. The individual HJ leaders, Nazi propaganda, and countless productions of formative aesthetic education were instrumental in convincing them of this.
3) *Activism*: Daily life in the HJ offered young people countless opportunities for physical activity, adventure, and thrills, as well as for active self-affirmation, proving one's success, and receiving recognition in the form of institutionalized "services."
4) *Environmental pressure*: External factors that urged children and adolescents to participate in the Hitler Youth were by no means necessarily experienced by them as negative and burdensome. This was true only if a negative or at least distanced attitude toward the Nazi youth organization had already existed beforehand. If the inclusive group dynamics of

family, teachers and, above all, peer group met with a neutral or already positive attitude toward the HJ, it often had the effect of increasing its appeal or at least being motivating.

The individual qualities of the Nazi mediators experienced in each case could have a reinforcing effect on the subjective perception of the HJ by its (potential) members. According to personal and developmental dispositions, adolescents had different needs regarding the qualities of a leader within the HJ. Numerous reports make clear that the concrete degree of devotion to the National Socialist youth organization also depended on, sometimes primarily, the experience of the leaders' abilities to fulfill their duties as "role model and liaison" (Miller-Kipp 2007, 34). In contrast, the following elements of an education in the HJ were often perceived by adolescents as unsatisfactory, empty of content, or even repulsive:

1) The HJ's potential to attract young people was affected by upheavals similar to those that affected the conditions of HJ membership in general (from voluntary participation to increasingly repressive compulsory service). The result of the structural shift within the HJ's daily routine was experienced particularly clearly by those who did not begin their service until the second or third phase, where they were increasingly confronted with one-sided drill. Moreover, this effect could be intensified by certain, often milieu-related aspects of the everyday life of the young people concerned. Thus, after an exhausting workday of sometimes 60-70 hours a week, fewer and fewer working-class adolescents wanted to expose themselves to military training in the Hitler Youth. This form of gradually developing alienation from the youth organization characterized almost all recollections on this topic in which a personal rejection was mentioned at all. In contrast, "(there is) not one case of complete refusal from the outset in the entire recollection narrative [...]" (Miller-Kipp 2007, 182).[6]
2) The degree to which service in the Hitler Youth became attractive to individuals also depended on their personal dispositions. In the negative case, these could have been both individual (lack of athletic talent, etc.) and collective (milieu of origin, etc.). On the part of the members of the Hitler Youth, this could result in reservations, lack of interest, disappointment, feeling overextended, as well as experiences of social exclusion and isolation, which in turn led in many cases to latent or decisive movements away from the Hitler Youth.
3) In addition to these internal factors, which were subjectively derived from the respective HJ member, objective external factors, such as the lack of pedagogical competence of the

[6] Cf. in this sense also the transformation of the siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl from committed HJ leader and dedicated HJ leader to resistance activists (Benecke, 2015a, 35 and 95 f. and the further publications cited there).

respective BDM leader or HJ leader, could also lead to the emergence of negative feelings toward HJ service.

The factors listed here were not clearly distinguishable from one another and usually occurred in combination. It was precisely the interplay of different aspects that could trigger or successively strengthen a negative attitude toward the Hitler Youth.

2.2.2 Dissident behavior in and towards the HJ

The goal of Nazi youth policy, which was also quite clearly reflected in the positioning of the HJ by its leadership corps (from the *Reich* youth leadership to its office and department heads down to the honorary BDM leaders in the organization's everyday practice), was ultimately designed with little differentiation. The measures for generating loyalty and ensuring obedience were supplemented by others whose task was to suppress and combat all deviant behavior and consistently eliminate any influences that were thought to destabilize Nazi and HJ loyalty (Buddrus 2003, 368; Kollmeier 2007; Benecke 2013, 77). In the context of the HJ's service practice as a youth organization, the creation of the aforementioned HJ "patrol service" and its controlling and regulating activities toward HJ membership were significant in this regard (Buddrus 2003, 369; Benecke 2013, 77). Here it became apparent what "youth lead youth" actually meant in this context: youth controlling youth in compliance with Nazi formation requirements. On a formal level, this demand of control was expressed in the establishment of an HJ disciplinary code that was adapted to specific phases. The basic message was clear. By joining the youth organization, one would be subjected to a new legal order that would supplement, and in the long run replace, all previous authorities:

> "The disciplinary maturity begins with the admission of ten-year-olds to the Hitler Youth; squirts and young maidens are already no longer simply children and thus no longer simply educational objects of the family and the school" (Tetzlaff 1944, 26).

The HJ disciplinary code basically provided for three main categories of sanctioning. Its disciplinary means represented an ascending "graded sequence" (ibid., 33) of sanctioning:

1) Group I included warnings and reprimands;
2) To Group II a suspension from promotion for up to three years, a deprivation of rank and reduction in rank;
3) Group III includes the deprivation of the ability to be a youth leader, *Jugenddienstarrest* (youth service imprisonment) of up to ten days and, finally, resignation and expulsion from the HJ for a period of up to three years.

The Nazi regime consistently reacted with hypersensitivity to actual or perceived dissenting behavior out of fear of losing power and control (Benecke 2013, 78 ff.). The extent of dissenting youth behavior and the systemic threat that the regime leadership believed it posed, especially during the war, is sometimes also underestimated in the literature. Ultimately, two basic categories of dissenting youth and young adults can be distinguished. *First,* those who, directly after 1933 and in the years that followed, rejected the HJ's claim to totalitarianism and its intended standardization of youth life with different, mostly milieu-specific motives. These included youth groups from the confessional, socialist or communist working-class milieus as well as the remnants of the bourgeois youth movement. The Nazi regime was by no means always completely rejected. Rather, it was about the need to maintain at least partial self-determination in matters of identity and behavior.
Second, those youths who sought alternative and self-determined spaces of experience – as a result of age-specific reaction patterns to the increase in drill and control in the HJ during the second and especially the third phase of Nazi rule, increasingly motivated by the stressful and constricting living conditions in the later war years (Kenkmann 2002, 230). These rather informally organized cliques and groups, whose members repeatedly came into open confrontation with the HJ's "patrol service", showed connections to the politically leftist resistance only in certain regional and milieu contexts. Better-known examples from these ranks were the "Swing Youth" or the "Edelweiss Pirates" (*Edelweißpiraten*). Even in this category, a dispositional participation in dissenting youth groups did not necessarily entail a complete rejection of the political system. For the vast majority of those affected – including Hans Scholl (Herrmann 2012) – the search for alternative youth cultures only led to political resistance after of a confrontation with the sanction mechanisms of the Nazi regime.

3. Exemplary fields of practice II: the (public) general education schools

3.1 Standardization and program: the example of *Volksschule* (elementary school)

In Germany, there were about 54.000 public schools providing general education (50.745 elementary schools, 1207 secondary schools, 2068 higher schools; as of 1939, old *Reich*: Statistisches Reichsamt 1940). Despite their total claim to power, the National Socialists had no coherent concept for the formation of the external and internal school system when they came to power. Just as in the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar Republic, the school system remained a structured one during the Nazi era. A distinction was made between eight-year *Volksschule* (compulsory primary and first years of secondary education), which were free of tuition fees and attended by 90% of an age group, and between middle and secondary schools, which were six- and eight-year schools,

respectively, based on the first four grades of elementary school and were subject to tuition fees (see Link 2011, 2015 for elementary schools; Kemnitz/Tosch 2011 for secondary schools). This subdivided external school structure was hardly changed during the Nazi period. The variety of types of higher schools, which had developed since the 19th century, was reduced to three types in 1938: high schools for boys, high schools for girls, *Gymnasium* (higher secondary schools). The introduction of the *Hauptschule* (main school, based on the Austrian model), which was enacted in 1941, was intended to become a compulsory school after the fourth year of schooling and to replace the middle schools prospectively, but it was hardly effective because of the course of the war. It was also criticized by elementary school teachers, who feared a loss of high-achieving students in the elementary schools. The elementary school itself was not changed structurally.

The only structural innovation introduced by the National Socialists was the introduction of National Socialist selection schools as a form of tuition-free secondary schools (Klare 2011). The National Political Institutes of Education (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*, also known as *NPEA*, *Napola*) run by the state, as well as the Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS) and the *Reich* School of the NSDAP Feldafing run by the party, opened up higher education leading to the *Abitur* (qualification granted at the end of the *Gymnasium*) to students selected according to racial criteria and performance. The goal of these elite schools "was the formation of a political leadership class and the associated securing of young talent for leadership positions in the state and party apparatus" (Klare 2011, 137), although the choice of profession remained optional. The number of elite schools was manageable; 30 NPEAs, three NPEAs for girls (Jodda-Flintrop 2010), and twelve AHSs are documented. All three types of National Socialist elite schools were boarding schools, which in turn enabled total control, registration, and influence in the sense of National Socialist formation education. Witnesses of the time report of a system of physical and psychological abuse that prevailed in the schools by consolidating in school and extracurricular formation education in the spirit of racial selection.

With the establishment of the *Reich* Ministry of Education under Bernhard Rust in May 1934 (Nolzen/Schlüter 2011, Nagel 2012), school policy and school administration, which had previously been the responsibility of the individual German states (*Länder*), were centralized and standardized. The *Reich* Compulsory Schooling Act of July 6, 1938, uniformly established eight years of compulsory schooling, beginning at age six, thus confirming in principle the provisions of the Weimar *Reich* Constitution (Art. 145), which, however, had not been implemented by some states (Zymek 1989, 195). Nevertheless, even during the Nazi era, the structured school system remained characterized by an external heterogeneity, the cause of which was primarily the educational disparity between urban and rural areas that was constitutive of the educational system

until well into the second half of the 20th century. There were hardly any secondary schools in the countryside. Apart from their basic structure, which consisted of the first four grades of elementary school and grades 5-8 of secondary school, rural *Volksschule* (which in official statistics included schools in towns with up to 2,000 inhabitants) differed greatly from *Volksschule* in cities. Whereas single-grade coeducational rural schools, which as one-room schools could have very few pupils, or in which more than 70 pupils were taught by only one teacher in a class, there were fully developed elementary schools in the cities with eight-year classes, separated into girls and boys. Only 10.3% of the approximately 51,000 *Volksschule* were fully developed eight-grade elementary schools; 39.9% were single-grade and 20.6% were two-grade and located in rural areas (Link 2011). Just looking at these external school ratios shows that we are talking about a very heterogeneous type of school when we discuss *Volksschule* under National Socialism. The common features of these institutes as the "school of the working people" (Gräfer 1940, 55) can at best be found in their general objectives, but hardly in terms of teaching and actual school conditions. Against the background of this quantitative distribution, the present overview focuses on the *Volksschule* and also uses its own research results for this purpose. The secondary schools can only be considered marginally (in detail Kemnitz/Tosch 2011).

As National Socialist "educators of the people," teachers at rural *Volksschule* were additionally expected to assume an important political function (Link/Breyvogel 2013; Stern 2021). Due to the "dualism of traditional and novel roles," "no other person in the villages [...] could have succeeded in presenting the binding forces of the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in such a polymorphous way" (Stern 2021, 382). In the countryside in particular, the degree of National Socialist politicization of school, teaching, and village life was closely related to the degree of Nazification of the teachers. It was no coincidence that the National Socialists repeatedly brought all teachers together in ideological training camps beginning in 1934, as they considered an ideological "reconditioning" of the teachers to be necessary (Kraas 2004, 2011).

This already indicates that the National Socialists exerted far more influence on the standardization of internal school conditions than on external ones. The laws, decrees and ordinances passed in rapid succession in 1933/34 also bear witness to this (on the regulations for elementary schools, see Link 2011, 2015; Klöcker 2013).

The "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" of April 7, 1933, intervened directly in school operations through dismissals and transfers of teachers. "This law marked the beginning of a path on which, step by step in the following years, Jews and other social groups were first restricted in their rights and opportunities, then marginalized, persecuted, expelled, and finally systematically murdered" (Keim 1995, 78). Due to a lack of data, it is (still) impossible to

precisely quantify how many schoolteachers were dismissed in total, in contrast to the dismissals in the school administration, in the higher schools, or in the democratically anchored reform schools in Berlin, Hamburg, or Bremen (cf. Keim 1995, 91). In *Baden* (a historical territory in South Germany), for example, 49 principals and 276 teachers at *Volksschule* were dismissed. Overall, however, the wave of dismissals among teachers was limited (Ottweiler 1979, 57). At secondary schools, the wave of dismissals and transfers ranged, with regional differences, from 55% of teachers and principals in Hamburg, 15% in Berlin, and 26% of principals and 6% of *Studienraete* (official title and rank for tenured higher teachers at secondary schools) in the Rhine Province (Kemnitz/Tosch 2011, 113-114).

School administrative measures with a direct impact on everyday school life and teaching in schools (cf. the collection of laws and decrees in Fricke-Finkelnburg 1989) included the Law for the "Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring" (July 14, 1933), which enabled the selection and transfer of pupils from *Volksschule* to *Hilfsschule* (special education schools) (Kremer 2011), and the introduction of the Hitler salute (July 22, 33). Simultaneously, at state level, it established various ordinances that intervened directly in the classroom: most notably, the Prussian decree to teach *Vererbungslehre und Rassenkunde* (heredity and race studies) in schools (Sept. 13, 1933), which was extended to the entire *Reich* in January 1935, and the Prussian guidelines for history textbooks (July 20, 1933), which were followed by similar regulations on history instruction in Hamburg, Bavaria, and other states. The Hamburg regulations were decidedly aimed at ensuring that students would be led to "take definitive positions," "clearly distinguish 'friend from foe' in foreign policy and domestic policy." The Weimar Republic "with its democratic lack of spirit" was presented to the students as "alien to the people" to then introduce them to the advantages of the new "national-authoritarian state leadership" (quoted in Ottweiler 1985, 237).

The above-mentioned decree *Vererbungslehre und Rassenkunde* (Sept. 13, 1933) stipulated that the topics heredity, race studies, eugenics, family studies and population policy were taught at once in all final-year classes in two to three lessons per week. This affected the subjects Biology, German, History, and Geography.

Educational journals and publishers took advantage of the initial lack of National Socialist teaching materials suitable for such topics. The first National Socialist textbooks appeared gradually, beginning with the German Reading Book for *Volksschule* in 1935 and for the other subjects only at the end of the 1930s. In supplements, they published teaching materials that were compatible with the first decrees, or they brought out corresponding book series for teachers (cf. in more detail Link 2009, 2011).

The first uniform *Reich* guidelines appeared in April 1937 with the "Guidelines for teaching in the four lower grades of *Volksschule*", which were replaced in December 1939 by guidelines that applied to the entire *Volksschule* and were published under the title "Education and teaching in elementary school" (Apel/Klöcker 2000, 107-142; Fricke-Finkelnburg 1989, 31-52). The fact that the curricular reorganization of the elementary school was brought forward is related to the intended reform of the secondary schools (Neuordnung des höheren Schulwesens sowie Erziehung und Unterricht in der Höheren Schule 1938; Fricke-Finkelnburg 1989, 102 ff.) by the REM and met with criticism from contemporary teachers of the *Volksschule* because it meant that the guidelines were one-sidedly oriented toward the requirements of the higher schools. Although the National Socialists attempted to exert complete control, it took more than four years until the first nationwide binding guidelines for schools were available.

Analyzing the genesis of the primary school guidelines of 1937 reveals a "simultaneity of continuity and discontinuity," a "mixture of radical change, congruence, shifting prioritizations, reinterpretations, expansions, and omissions" compared to the time before 1933 (Götz 1997, 361). The reason for this lay in the evident "multiplicity of expectations" (Götz 1997, 39), which could not be eliminated despite the tendencies toward unification.

It was not uncommon for contemporary educators to interpret the 1939 elementary school guidelines as consistent with and in continuation of the Weimar guidelines. Above all, they saw the propagated forms of work as a *Reich* ministerial codification of (progressive) education achievements. Even in the Nazi era, the enactment of such regulations followed school-administrative procedures of prolonged negotiation and school-specific logics, so that one can rightly see in the guidelines a "blend of Weimar tradition with specifically National Socialist elements" (Keim 1997, 46).

The original guidelines "Education and Instruction in the *Volksschule*" of Dec. 15, 1939, comprised 32 pages and were subdivided into "General Guidelines" (9-12) and "Guidelines for the Individual Subjects" (13-30). "Educational institution of the German people" – that was what the *Volksschule* was supposed to be according to these guidelines. Its task was to,

> together with the other National Socialist educational powers, but with the means appropriate to it, educate our people's youth to become physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy and strong German men and women who, firmly rooted in their homeland and national heritage, are each in his or her place ready for full commitment to the *Führer* and the people. Within the framework of this task, the elementary school is responsible for equipping the youth with the basic knowledge and skills necessary for the use of their strength in the *Volksgemeinschaft* and for participation in the cultural life of our people. By entrusting the entire German youth in the lower grades with the education and teaching of elementary knowledge and skills, the *Volksschule* is further entrusted with the rewarding task and responsible duty of laying the foundation for a common life in the national community among all German children (cited in Apel and Klöcker 2000, 108).

The *Volksschule*, however, "does not have the task of imparting a wide variety of knowledge for the benefit of the individual. It is tasked with developing all the powers of the youth for the service of the people and the state so they may be harnessed" (ibid., 109). The homeland and the people were the focus of the work, and the girls' instruction was to be "geared more strongly towards their later purpose as housewives and mothers" (ibid., 109). In "a lively school and class community" it was a matter of "community education – leadership selection – leadership education": "In it, the teacher is the leader" (ibid., 110). As methodological ways, the guidelines suggest: relaxing the subjects – synergy between subjects – autonomy of subjects – standardized classroom management (ibid., 110); descriptive, child- and folk-oriented work structure (ibid., 111); no over-discussions, no abstract teaching, no mindless rote learning (ibid., 112); independent performance – responsible commitment – independent activity – group and individual work, practice and scheduled repetition (ibid., 112). "The children's natural urge to strive for independent and self-reliant work is to be accommodated according to the requirements of the individual stages of growth." (ibid., 112).

In this range of topics, the significant blend of traditional elements of the *Volksschule* education, progressive education, and National Socialist formation becomes obvious, which is also a characteristic of a handbook that was released only a few months after the publication of the guidelines under the title "Neubau der Volksschularbeit. Plan, Stoff und Gestaltung nach den Richtlinien des Reichserziehungsministeriums vom 15. Dezember 1939" (Higelke 1942), meaning "Restructuring of elementary school work. Plan, material and design according to the guidelines of the Reich Ministry of Education of December 15, 1939". On 244 pages (3rd edition 1942: 368 pages), teachers were offered interpretive aids for working with the new guidelines. Introduced by a remarkably factual outline of the history of curricula from the Middle Ages to the present, the 1939 *Reich* guidelines were placed decidedly in continuity with progressive education: "Essential and fruitful didactic insights of progressive education also find their organic integration and their fruitful re-anchoring in the Reich guidelines" (ibid., 17). To emphasize such continuities argumentatively would have been unthinkable, for example, in Franco's Spain in relation to republican education. The guidelines, however, were not to be seen as "the result of a new school reform, but as the living expression of a completely new nationalist view and basic attitude, which [...] is supported by the single-minded will of a powerful state that is and strives to be an educational state" (ibid., 6). New things are claimed, continuity is used as an argument.

A section of the guidelines is also devoted to school celebrations. Scholtz speaks not without reason of a "celebration mania" (Scholtz 1994). In the school celebrations, for which the mass media of radio and film were also used, "the integration of the school into the great national

community was most conspicuously manifested"; they were to represent "the high point in the community life of the school" (Richtlinien, cited in Apel and Klöcker 2000, 110; on the organization of National Socialist school celebrations, cf. with numerous examples: Link 1999, 230-240). National Socialist school celebrations, in their pseudo-religious design, were "an outlet where the basic racist tendency of the Nazi regime found a visible expression and was able to impress itself on young people accordingly" (Keim 1997, 53). When, at a graduation ceremony for the eighth grade of *Volksschule* in 1936, a banner read, "We are born to die for Germany" (Keim 1997, 54), this probably expressed the goal of the school's formation and the fulfillment of Hitler's educational intentions most strikingly.

Conversely, integration into the formed national community also meant exclusion. For the National Socialists, there was no question that "education for the *Führer*'s people" was intended only for the Aryan German national community. On the basis of the Nuremberg Race Laws, Jewish and other "non-Aryan" students were increasingly pushed out of schools. While in 1931 there were still about 29,000 Jewish students attending a public *Volksschule*, by 1938 there were only about 10,000 (Ottweiler 1979, 45-46; on the overall context, see Röcher 1992; Keim 1997, 220-263). The gradual exclusion of Jewish pupils from public *Volksschule*, which even led to their complete expulsion, necessitated the expansion of the Jewish school system. It had already existed in Germany in basic form before 1933 and had until then represented an alternative offering, but it now took on a compulsory character. By 1936, more than half of all Jewish children of school age attended a Jewish, i.e., private, *Volksschule* (Zymek 1989, 200). The exclusion became more radical after the November pogroms of 1938. On the perfidious grounds that "after the nefarious murder in Paris [...] no German teacher could be expected to give lessons to Jewish pupils" and that it was "intolerable for German pupils to sit in a classroom with Jews," the *Reich* Minister of Education issued a decree on Nov. 15, 1938: "Jews are not permitted to attend German schools. They may only attend Jewish schools. As far as this has not yet been done, all Jewish pupils currently attending a German school are to be dismissed immediately" ("Schulunterricht an Juden", Nov. 15, 1938, quoted in Fricke-Finkelnburg 1989, 271). Against the background of the deportations, all schooling of Jewish children was finally banned in 1942.

Overall, "centralization, standardization, control," as well as functionalization of didactic-methodological arrangements were "determining elements of National Socialist school policy," "in order to tie school and teaching as closely as possible to the National Socialist ideology" (Ottweiler 1985, 249).

3.2 Educational practices: everyday school life and teaching

The fact that there are differences and rifts between the program, decrees, guidelines and everyday school life, i.e., between the attempt at complete control and the realities, is a historical as well as a current triviality. By now, we are relatively well informed about school realities in *Volksschule* during the Nazi period through regional historical, school historical, or biographical studies and documentations (cf. the literature in Link 2011, 95). In addition to official documents, these studies primarily use sources that originate from historical everyday school life itself, e.g., school chronicles, conference minutes, teaching reports, textbooks, student papers, contemporary witness accounts, photographs. With such sources, therefore, it is possible to investigate the question of the relationship between aspiration and everyday life for *Volksschule* under National Socialism.

> I can remember that I had not learned Hitler's curriculum vitae well. With my hands outstretched, palms up, I had to stand in front of the teacher at the teacher's desk. He had a stick in his hand, and I began my litany: 'Our *Führer* Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn on April 20, 1889 ...' If there was a falsity in the next sentence, he would immediately beat the fingertips with the cane. Strict discipline prevailed at school, and not only in the form of physical punishment. When the teacher entered the classroom, we had to stand up in proper military form, and it had to be reported exactly how many students were present, how many were absent, and why. Then we were greeted with the Hitler salute, the teacher ordered 'Sit down!', which we all did in unison, and usually it was quiet as a mouse. All the students felt very terrorized because of the beatings and fearing the teacher. (Quoted in Arbeitsgruppe Pädagogisches Museum 1983, 82.)

These recollections of a Berlin *Volksschule* student certainly correspond to notions of everyday National Socialist school life: mindless reproductions, the omnipresent fixation on the *Führer*, military discipline, the Hitler salute, an abusive teacher as a stand-in for the *Führer*, terror, and fear. Other examples of indoctrinating teaching strategies can also be found in textbooks. For example, children were already confronted with National Socialist role attributions in the first school year when they were instructed on how to count: gender-differentiated, the textbook pages illustrated the first numbers with tanks and soldiers for boys on the one hand and with dolls and cradles for the girls on the other, completely in line with Nazi ideology (cf. Link 2011, 97). In the seventh and eighth school years, students were given the following tasks, among others, in arithmetic lessons under the heading "The hereditary defective burden and endanger a nation."

> 6. At the expense of the district and state welfare associations, the following were housed in 1936: in mental asylums, etc.: 209032; in institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, and crippled: 37628. The number of board days in 1936 for both was 60530575. a) Calculate the total number of insane, blind, deaf and dumb, and crippled! b) Assume the daily cost of living to be RM 4.50! What then is the annual expenditure of the district and state welfare associations? (Rechenbuch für Volksschulen. Heft VII. Siebtes und achtes Schuljahr. Von Franz Siegfriede Hermann Schroedel Vlg., Halle a. d. Saale; quoted in: Arbeitsgruppe Pädagogisches Museum 1983, 111).

The political message and the racist background of such tasks are so obvious that an interpretation is unnecessary. The concurrence of ideologization or politicization of the topics as well as of tasks and requirements traditional for arithmetic lessons, which is evident here, is also

characteristic of German textbooks, for example. Unfortunately, there are no sources available so far that could clarify for us how individual students worked with these materials and what effects such assignments had. Interestingly, contemporary witnesses sometimes do not remember such clear ideologizations at all (cf. Link 1999, chap. 3.1).

Similar ideologizations of lessons have also been handed down from secondary schools. They manifest themselves, among other things, in *Abitur* essays on topics such as "What did Hitler do for the German people?" or "What is the basis of leadership?" or "We are helping to build the new Reich!" or "The army as the school of the *Volksgemeinschaft*" (Sauer 2012; see also Keim 1997; Kemnitz and Tosch 2011).

However, there are also didactically and methodologically more demanding examples of teaching during the Nazi era. As already mentioned, according to the 1939 guidelines, instruction at *Volksschule* was to be "true to life" at all levels. An evaluated teaching report from the 1937/38 school year of the Horst Wessel School in Marburg illustrates how this closeness to life could be realized in teaching:

> At the beginning of May, school beginners were first introduced to Nazi ideology through the primer. In class they talked about the 'experiences of May Day, the parade, street decorations.' In the same way, 'the flag' was drawn. A little later in reading and writing the "H" was on the lesson plan [...]. The teaching report notes as lesson contents: How to greet on the street. Heil Hitler on the *Weidenhäuser* Bridge'. In other respects, too, the children's experiences were skillfully taken into account. At the beginning of September 1937, there were obviously more soldiers than usual on the streets of Marburg. That is why in the lessons of the first school year they covered: Soldiers go on maneuvers. Children tell what they saw. Writing: What's going on? There are cars with soldiers. At the same time, the children drew 'car, soldiers, field kitchen' and sang the song that naturally seemed fitting: 'When the soldiers march through the city' (Schmitt 1985, 194-198).

From a didactic-methodological point of view, it is striking in this example how living environment-oriented learning strategies originating progressive education were linked with National Socialist content. Such didactic arrangements can be found many times in the sources from the Nazi period. They are not isolated incidents, and the examples could be expanded almost at will. However, I would like to add just one more example here.

> In Winningen [near the Moselle] we once made a real radio system in physics class. It was to be tried out by transmitting a few sentences from the transmitting room to the receiving room. The lesson imperceptibly became elocution training and remained so for a while in German lessons. We set up a real speaking competition and received the liveliest reports of events on the street, at the river, of soccer games. One group got together and wrote a "Happy Saturday Afternoon" with all the trimmings. Others retold old Winningen anecdotes. In class, all of these performances would never have happened. When one of the timid classmates returned from the speech cell after a good performance, we did not hold back with cheering praise, and this benefited the person himself (Kircher, 1938, 38).

In this recollection of a lesson, completely different things immediately stand out than in the proceeding examples: interdisciplinary project lessons, group work, topics connected to their environment that were obviously worked on with joy, individual achievements that were integrated

into the school community, praise and support instead of pressure and discipline. This, too, was National Socialist *Volksschule* teaching. Of course, this particular teacher reporting from his lessons was not critical of the system, such as Adolf Reichwein, from whom comparable examples of lessons have survived (cf. Link 2006, 2011; Hohmann 2007). The reporting teacher – Wilhelm Kircher (1898-1968) – was even head of the *Volksschule* section of the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund* (National Socialist Teachers' Association, abbreviated NSLB) starting in 1941 and one of the most publicized functionaries of this association, to which 97 % of all teachers belonged. Before 1933, Kircher was an internationally active and well-known countryside school reformer. As a didactically and methodologically creative teacher, he pushed for a progressive education countryside school reform in the New Education Fellowship, among other organizations, and had no affiliation with National Socialism until 1933 (Link 1999).

Apparently, the reality of National Socialist school teaching was more diverse than could be expected against the background of the totalitarian aspirations of the National Socialists. Educational and didactic trends from the Weimar Republic as modern education approaches were evident at the micro level of teaching in the form of progressive educational teaching-learning arrangements in the Nazi era as well; primarily in (rural) *Volksschule*, but also in isolated cases in secondary schools, for example when chemistry lessons for girls experimentally became "kitchen chemistry", which was supposedly closer to their expected activities as housewives and mothers later in life (Kemnitz and Tosch 2011, 131).

The examples cited show the range of National Socialist school instruction between obtuse physical abuse education, which already existed before 1933 and even after 1945, on the one hand, and didactic-methodologically sophisticated learning structures on the other. It takes away from the historical realities if it is claimed that "Nazi ideologemes and slogans were instilled through constant repetition and memorization to the point of eventual internalization" (Amlung 1991, 332). Therefore, Wolfgang Keim can only be agreed with when he points out that one must be careful not to "identify Nazi instruction orientation from the outset with a lack of ambitions and demanding content" (Keim 1997, 51). This was demonstrated by the proffered examples. Reports about morning roll calls, Hitler salutes, marches, and National Socialist ceremonies have survived, as have reports about didactically and methodologically diverse lessons, which, however, also illustrate a clear ideologization and politicization of classroom instruction.

4. Conclusion

The preceding remarks have made clear the measures with which the Nazi regime attempted to translate the premises of racist ideology described at the outset and its political goals

derived from them into practices of a formative education. In summary, the Hitler Youth was a youth organization of ambivalences. This was less true of its youth-political orientation – the *Reich* youth leadership devotedly followed the *Führer* Adolf Hitler and his political guidelines. It did apply in two respects: first, to the contradictions that arose with some consistency between the program and the practical implementation thereof; second, to its retrospective educational-historical assessment. The gray areas of coverage have already been pointed out. The contradictions in this regard were also evident in the fact that adolescents who were categorized by the regime as Jewish "half-breeds" were "required to serve," despite all formal regulations, and the evaluation of an allegedly "Jewish" appearance determined whether the persons in question experienced appropriation or exclusion (Benecke 2015, 144). Other ambivalences have also been pointed out. For example, it depended on the time of membership in the HJ whether one could experience it as an adventure entered into voluntarily (first phase) or as a potentially life-threatening coercive measure due to active wartime service (last phase) (Benecke 2013, 27). Ultimately, in a manner typical of Nazi education as a whole, the HJ program was characterized by the strategy of a synergetic interplay of seduction (propaganda, emotional attachment through aesthetic elements, but also through the assignment of leadership tasks) and control (attempt at complete inclusion, sanctions for noncompliance, control of behavior through the HJ "patrol service," among other things). In all of this, the normative judgment of the *Reich* youth leadership is clearly negative – with the reference to the surrender of all educational responsibility to the primacy of the political, the central justification has already been named. In contrast, the effort to systematically categorize the HJ once again leads to ambivalences. While the HJ – supported by propaganda, social pressure and increasing sanctions for withdrawal – generated membership quotas that in the history of youth organizations in Germany were only approached (Benecke 2020) by the "Free German Youth" (*Freie Deutsche Jugend,* abbreviated FDJ) of the later GDR (Benecke 2022b), it failed to realize the central youth policy goals of the regime (full integration of the offspring of the *Volksgemeinschaft*). In this latter sense, measured against its own expectations, one can even speak of a failure of the HJ (Benecke 2015; Postert 2021). Nonetheless, the youth was enveloped to an extent that can hardly be compared to any other social group. This system perspective, however, should not be confused with the multi-layered and differently perceived educational realities during the Nazi era (Rosenbaum 2014).

The educational-historical analysis of the institution of school during the Nazi period also requires some differentiation. In the encyclopedia article cited at the beginning, alleged ideological and program deviations are stated for the period after the historical-political turning point of 1933. Research on schools and classroom instruction during the Nazi period shows that such deviations

undoubtedly existed. At the micro level of school realities, however, there were at the same time continuities with longer-term trends of external and internal school development. The attempt at a complete political formation superimposed the requirements of traditional school and teaching development but did not replace them.

On the level of standardized demands, uniformity, politicization and ideologization of (elementary) schools are evident. By approaching the multifaceted and quite heterogeneous level of educational realities in everyday school life, correspondences to these claims can be found as well as differences and deviations. It was the inherent rationale of classroom instruction and the inherent laws of traditional school qualification and development processes that broke through these attempts at ideologization. In this context, one often reads in the literature about indoctrination. Nevertheless, it does not seem to have been clarified so far how indoctrination actually functioned in schools or through instruction, what part subject instruction played in it, and what longer-term effects were associated with it (cf. Tenorth 1995). The examples given show how specialized instruction (e.g., arithmetic) could simultaneously indoctrinate and promote classical school skills. The limits of school indoctrination became clear at the latest when it came to learning, which as an individual process can only be influenced from the outside to a limited extent. This is made clear by surviving sources from everyday classroom life and eyewitness accounts. The history of the school under National Socialism shows both the political formation and the traditional continuity of school tasks. The effects of (elementary) school education under National Socialism were probably no greater or lesser than the effects of schools in non-totalitarian societies, despite totalitarian tendencies toward standardization.

This article summarizes programs and practices of National Socialist education that can be observed in their communitarian forms and practices in other totalitarian systems as well. This is true for fascist systems and socialist ones alike. From a research perspective, this opens up possibilities for comparative studies that, on the one hand, elaborate the system-specific and, on the other hand, examine intersections and differences in concepts and practices. In Germany alone, the practical educational conditions of the FDJ in the GDR show clear parallels to forms of National Socialist formation education; however, there were massive differences in the cooperation between school and HJ or FDJ (Benecke 2022b). If one extends the perspective to, for example, fascist Italy and Francoist Spain, one notices, among other things, that the Catholic Church played a completely different role in the established educational relationships than in Nazi Germany, while the forms of educational practices show great overlaps. Such comparative studies have been scarce (Morant 2013; Ponzio 2015; McLean 2018, Williams 1994). Overall, the field of comparative studies on youth politics, including youth organizations, in the ideocracies of the 20th century can be seen

as a persistent desideratum of research on the history of education (Postert 2015, p. 171). In addition to studies such as the one by Schleimer, which offers a comparative reflection on youth organizations in fascist Italy and the Hitler Youth (Schleimer 2004), it would be possible to broaden one's perspective to fascist youth organizations. If that were the case, analyses would also come to pass which compare, for example, the Hitler Youth and/or the FDJ with the "Frente de Juventudes" of the Spanish Franco dictatorship or the little-researched Portuguese "Mocidade Portuguesa" of the "Estado Novo". Finally, broadening the perspective even further to include totalitarian regimes in general, could allow for a comparison with the communist youth organizations in the Eastern Bloc countries (Postert 2015, p. 175). They all could reveal "specifics, differences, or structural commonalities of political systems" (ibid.) – while facing analytical challenges throughout, as is the case for comparative studies in general. The reason for the challenges of such comparative studies is a seemingly paradoxical task:

1) On the one hand, it is necessary to reduce complexity and to relate only structural elements that fit together. Such a focusing of certain partial structures avoids the erroneous belief that one can compare phenomena in their "multilayered totality" (Haupt/Kocka 1996, p. 23). A fit, on the other hand, can be derived roughly from the same task, such as the formation of youth in the corresponding mass organizations (Dudek 1999, p. 180). The object of the comparison would then be the strategies of implementation as well as their effects. Of course, the assumed fit may prove to be limited or even non-existent in the results of the analyses. Thus, it can only be seen as a starting point for comparative analyses, but not as their endgame (Buddrus 1996, p. 68).

2) On the other hand, a valid assessment of both substructures to be compared requires consideration of the specifics of the respective political and social contexts in which they were embedded. This analytical challenge ultimately leads to corresponding studies, subscribing to the fundamental thesis that the Nazi state and the GDR or other totalitarian systems "were dictatorships" (Matthes 1996, p. 26; in this sense also Buddrus 1996, p. 59), often neglect one or the other side of their comparison or neglect the comparison itself. This also applies to the only comparative study to date that relates HJ and youth organizations of fascist Italy (Schleimer 2004).

Overall, it can be stated that analyses of conditions in other, politically similarly constituted contexts (dictatorships or totalitarian systems in general) can sharpen the view for lines of continuity in the history of education.

The "education for the Führer's people" – as formulated for the National Socialist *Volksschule* (Kircher 1941) – had an inside and outside perspective. Inwardly, it was about educating a generation that was loyal to its leader. Looking outward, it was about educating a people that would assume the racially based leadership role in the 'new Europe' (cf. Morant i Ariño 2015). With

regard to public schools, this double intention remained an omnipotence fantasy of totalitarian ideologues, because it overestimated the possibilities of schools beyond measure. In this respect, it was only consistent for the National Socialists to place the emphasis of the formation of educational work not on the inert public school system but on specially founded elite schools and even more so on the directly controllable extracurricular work of the Hitler Youth.

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