

How do pupils experience a school inspection?

**How do pupils experience a school inspection?**

**An insight into the reality of a school inspection tool**

**REPORT**

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### **Abstract**

Previous research on external school development instruments such as a school inspection only marginally addresses the importance of the self-representation dimension and its manifestations. Consequently, this aspect of social reality has not yet been systematically incorporated into the theory of school development. From critical perspectives on school development instruments, however, it is consistently concluded that self-representation and even deception must necessarily take place in this context. The present research exemplarily explore the behavior and experience of people in an external test situation. The chosen approach explores pupils' perspective on school inspection (study 1: interviews; study 2: written survey; study 3: experiment). We try to get clues about the actual behavior of schools with regard to a school inspection as a significant school development tool to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social processes. An understanding of the self-representation dimension can differentiate previous research results in this area and, in the long term, processes could be designed to make school inspections more congruent with reality. This could also benefit the modalities of other external inspection procedures.

**Keywords.** Self-presentation, deception, school inspection, perspective of pupils, social processes

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## **Introduction**

The way other people look at themselves or groups is a central social-psychological issue that is dealt with in traditional theories such as Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934), Self-Awareness Theory (Duval & Silvia, 2009) and Self-Presentation Theories (Goffman, 1986; Mummendey, 2002). The presence of other people influences behavior because the external view of oneself is taken into account, especially in performance-related contexts (Markus, 1978). In public situations people seem to tend to present themselves in a positive light in order to at least maintain, if not improve, their self-esteem and image (Brenner & De Lamater, 2016).

The fundamental insight that the self-directed reflection of the individual influences his or her experience and behavior by activating external views and standards is a starting point for the present research. From here, we look at an external inspection situation, as it takes place internationally on a daily basis, namely a school inspection. From a social-psychological perspective, a school inspection is a complex social situation, which is constituted both by the official reports and official behavior of the people inspected (which embody the official standards), and by various other hidden realities (which can be assumed on social-psychological grounds). These hidden realities will be explored in the present research.

In the following, the official and covert dimensions of reality are presented, as represented by the current state of research.

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### **Central topics and research perspectives on school inspections as external testing and control instruments: The official reality dimension**

Central topics of research on school inspection are their desired and undesired effects, the possibilities of influencing the persons involved in order to achieve desired effects and the reflection of school inspections as a control instrument.

The contributions on these topics are dealt with from diverging approaches. These can be subdivided into affirmative and critical, in a simplified way. In this context, an affirmative approach means that external audit procedures are generally regarded as profitable. Critical means that the way in which they are conducted is judged to be in need of improvement. This subdivision is simplistic because both the affirmative and critical perspectives on school inspections contain different degrees of affirmation or criticism, which are referred to as (1) critical-affirmative (Bitan, Haep & Steins, 2015; De Wolf & Janssens, 2007), i.e. in principle, external audit procedures are affirmed, but considered to be in need of improvement, (2) uncritical-affirmative (Schweinberger & Quesel, 2018), i.e. in principle, external audit procedures are affirmed and also found to be good in their present form; (3) fundamentally negative (Ball, 1993, 2003, 2015) and (4) negative-constructive (Biesta, 2010), i.e., external test procedures are rejected, but alternative forms are conceivable.

Research described as uncritical-affirmative addresses the optimization of the desired effects of school inspections and the minimization of undesired effects. In this context, particular attention is paid to variables such as accountability and pressure (Altrichter & Kemethofer, 2015; Ehren & Visscher, 2008). The premise of this research is that external evaluations are inevitable in order to influence the educational system in a supra-societal way and to develop it positively. Critical positions within the affirmative research approach examine the possible measures to increase the acceptance of school inspections, such as through more transparent information of schools and more participation of the teaching staff,

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and critically address the one-sided interpretation of criticism of school inspections as resistance to external evaluation procedures (Steins, Behravan & Behnke, 2020).

From a negative position, school inspections are seen as a neoliberal instrument of power within the framework of larger societal transformation processes, with which schools and other educational institutions are attempted to adapt to the laws of the education market through undemocratic and non-transparent processes (Ball, 2003; 2015; Shore & Wright, 2015). Teachers, in particular, would be faced with moral dilemmas as a result of accountability as required by school inspections, but also by other evaluation procedures (Gurova & Piattoeva, 2018; Oliveira, 2018), since their actual professional goals would be subordinated to education market policy goals (Hardy & Lewis, 2017). As a result, schools would lose sight of their actual "telos", the education of pupils to maturity (Biesta, 2010: 209), as long as this goal is not operationalized by inspection criteria or is not reflected in them.

**Subjective perspectives included in the previous research.** Research on school inspections often involves the group of principals. Principals react differently to school inspections; the range reflects the approaches from negative to affirmative (Behnke & Steins, 2017). However, they generally respond to school inspections with less stress and strain symptoms than teachers (Brimblecombe, Ormston & Shaw, 1995). The group of teachers is also increasingly being taken into account in research on school inspections (Schweinberger & Quesel, 2018; Steins, Behravan & Behnke, 2020).

There is very little reliable evidence on the effectiveness or evaluation of school inspections from the perspective of those who carry out school inspections, i.e. from the perspective of the school inspectors themselves (Fletcher, 1982; Hargreaves, 1990).

The pupils' perspective on school inspections plays an even smaller role in research. At best, the changes in pupils' performance are investigated in relation to the time before and

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after school inspection. School inspections very often do not succeed in bringing about performance improvements in pupils, although this is certainly one of the aims of school inspections. However, there are also a few findings to the contrary (Pietsch & Mohr, 2014; Luginbuhl, Webbink & de Wolf, 2009). Pietsch et al. (2014) suggest that effects of performance improvement are related to different contextual conditions and intra-school information processing. The overall result is striking that, on the one hand, school development tools are now globally widespread and used, and that much research is also being done on increasing effectiveness, but that precisely this effectiveness is weak to non-existent, despite a fundamentally positive attitude towards change processes on the part of schools (Gärtner, Wurster and Pant, 2014).

Previous research efforts in this field have thus focused on the attitudes of adult participants and externally observed improvements in pupil performance. However, the direct experience and behavior of the pupils themselves in relation to the events is not taken into account. Research shows that children and adolescents actively perceive and participate in shaping their environment, but due to asymmetric power structures their voice is often not heard or is ignored (Baroutsis, Mils, McGregor, te Riele, & Hayes, 2016; Christensen, & Prout, 2002; Cremin, Mason, & Busher, 2011; Prout, 2002; Wood, 2003). It can be assumed that pupils have their own view of school inspections. This is where our research comes in.

**Own research on school inspections.** A central question of our studies concerned the acceptance of school inspection by school administrations and teachers and the possibilities of increasing its acceptance. Our previous research shows that the acceptance increased over time (Behnke & Steins, 2017; Bitan, Haep & Steins, 2015; Haep, Behnke, & Steins, 2016; Steins, Behravan, & Behnke, 2020). However, this assessment is based on self-reports: Since the introduction of QA (in the federal state NRW, Germany, a new form of school inspection is named Quality Analysis), school administrations in particular have been more inclined to

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use this external evaluation structure to legitimize their own goals (Behnke & Steins, 2017).

However, a study with teachers showed that they are ambivalent about QA while at the same time showing a positive interest in school development processes (Steins, Behravan, & Behnke, 2020). The increase in participatory shares in QA increases acceptance among school administrators and actively participating teachers, but not among the majority of teachers.

From our previous results we increasingly felt the need to investigate school inspections as a social situation in order to understand the behavior of the groups of people involved. For apart from the results published so far by our working group, there were many indications of at least two levels considering school inspection that had not been systematically investigated so far and that might be related to the low effects of school inspections.

One level is that of the perceived mismatch of school inspection procedures with school reality: Here, in the course of our research, extensive material has been collected through interviews with school administrators and teachers, which contains many indications of a mismatch. This is also pointed out, for example, by Biesta (2010) and Ball (2015). The other level, which is the concern of the present study, is the deception of the school inspectors indicated by irrelevant sounding remarks of teachers and school administrators.

### **Deception as a secondary theme in own preliminary work and in research: The unofficial (covert) dimension of reality**

In the results of our research, the subject of deception repeatedly appeared. School administrators mentioned in interviews attempts to deceive other schools. Terms such as "theatre", "show" etc. were usually used for this (Behnke & Steins, 2017). Deception was only

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included as an indirect topic and, as it had not been the central object of research until then, it was not pursued further as a separate issue.

Critical perspectives on external school control instruments describe pointedly positive self-presentation up to and including disguise as a social fact logically arising from a control system, which is imperative for teachers and school administrators. This is concluded in the same way from the perspective of systems theory (Kieserling, 2012), from the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Estes & Edmonds, 1981) and also from the perspective of organizational psychology (Weick, 1995). Self-representation up to disguise in the context of external test situations is thus an ubiquitous process in the sense of identity preservation, caused by an external view of oneself.

Deception as a stronger variant of pretence may also be a structurally compelling effect of situations such as an external test situation. Baudrillard's term simulacra express this idea (Baudrillard, 1994). According to this, in situations in which strategies supposedly pay off more than authenticity, signs of social reality, i.e. symbols, no longer represent reality, but reality is replaced by signs of strategic reality. In these contexts, symbols are thus determined by strategies. This in turn legitimizes the strategic reality. Thus, where control over external control instruments is sought, a hyper-reality, a simplified reality emerges, which takes strategic aspects into account but does not represent reality. Self-representation and other degrees of disguise become deception, creating an illusion (Grandy & Mills, 2004).

In order to serve hyper-reality on the one hand, but also reality on the other, dilemmas, overloads and second-order activities arise for school administrators and teachers (Baudrillard, 1994), which have little in common with the actual job-related activities. The simulation of adaptation to given performance criteria due to a "fetishisation" of school performance data (Hardy & Lewis, 2017: 683) leads to a double thinking, which, according to the authors mentioned, in analogy to Orwell's "1984", combines contradictory attitudes, i.e. on



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the one hand an adaptation to accountability criteria as a status symbol and on the other hand the knowledge that learning and the needs of the pupils are not necessarily related to this. In analogy to this "performativity" (Hardy & Lewis, 2017: 672), Lingard and Sellar (2013) speak of the performance of achievement associated with intentional games (deception). This dilemma for teachers is described by Ball (2003) by a so-called institutional schizophrenia, according to which performance criteria would be officially relevant, but these have nothing to do with pedagogical and professional content, i.e. good practice and the needs of the pupils. Ball provocatively juxtaposes the soul of the teacher, i.e. the deeply internalized understanding of good practice, with the terror of performativity, i.e. externally prescribed criteria of good practice. Ball therefore sees schools systematically forced to manage their performance, so that examination situations become real spectacles that reflect nothing more than a cynical adaptation to external ideas of good practice (Ball, 2015). According to Ball's argumentation, school inspections can be classified precisely as an instrument of "performativity" and thus would encourage deception, simulation and the playing of games (Shore & Wright, 2015).

These critical analyses indicate that school inspection could in a sense be understood as a strong situation in the sense of Mischel (1977), which also tempts actually conscientious people to deceptive behavior (Kleinlogel, Dietz, & Antonakis, 2018). In addition to misrepresentation and self-portrayal as an ubiquitous phenomenon, external test procedures would thus make probable another, stronger and more systematic type of misrepresentation, namely deception.

While school inspections may well involve sanctions, this is not the case in Germany, the QA NRW is one of the rather softer procedures (Altrichter et al., 2015). Subjectively, however, the situation is different for schools: Our preliminary work clearly shows that school

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inspections are seen at least ambivalently and, despite the lack of sanctions, are assessed as negative control (Steins, Behravan, & Behnke, 2020).

### **On the present research: considerations and objectives**

From various perspectives, it can therefore be assumed that deception is highly likely to occur in the context of school inspections. Completely unexplored here is the perspective of the pupils. Pupils are eyewitnesses of school inspections. They see how it is prepared, carried out and subsequently treated on site. All other witnesses have either incomplete information (the school inspectors) or a system-immanent interest in strategic impression management up to deception (school management and staff).

The question of the degree of reality of a school inspection is complex: self-representation in direct interaction can, as mentioned above, already be observed in everyday contexts. Formal, conference-like interaction contexts such as a QA, however, can probably be described as more extreme examples of social opportunities and lie at the limit of usual interaction situations (Goffman, 1986). On social occasions, rituals on both sides negotiate face-saving offers that include hypocrisy as a tact and have the effect that the "appearance of mutual recognition must not be discredited" (Goffman, 1986, p. 44). Goffman's analysis of interaction rituals forms an important basis for research into impression management tactics and strategies (Mummendey, 2002). In terms of content, this analysis ties in coherently with Symbolic Interactionism (Carter & Fuller, 2016). Here the individual is seen as autonomous, as an agent, creatively integrated into the social world.

From these perspectives, it is obvious that an official examination situation will bring up patterns of self-expression. Especially in face-to-face situations, individuals can successfully use behavioral strategies to cover up lies (Dwenger & Lohse, 2018), but also to

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protect their own identity (Baumeister, 1982; Brenner & De Lamater, 2016). The extent to which these deceptions take place in the context of a school inspection is largely unexplored, even though it is known that deception takes place here (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007).

Furthermore, it is still unexplored what it means when schools commit such deceptions that also involve the pupil body. Researching this question is relevant for us for several reasons. School is an important governmental institution that is supposed to support pupils on their way to maturity. The way a school deals with a school inspection can be seen as exemplary behavior for dealing with a state control instrument. Deception reduces the likelihood of enabling pupils to actively participate in processes that are important for their own everyday in school. However, it is precisely this involvement that is important for the development of democratic empowerment of children, young people and adolescents (Baroutsis et al., 2016).

To understand the relevance of the social situation of deception for pupils, research within the framework of Broken Window Theory is illustrative (Keizer, Lindenberg & Steg, 2008). These research results clearly show that norm violations in specific areas can not only lead to further norm violations in these areas, but that the norm of norm compliance itself is questioned, so that norm violations in general become more likely. The authors conclude that if a certain norm violation behavior becomes common, it will negatively affect the compliance for other standards and rules. Signs of inappropriate behavior lead to further inappropriate behavior, which in turn may lead to inhibition of other norms and weaken the implicit common social goal of behaving appropriately (Keizer et al., 2008, 1684). In particular, it can be assumed that when pupils experience the teachers as deceptive with whom they identify, pupils justify the teachers' behavior and are thus more likely to deceive themselves or justify similar actually unethical behavior in themselves. The own moral compass is adjusted to the perceived standards (Gino & Galinsky, 2012).

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The overall aim of the research is therefore to explore dimensions of reality beyond the official findings in order to approach the whole history of the use of external testing methods. These findings could help to make external testing procedures more appropriate to the social conditions.

The concrete aim of the research is therefore to explore the pupils experience with school inspection. The present research includes two interviews with pupils who report varying degrees of deception in their school in the context of a school inspection, ranging from a targeted positive self-presentation to the staging of an unreal situation (Study 1). The results of the interviews gave us clues for the application of a written survey with students retrospectively describing their experience with school inspection and pupils (Study 2). Finally, we conducted an experiment to investigate the effects of deception on one's own moral compass (Study 3).

The focus of the research aims at a first, deeper understanding of the pupils' perspectives. All persons involved in the investigations should have in common that they already had experience with school inspection. Since school inspection procedures differ both internationally and in Germany, and since our previous research has focused on QA NRW, the persons involved in the investigations should have specific experience with QA NRW in order to ensure a consistent context.

In order to achieve the research goal of an in-depth examination, a qualitative procedure is chosen in studies 1 and 2, which leaves (former) pupils as open as possible to their response behavior. The content-analytical evaluation of open answers is inductive. The validity of the investigation of the pupil perspective from study 1 is partially validated by means of quantitative assessments from study 2 and is deepened by means of experimental methods (study 3). The exact steps will be explained below for the respective investigations.

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## **Study 1**

### **Materials and Method of Study 1**

Methodologically, the planned interviews should take into account the fact (as with all self-reports, also and especially on retrospective events) that reconstructed memories are prone to errors and that this susceptibility to errors is increased by suggestive questions (Wise, Sartor & Safer, 2014; Mori, 2008). The interviews should therefore begin with an open narrative. Structured questions should be used to secure any necessary content, e.g. to address the consequences of the perceived deception if it were not addressed on its own.

Our research questions are: How do pupils experience a school inspection? What do they observe? How do they process the situation?

### **Sample**

Informally, pupils were asked about their experience with school inspection and made themselves available for an interview. Two people, a former pupil (20 years, high school, male; QA three years ago) and a female pupil (15 years, high school, female; QA one year ago) contacted the interviewer (female, 21 years).

### **Procedure**

The interviews were conducted individually by appointment; they were recorded with the help of a live scribe pen. Both interviews lasted 30 minutes. First, the background of the interview was explained and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. It was then clarified whether the school inspection had really been a quality analysis: Evidence for this is that there were visiting days that were relevant for the whole school. In preliminary talks it had turned out that pupils are not necessarily aware of the difference between the school inspection and the traineeship exams.

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In the interviews, as many open questions as possible were asked, but care was taken to ensure that the following key questions were taken up: (1) How did the interviewee experience the school inspection?, (2) What does the interviewee know about the experience of the school inspection by the classmates?, (3) How were the pupils informed by the school about the school inspection?, (4) Were there any changes before or after the school inspection?

The main aim of the interviews was to let all memories be told as unfiltered as possible. For this reason, a strict sequence of questions was dispensed with.

**Analysis of the interviews.** The interviews were fully transcribed and their contents were analyzed by two independent counsellors according to central themes. It is expected that the results will provide an insight into the pupils' perspective on school inspection in terms of their experience and evaluation of school inspection as a complex social situation. In the following the results will be presented thematically.

## **Results of Study 1**

### **Interview 1**

**Staging elements.** The interviewee notices that the teacher dresses differently than usual: "... and he put on a complete suit and said, no, now his bosses are coming and he wants to dress respectfully and then it was such a big happening."

The day of the class was announced and the lessons were prepared thematically. The pupil sees the goal in it to prepare also the pupils for a test situation and to change their behavior towards performance and participation: "The pupils and the teachers know in advance and have also announced what will be done on that day. (...) Once before, there was, yes, a little preparation, ... so that one was not quite thrown up when faced with a new topic. But that you had a little foreboding, maybe you could form your own opinion about it, so that the participation was probably very high. (...)."

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In sum, on this day he noticed only small significant differences in the appearance of the entire school and the classroom.

**Emotions of the interviewee and the classmates.** The interviewee expresses his own values about how he had to behave as a pupil and indirectly speaks for the other pupils. He felt morally obliged to support his teacher and also processes the view of himself and his fellow pupils through the school inspectors: "Yeah, well that thing is kind of, no matter how shitty the teacher is kind of, (...) But the atmosphere was really, everybody's trying really hard. Even if you were too lazy to get in touch, you got in touch a little bit more often that day. (...) not only for the sake of the teacher, but also for the person in the back, maybe to impress them or something. It was a bit special for the pupils, if someone else looked over the lessons."

**Perception of the teacher.** The interviewee emphasizes that his teacher would have shown sincere behavior in addition to the test situation. In retrospect, he appreciates this sincerity: "(...) I think he did the lessons normally. (...) so now in retrospect I find it very impressive that he said that I don't want to play for anyone here, that this is teaching, as I do it and I do it as usual."

**Change after the school inspection.** The interviewee reports that after the event, the teacher developed a feedback tool that he systematically used for pupils' feedback concerning his tendency to digress. As a result, other teachers also worked with feedback tools.

## **Interview 2**

**Information for pupils.** The pupils were informed by the school that a collective effort is now needed for QA. In order to avoid future efforts, they say, it is necessary to do particularly well now. "(The teachers) then said, I have to do the lesson this way, because they have such strict guidelines and they want it this way and group work, then we do it this lesson..."

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After the QA, the parents were briefly informed orally of the results at the parent-teacher conferences. The results were not communicated to the pupils. "Well, nothing was said. So (my mother) was at the parents' evening, where parents were informed, how well the school did, but we pupils were not told anything."

***Evaluation of the lack of information.*** This lack of feedback is evaluated negatively by the interviewee; she lacks an appreciation of the work done by the pupils:

"A bit silly. Because the parents have nothing to do with it, and we pupils were involved and noticed that, and then you would like to know somehow how it was and that was simply pushed away. As if nothing had happened, and I think many people have forgotten this, but I think it could have been mentioned anyway. Because it also has something to do with respect."

**Perception of the preparation of QA by the school.** The interviewee describes how she perceived the school's preparation for QA. She describes a series of instructions that the pupils received many weeks before QA, which were often rehearsed repeatedly and then carried out on the day of QA.

***Early announcement.*** "But we were just told that QA was coming. But it was also announced early, I think about four months in advance or something."

***Systematic practice.*** A series of repetitive and sequential preparatory activities were conducted in class. Some of these activities were related to the content preparation of the lesson, which was attended by the QA as expected:

"Well, we heard about it for the first time, and then it just kept coming up and then, at some point... (...) Yes, they really prepared themselves for it! They also partly took the lessons before, so that we know the material, exactly for this lesson. (...) And then it was always just a very small area that they addressed in the lesson and we didn't take



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too much out of it. (...) Well, she (the teacher) told us what we would do in the lesson. Which tasks approximately. That she gives us worksheets, that we should sit down in groups and then... we should work together calmly, we can also help each other... and she has given us similar tasks before ..."

The pupils were explicitly made accomplices: "Yes, and also, I think, yes, this orchestra rehearsal, they just came in and then we should give the teacher, the teacher who conducted it, a sign that they're sitting back there, and then we quickly played another piece, which we're good at."

Other activities related to methodological aspects of teaching: "I only heard from a friend of mine that they were practicing for a while how quickly they could move the tables around, every hour before. So that it just goes like clockwork. When they come in, they move all the tables very quickly, and then a whole new lesson suddenly, a completely different subject."

The pupils were repeatedly given explicit general rules of conduct for the time of the class visits. "Yes, the whole school made a lot of fuss about it. And we were also told to be quiet then. And, yes, not so with my teacher now, but with other teachers they also told us how to move the tables and... it was practiced properly. (...) But yes, we should behave then, so we make the perfect picture. They just said we should be more orderly."

***Arrangement of the surroundings.*** The environment was visibly arranged for the QA:

"The schoolyard was always cleaned up very thoroughly... The recreation room, which was renovated before... before that there were bugs and things."

***Explanations of the pupil for the preparation.*** The pupil sees the origin of these instructions in the ambitions of the school to perform brilliantly: "...they were simply told by

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the headmaster that this is the way things should be done. But they always want to be the best and that's kind of annoying.”

**The behavior of the teachers.** The interviewee differentiates between a teacher who she judges to be generally competent and sympathetic and other teachers who changed their teaching behavior for the inspection and increased their efforts: "So with this teacher, now, it was actually the same as always. That was also a very good teacher. But it was just very funny, because it was somehow a role reversal, because she was suddenly the inspected one, and totally excited, and we all noticed that. And because we liked this teacher, we were also well involved and so on. But from other teachers, where the QA just didn't come in, but where they thought they were coming in, they did completely different lessons, suddenly: group work, didn't read texts all the time, but also involved the pupils in conversation and so on, and divided them into several rooms, created posters... and otherwise we were just sitting in the classroom reading a text and were supposed to mark it and write the information out, that was just a very extreme contrast. (...) So there were also teachers, we also have bad teachers of course and they tried hardest. The lessons were completely different then. With her it was just fine."

**Emotions of the teacher.** The interviewee also reports aspects of emotional experience in the sense of emotional contagion between teachers and pupils: "She (the teacher) was very tense. That's funny, because this is somehow transferred to the class and... nobody knew exactly what was going to happen and then they got up and went around..."

**The pupil's interpretation of what she observed.** In the interview, there are a number of recurring statements that provide information on the interpretation of the experiences.

**The QA is a fake.** On the one hand, it becomes clear that the pupil has perceived the days as fake and evaluates this negatively. "Well, we all knew that this is not really the case,

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and the teachers sometimes gave completely different lessons than usual and followed these guidelines very closely. And so, yes, it was all a bit fake. Fake, yes. Depicted. (...) Because it's no use to me. It's not honest. And then the QA can't really see how it really is.”

***Doubts about the validity of her evaluation.*** The interviewee feels that her evaluation is not shared by all pupils. Others, she notes, seem to reflect the situation less and some are uncritical of the behavior of teachers and school. "So, I talked to a few people about it and a few people also found it funny how the school behaved, and yes, that we didn't like it that much, that the lessons were suddenly so completely different and only so that they could stick to the guidelines. But many people didn't even notice that and many also thought, yes, it's good when our school does so well, and that's what teachers have to do, and they're not allowed to do anything else, but... well, most of the pupils thought it was good. (...) but I just had a bit of a, yes, I saw it a bit critically, because I thought it was kind of dishonest and that's why QA doesn't say so much. (...) I don't think many people thought about it that much. Because, they just did it." (...)

***Conclusions.*** The interviewee also draws conclusions from the teachers' behavior about their attitude towards the lessons and the pupils. She feels that the teachers wrongly see the testing instrument or external actors as the addressee of their lessons and not the pupils. "... yes, it always seems as if the teachers are not doing it for us, but for the QA and that is somehow a bit sad. (...) One feels not taken so seriously, then when one realizes that the teachers don't do it for us, so that we have fun. (...) Yes, it just annoys me a bit. That the school has such a good reputation, yes, the school is not bad, but that you know how the school got it. The school would certainly have got it even without it. But... Maybe not so good. But that they always want to be the best, and that's annoying.”

***Changes after the school inspection.*** The pupil concludes that the teachers' attitude towards teaching is based on the teachers' behavior after QA: "Yes, so the general teaching of

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the teachers was just like before." (...) now with the worse teachers I had, everything was the same. And, yes. A bit frustrating, but we knew that. (...) And I think it always transfers to the pupils, if the teacher doesn't want to do it, the pupils often don't have so much fun and yes... then everything is just boring, like this, and I think it could be made more interesting in many areas and I think many pupils would then also be more interested and wouldn't give up so quickly. But, yes... somehow the teachers don't see it that way."

**Wish of the pupil.** The pupil would like an unannounced inspection, which she believes would be more honest. She connects this wish with the possibility that if QA could be done at any time without notice, the teachers would consider it their everyday task to give good lessons. "Yes. And, I think perhaps the attitude of the teachers would also change then. If they know that someone could come in, that they're somehow worried about how to deal with pupils, that it's becoming routine for them and then they don't have to be afraid anymore."

### Discussion of Study 1

Interview 1 shows that the interviewee has registered quite a lot as pupil. He was able to reconstruct the teacher's behavior in relation to the situation and the influence on his own behavior. The central theme is that the pupil felt morally obliged to cooperate better than usual. The pupil expresses it clearly that he appreciated that the teacher did not disguise himself in the teaching situation.

From the perspective of the interviewee 2, the school inspection on the day of the class visit turns out to be a deception that upsets the pupil, but also makes her sad and frustrated. She interprets the behavior of the teachers as disinterest towards the pupils and would like the teachers to give good lessons for the pupils and not to leave the school unjustifiably standing well. The deception of the school towards the inspectors is linked in her case to a feeling of senselessness and disrespect, particularly because bad teaching practices continued

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afterwards, even though the lessons had been better on the day of the visit. However, she doubts the appropriateness of her evaluation, as other classmates do not share it, but assumes that many classmates have not even thought about the situation.

Both pupils have witnessed how external testing procedures such as school inspections influence the behavior of the teaching staff. From the interviews it is clear that different degrees of deception are perceived and that these perceptions are processed differently. Both pupils participate in the teacher's emotions, see their excitement and share them in some way. Both pupils appreciate it when the school and the teacher remain undisguised in their encounters with their examiners: One interviewee emphasizes this positively because he perceived it that way, the other interviewee would have liked it because she experienced the school inspection as a deception.

The spectrum of encounters between inspectors and schools illustrated by these two cases is wide: relatively little staging at one school, which could be described as positive self-expression; a rehearsed staging at the other school, which already falls into the realm of deception and in which pupils are made accomplices to the deception without many of them seeming aware of it.

With regard to the exemplary role of a school in dealing with state authorities, the schools act different. One school points out good behavior to its pupils. The pupils are to a certain extent free to decide whether or not to follow this advice. The other school practices this good behavior in front of the school inspectors; the pupils are given an extra role and their commitment to play this role at the crucial moment is tacitly assumed. The effect on the pupil's emotions from Interview 2 are frustration, sadness, disappointment, combined with a clear desire for honesty. The fact that the pupil is not convinced that the majority of the pupils perceived the situation in this way, but that she might have had a special view of the situation,

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seems particularly important to us; she is left alone with the episode, especially since there was neither information nor discussion after the school inspection for and with the pupils.

Of course, an interview study with two retrospective interviews, as different as these cases are, can only provide two singular perspectives. Based on the findings of retrospective memory research, pupils will substantiate their memories of the school inspection event with personal evaluation patterns and perceive it differently shaped by these patterns (Mori, 2008): this is exactly how these two interviews are to be understood. However, in order to understand the significance of the disguise for the pupils, this subjective evaluation is of great interest. The deeper exploration associated with this enables an initial description of when a rule transgression is perceived and how it is morally evaluated and conceptualized (self-representation, maintaining identity, conventional behavior vs. deception, lying). We assume: In the first interview the school moves within the framework (self-presentation), in the second it falls out of it (deception).

In order to find clues for the generalizability of the emotions and evaluations found in the interviews, a questionnaire was designed, in which quotations from the two interviews were used.

## **Study 2**

### **Materials and Method of Study 2**

The questionnaire to be developed for Study 2 had two objectives: Firstly, the concrete perceptible experiences of the interview participants were to be validated. For this purpose, structured questions were presented to the questionnaire participants, separately before, during and after the quality analysis, and supplemented by open answer formats. Afterwards, the participants were given the opportunity to openly add any aspects they could think of in addition to the school inspection they had experienced. In a final part, the participants were

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presented with quotes from the interviews, which represented relevant experience of the interviewees of Study 1. The participants were asked to assess the appropriateness and comprehensibility of these experiences.

### **Recruitment and setting of the procedure**

The participants consisted of two groups: One half was approached via an internal university advertisement at the Institute of Psychology; here, the students (freshmen) came to the laboratory of the conducting research group in groups of maximum three persons as part of their psychology studies. The other half consisted of pupils of very different age groups who were approached via a university project (remedial teaching for children and young people with a migration background). These participants were also interviewed in a room at the university.

When recruiting the participants, it was emphasized that experience with school inspection was a prerequisite for participation.

The participation was rewarded: The pupils were able to credit 30 minutes of test person time for processing the questionnaire. They must have accumulated 20 hours of time before registering for the bachelor thesis, which is not a problem; the pupils were therefore not dependent on this study at all. After their participation, the pupils received a sweet as an appreciation of their efforts.

### **Sample**

A total of 20 participants took part in the written survey, 10 students of the first bachelor semester of psychology (bachelor) and 10 pupils of different types of schools. The participants were between 14 and 27 years old ( $M = 20.15$ ,  $SD = 3.87$ ) and 70% ( $f = 14$ ) of them were female and 30% ( $f = 6$ ) male pupils.

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Most participants had experienced a school inspection at a grammar school ( $f = 14$ , 70%), 20% ( $f = 4$ ) at a comprehensive school and one participant each at a secondary or primary school (5% each).

At the time of the school inspection, the participants were at very different stages of their school careers. During the school inspection, one person (5%) each was in levels 3, 5, 6 and 9 and 13 at his own school, and two persons (10%) each were in levels 7, 8, 10 and 12. Most persons ( $f = 6$ , 30%) were in level 11 at the time of the school inspection. One person did not give any information on this.

### **Procedure for the collection of data**

**Preparation.** Children and young people under 18 years of age were given a parental consent form beforehand. Only those who brought this signed could take part in the survey. The parents' declaration of consent also contained the information given to the pupils for informed consent.

***Informed Consent.*** Students were given informed consent, which had to be signed in order to continue participating in the study. In the informed consent, the participants were informed about the purpose of the survey and assured that the data would not be treated as personal and confidential. Since the questionnaire consisted of different parts, it was important for us to give the participants an overview of the structure. They were informed that six parts would follow. Finally, they were asked to give a sign whenever they were finished with one part, then the next part would follow. We found the successive processing of the parts relevant, because sometimes the questions were repeated for validation purposes, but mainly because we wanted to describe the experience specific to the phases. We were worried that paging back and forth here could possibly contribute to a blurring of memory or that the quotes from the interviews of Study 1 could influence the recall. After the informed consent was signed, the survey began. The six parts were successively issued or collected.



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### **The parts of the questionnaire**

In the following, the questionnaire is described chronologically, as it presented itself to the pupils and pupils. For most of the questions an open answer format was provided, for some, in addition, a 5-point scale.

*Before the QA.* It was asked whether special, i.e. not previously common, forms of teaching had been practiced. Thereupon a number of forms of instruction were mentioned, which could be ticked off several times and there was also the possibility of free naming. The question of whether concrete expectations were placed on the behavior of the pupils was supplemented by the fact that the expectations could be freely described. Furthermore, changes concerning the school building and the school grounds were asked for and with the help of some specifications, structured changes were queried which could be ticked several times and could be freely added. Afterwards the own expectations of the school inspection were could be freely concretized additionally. One question related to the extent of information provided by the school was answered with the help of a scale.

*During the QA.* The questions about the time during the QA refer explicitly to the experience of the school inspection during the visiting days. In order to recall the experience in concrete terms, the first question asked is whether at least one school inspector was in the classroom (Yes/No). It is then asked whether there were any signs agreed between teacher and pupils, which signaled to the pupils what was to be done (yes/no). In case of a yes-answer an open description of the signals was asked for.

*After the QA.* Various issues will be addressed for the period after the school inspection. The first complex relates to perceived changes that affect the classroom and individual teachers. For each of these entities it was possible to tick off whether there were any changes (yes/no) and in the case of yes, which changes these were or how these changes

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were assessed. Furthermore, the extent of information about the results was asked with help of a scale.

***Open comments.*** The fifth part of the questionnaire gave all participants the opportunity to make additional comments. The instruction read: "You can add to your personal experience; here we are interested in all your thoughts that you have outside of our previous questions about school inspection". Two blank pages were provided for this purpose.

***The assessment of the experience of other pupils.*** The participants were presented with three quotes from the two interviews. Quote 1 deals with the topic of solidarity with the teacher being inspected. The second quote deals with the topic of acting and the third quote reflects the pupil's disappointment about the low effectiveness and her interpretation of the teachers' lack of interest in the pupil. All three quotations were followed by a question, which could be answered with the help of a scale. For quote 1, the question was: "How right do you think it is for the pupils\* to make a special effort during a school inspection?"; for quote 2: "How right do you think it is for a school to prepare for a school inspection in this way?" (For both scales: 0 = "not right at all" to 4 = "just right"). Regarding quote 3, the question was asked about the appropriateness of the pupil's interpretation: "How appropriate do you find this interpretation?" (0 = "inappropriate", 4 = "appropriate"). Finally, the participants had space for comments on these quotations and were also explicitly asked about them.

***End.*** The survey ended with a thank-you for participation. The participants could also give their email address on a separate document in case they wanted to be informed about the results.

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## Results of Study 2

### Before the school inspection

Half of the participants indicate at least one form of instruction that has been practiced. Group work ( $f = 11$ , 55%) was mentioned most frequently, followed by partner work ( $f = 5$ , 25%) and teacher presentation ( $f = 4$ , 20%). The research-developing teaching was mentioned twice (10%).

14 participants reported in a free response format that concrete expectations were placed on their behavior. The topic of good behavior, which was mentioned by 9 participants in various concrete variations, is particularly frequent, namely as a general expectation (the literal quotations are now in brackets: generally good behavior, behave well, be good to these people when they come to class, behave "well", we should behave even better), as an order to be punctual (4 times mentioned), as an order to be tidy (especially today, bring all the material you need, tidy clothes (2 times mentioned), leave no dirt). An expectation that is also frequently mentioned (8 participants report this) is peace and quiet: be quiet, special peace and quiet, quiet in connection with classmates, quiet conversations in the group. Another frequently mentioned topic is concentrated cooperation, which is reported by 5 participants in these formulations: be/are attentive/cooperate, more concentrated and motivated in the lessons, participative, "more open" in connection with the lessons (more pointing out, etc.). 2 Participants also report on expectations regarding the level of cooperation, which is once called the requirement "to be smart", and which was controlled by the teacher: "exemplary answers. In most cases, the pupils who were very successful in class anyway were taken on." One participant reported that the pupils were given a forewarning and that this created a ripple effect: "Through the forewarning, one knew that teachers had certain expectations without explicitly naming them. Pupils were calmer, more focused and more motivated to participate in class."

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On average, the participants felt ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ) moderately informed (0 = “not at all” ( $f = 3$ , 15%), 1 = “a little” ( $f = 5$ , 25%), 2 = “moderate” ( $f = 6 = 30\%$ ), 3 = “fairly” ( $f = 3$ , 15%) and 4 = “extensively “ ( $f = 3$ , 15%).

Some changes to the school building or school grounds were made: 4 persons (20%) report renovations, 6 persons (30%) cleanings, 2 persons (10%) report new facilities and one person (5%) reports a converted facility, three persons (15%) report new decorations. 8 persons (40%) report rooms where changes have been made. Most often this happened in the classrooms (4 persons report) and corridors (3 persons report), chemical rooms, canteen, the whole building, facade, WC, schoolyard are mentioned rather rarely.

Prior to the school inspection, 13 participants formulated their expectations in a free format. 5 people expressed positive expectations regarding the improvement of teaching, which is partly assumed to be only short-term (exceptionally good teaching; the lessons are organized), but also seen as an opportunity (but I was aware of why this is done in order to improve teaching); two participants assume that there is less teaching on these days. Some statements (from 3 participants) focus on the possibilities of positive changes (possible changes in the school, ... but if something is very noticeable that needs to be changed, it will certainly have positive effects). One participant explicitly had no expectations, two participants expressed criticism ("I do not consider it useful if the school is changed positively on a certain day (day of school inspection), but there is no future, permanent change".) or a negative expectation ("I had no expectation because I knew that things would go on just as well afterwards as before".)

### **During the school inspection**

In 7 of the respondents (35%) no school inspectors were present in class, in 13 (65%) at least one school inspector was present in class.

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5 (25%) of the participants stated that there had been agreed signs between teacher and pupils, which signaled to the pupils what to do, 15 (75%) of the respondents denied this. All five participants made statements on this, from which the following agreed signals emerged: Certain words and hand signals, e.g. "Touch hands - signal for silence and attention".

### **After completing the school inspection**

No changes were perceived in relation to the school as a whole and the lessons by 85% of the respondents ( $f = 17$ ), nor in relation to individual teachers by 16 respondents (80%).

Two persons describe the following general changes: "More attention was paid to rubbish on the floor during breaks and in general", "Tables were placed differently". In class, the following changes are described by three participants: "The lessons were better planned and more varied. "More group work of this kind", "Group work". Especially the friendly behavior is emphasized in the changes of the teachers (by three participants: "Better teacher-pupil relationship -> more friendly interaction", "Some did their lessons better and were more friendly", "Teachers were suddenly pedagogues, friendly, helpful and balanced, motivated"). But the change to the old is also discussed: "They became "normal" again, made us aware of our "inappropriate behavior"").

On average, the respondents were informed a little about the results of the school inspection ( $M = 1.05$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; 0 ( $f = 10$ , 50%); 1 ( $f = 2$ , 10%); 2 ( $f = 6$ , 30%); 3 ( $f = 1$ , 5%); 4 ( $f = 1$ , 5%).

### **Open remarks concerning school inspection**

12 participants took the opportunity to freely write down their thoughts about the school inspection on a blank sheet of paper especially designed for this purpose. The answers of the participants were sorted by topic. All statements dealt with (1) thoughts on the effectiveness of the school inspection of 9 participants, (2) statements on information by the

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schools of 6 participants, (3) the effects of the situation on the own behavior of 5 participants, and (4) 3 persons expressed their attitudes to the school.

*Reflections on the effectiveness of school inspection.* Only one participant sees a positive change: "The school inspection has made it possible for the school to be changed. The building currently looks nicer than before. The school has a good reputation." The forthcoming school inspection was an occasion to make improvements to the building and the canteen; these changes are welcomed. However, 7 participants explicitly describe that nothing at all would have changed as a result of the school inspection (e.g. "As soon as school inspectors were gone, everyday life went on", "as nothing changed afterwards either", "during the QA I, like some other pupils, thought that something might change, but it did not"). The statements on this topic are complex in that the topic of deception - one participant calls it distortion (in German: Verfälschung) - is mentioned by 6 of the 8 people who commented on it in connection with effectiveness as a cause and/or symptom of the fact that nothing will change as a result of a school inspection. Examples of this are the following statements: "So, it was not a natural environment for school inspectors. The lessons were well thought out and exemplary prepared and delivered. I don't know how it is in the school system today, in our time it was not something that would and did lead to changes in the school." "Also, I think that this inspection shouldn't be made such a big deal about it, because everyone changes just for that period of time." "To me the school inspection seems pretty pointless, since I primarily saw the distortion that took place before and during a school inspection." "The QA as such I have rather negative memories, since the teacher's actions during the inspection were only there and only once. Group work still remained a rarity. Also, the results of the QA were not further openly presented to us. For us as pupils, the situation of QA was not special apart from the work in the classroom, since nothing changed afterwards either."

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***Effects of the situation on one's own behavior.*** The five participants who commented on this report that the overall situation, announcements or the teacher's nervousness had changed their own behavior and that of their fellow pupils in this situation: "The school inspection unconsciously puts pupils under pressure by making them show more of what they can do"; "nobody wanted to be negative - the pupils were more tense than usual, but also more respectful in dealing with others & the teacher".

***Attitudes towards school inspection.*** One in three people who have formulated their attitude towards school inspection expresses a neutral opinion. Another participant, who finds it basically positive that a school inspection takes place, would like it to take place twice a year. Another participant points out that the official announcement leads to falsified results and would therefore be pointless.

***Information about the school inspection.*** The six participants who commented on this report that the results were not communicated, nor was the purpose of the school inspection discussed in advance.

***The assessment of the experience of other pupils.*** On average, respondents tend to agree that pupils make a special effort during a school inspection; respondents do not agree that a school should practice the visiting day as shown in the example. Most pupils find the pupil's interpretation appropriate. 9 participants wrote down their thoughts on the submitted quotations of the pupils from the two interviews. 6 participants explicitly emphasize that they agree with the experiences formulated in the quotations. Either from their own experience (e.g. "I can confirm all quotations in the same way. I also felt that the teachers had prepared themselves extremely well for QA and not for the lessons themselves. As a pupil, one also had the impression that one had to participate in the lessons more often than usual"; "As a pupil, one noticed that the atmosphere changed. I can only agree with the quotations"; "I am of the same opinion that in these lessons everything is played out and does not reflect reality";

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"I agree with these quotations. Even if you didn't perceive it that way before, in QA you are in some way in solidarity with the teacher. Of course, it is useless if then a completely different lesson is given than usual); or because they heard it from others (e.g. "From friends of other schools I have also heard this more often and it is really not appropriate if teachers only make an effort because of an inspection and not otherwise").

***Response behavior of the participants.*** Only one participant in the study did not take advantage of the various opportunities to speak openly. All other participants made comments at least once on these occasions. Of the five people who expressed fewer opinions, four people described at least one experience indicating that they had been prepared for school inspection in a special and limited way. Only one person did not express any criticism or point to deception, but considered the school inspection to be a profitable experience because the canteen and other parts of the building were renovated.

## **Discussion of Study 2**

The response behavior of the participants shows that 19 out of 20 report openly and/or indicate through concrete individual experiences that they experienced the school inspection as a very selective and more or less prepared event for the occasion. A relevant result of the study is the confirmation of the insight gained in the interviews that pupils remain uninformed both before and after a school inspection. Pupils are more likely to be used for staging the moment after which one returns to the old, but they are not made familiar with a school inspection and are not shown how to handle such an inspection professionally.

In summary, it can be said that elements of different levels of deception in schools are used in the context of a school inspection under the eyes of the pupils. Study 3 represents a first experimental attempt to check whether deception in the context of a school inspection



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affects one's own moral compass and the consequences of experienced officially approved deceptions are addressed.

### Study 3

#### Materials and Method of Study 3

##### Sample, design and hypotheses

24 pupils of psychology ( $n = 22$ ) and applied cognitive and media sciences ( $n = 2$ ) participated in the survey. Of these, 20 persons stated that they were female and 4 persons male. On average, the participants were 25 years old ( $M = 24.88$ ;  $SD = 9.04$ ). The students randomly were assigned to two different conditions: They either read a justification of a principal who dealt honestly with school inspection (condition: honesty;  $n = 12$ ) or dishonestly (condition: dishonesty;  $n = 12$ ). Following this, all students were confronted with an immoral offer of the experimenter; it was measured if they accepted the offer or rejected it.

It is assumed that being confronted with deception (dishonesty) should lower the threshold for accepting a deception for own sake (accepting the immoral offer). Thus, we assumed that the students in the condition Honesty should reject more often the immoral offer, the students in the condition Dishonesty should more often accepted it.

##### Procedure

**Introduction.** The participants, who were able to register for the dates via a manual list and an online survey, came to the laboratory individually. Here they first received a declaration of consent and a short introduction to the subject matter, so that it could be ensured that all participants knew how a school inspection works in its main features.

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**Manipulation.** Afterwards, each person was given one of two field reports by a school director to read. These did not differ in the description of the school and its difficulties (comprehensive school with many pupils who have learning and regulation problems), but only in the reaction of the headmaster: his decision to deal with these problems honestly (condition honesty) or dishonestly (condition dishonesty) and how he justifies this approach: “When the school inspectorate registered, it was immediately clear to us in the college that we would not make a good impression: there is a lot of chaos in the classroom, the support services are not well accepted and the surroundings look rather rocky despite our efforts.” The dishonest conclusion is: “We told ourselves that these people from the ministry would have no understanding for our everyday life and its difficulties. They are totally out of touch. So why should we honestly show what difficulties we have and that we certainly make mistakes? They will not help us anyway. So, for the visiting days we pimped everything as good as we could and the pupils had exact instructions how to behave, which they mostly followed. Well, this decision worked out well; we got good evaluations and now we have peace of mind until the next time.”

The honest conclusion is: “We also have a good reputation to lose, which we have despite everything, but we told ourselves that we wanted to show the school inspectors the reality. Even if we won't get any good recommendations that could help us to improve, we won't be able to get them if we pretend. And we didn't want to involve the pupils in any deception, what would we show them? So, for the visiting days we did everything as well as we could, did everything as well as we could. Well, this decision proved to be a good one for us; we didn't get particularly good evaluations and our reputation certainly didn't get any better. But we got some good feedback and we know what we want to change.”

**Impression of the principal.** Once the participating person had read the report, he or she was given a short questionnaire. In this questionnaire demographic data was collected, (1)

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the person was asked to use a scale to rate the comprehensibility for the principal and then was asked in free formats to (2) choose own words to describe the principal's dealing with school inspection, (3) to describe how themselves would act in the same situation as a principal, (4) note own experiences with school inspection, (5) think about whether they were influenced by the way their school dealt with the school inspection and (6) describe the way the own school dealt with school inspection, especially with regard to the honesty of the experienced inspection.

***Deception and central dependent variable.*** Before the questionnaire was handed out, the participants were deceived. They were reminded of how much time the inspection was estimated to take (about 30 minutes) and were then asked by the experimenter whether she should write more time on the certificate of the test person hours. The spontaneous affirmation or denial of the offer was recorded. In order to comply with the Institute's specifications for the allocation of hours, only the time actually worked was, of course, in reality written down, regardless of the response behavior. All participants are dependent on a certain number of test person hours within the framework of their studies. They are given enough time for this so that nobody was dependent on the acceptance of the offer and there would be no need to accept it (cf. study 2). Basically, it is to be expected that the participants appreciate a dishonest handling of the inspection less and therefore evaluate it more negatively than an honest handling.

***Hypothesis.*** The central hypothesis of the experiment is that participants who have been assigned to the condition dishonesty are more likely to accept the offer of a fake test person certificate with an untruthful indication of the number of hours.

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### **Results of Study 3**

#### **Impression of the principal**

The school management was found to be comprehensible in the overall average across the conditions with  $M = 2.52$  ( $SD = 0.89$ ), whereby a value of 4 was described as "completely understandable", 3 as "quite understandable", 2 as "partly/partially", 1 as "rather not" and 0 as "not at all". In the condition honesty, the mean value was  $M = 3.08$  ( $SD = 0.67$ ), in the condition dishonesty it was  $M = 1.91$  ( $SD = 0.7$ ).

#### **Description of the principal's dealing with school inspection**

All persons communicate their impressions of the headmaster. 9 persons in the honesty condition describe him with a total of 30 positive characteristics or statements, but three persons also express a total of 8 negative characteristics/statements, so that 21 positive statements remain as a balance. From four persons a total of 6 terms are mentioned, which suggest that the headmaster is felt to be helpless.

3 persons in the condition Dishonesty name 4 positive attributions, but 11 persons name a total of 31 negative attributions, which makes a quite negative balance of 27 negative attributions. 5 persons in the condition Dishonesty name 12 ascriptions, which also show that they perceive this headmaster as helpless.

The ascriptions "helpless" were neither assessed as positive nor negative, but represent a category of their own.

#### **Description of how themselves would act in the same situation as a principal**

The central point is, if participants would do it similarly as the principal or would dissociate themselves from his behavior. There are 23 answers to this question, one person from the condition dishonesty did not answer this question.

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9 persons from the condition honesty think they would do it similarly. Seven of these persons give reasons for this, but only one person gives a reason that is not a repetition of the phrase that it is good to be honest; this person focuses on honesty to get feedback for actions that are good for the pupils. However, 6 persons find the principal, although they approve in principle of his honest behavior, too passive and negative and suggest that more should be done actively at school.

In the condition dishonesty four persons would do the same as the principal and two express understanding for the procedure. 7 persons dissociate themselves from it and point out the need to be honest, two of them emphasize this as a way to get support.

### **Own experiences with school inspection**

There are 16 answers, 6 participants of the condition honesty did not answer this question, as well as 2 participants of the condition dishonesty. 7 participants (condition honesty:  $f = 2$ ; dishonesty:  $f = 5$ ) emphasized that the school inspection was a show, the term fake was usually used for this. 2 participants reported that they had received no information at all, 12 little information. Only one pupil was active in the pupil council and reported that she had dealt with the situation in a decidedly honest way.

### **Being influenced by the way their school dealt with the school inspection.**

13 participants reported no influence of (fellow) pupils. 5 persons stated that they would suspect an influence, namely on the self-presentation on the part of the pupils and a tendency to deceive themselves. The remaining 13 participants saw no danger of having changed in the long term through the experience.

### **Honest or dishonest?**

In the condition honesty three persons clearly rejected the offer (25%) and two clearly accepted it (16.67%); in the condition dishonesty there is not one clear rejection of the offer

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and 9 persons (75%) clearly accepted it. 7 (58.33%) persons in the condition honesty answered so evasively that it can be interpreted neither as an acceptance nor as a rejection (ambivalent reaction); in the condition dishonesty there are 3 persons doing so (25%). The conditions differed significantly based on a Chi-square test ( $\chi^2 (df = 2) = 9.05, p < .01$ ).

6 persons in condition honesty left the responsibility for the decision to the experimenter (50%), and 9 did so in condition dishonesty (75%). There were frequent queries such as: "If that's possible?" The offer caused insecurity, which partly manifested itself in the search for a standard of comparison ("How did you handle it with other people?", "Are there also people who say no?") and in justifications ("I don't want to get something now for work not done", "What do I have to do for it?"). The insecurity was often not formulated, but only expressed through hesitation and facial expressions. In almost all cases, the test participants who rejected the offer also considered aloud whether the forgery was possible or permitted, but then came to the conclusion: "that would be cheating" (quote from one person).

### **Discussion of Study 3**

Assuming that most students are informed about what is allowed in test time documentation, the students tended to accept deception. There was a significant and visible difference in the frequency of acceptance of the offer between the conditions. Honesty does not seem to be a dominant behavioral tendency in the chosen situation. Nevertheless, the group of participants who had previously been confronted with the justification of dishonest behavior by a principal showed a stronger tendency to deceive themselves.

Only a small sample was tested, which meets the minimum requirements for a quantitative study. In order to be able to test the correlation and transfer it to pupil communities, a larger sample would have to be available, and the participants themselves should be pupils. In past studies on this topic it has proved difficult to reach pupils on a large scale for such a psychological survey if one wants to avoid going through the school staff,

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which could possibly influence the pupils in the run-up to the survey. If pupils were tested, it could be assumed that an effect would be (more) obvious, because for them the school management or the teachers are significant others. This would mean that the situation (in a field report or other form of presentation) would be more relevant to them and they would be more motivated to put themselves in the shoes of the school staff.

### **General Discussion**

The overall objective of the investigations was to explore dimensions of the reality of the use of external testing methods. We suspected that these findings could help to make procedures more appropriate to the social conditions. We approached this goal in this paper from the perspective of those who witnessed the inspection process: the (former) pupils which add up to an examined group of  $N = 46$  in this contribution.

Our results show that pupils regularly actively participate in deceptions towards the school inspectors and that this participation probably has consequences on the emotional level (frustration, disappointment), the cognitive level (loss of confidence) and the motivational level (demotivation). Pupils perceive how schools deal with state authorities and some of them come to the conclusion that announced visits are not very effective. Pupils are mostly not informed and involved and are not treated as persons on equal terms by their schools: This is clear from the schools' information policy. Pupils do not think it is appropriate to deceive inspectors. The fact that they want an announced school inspection also shows that they would like to see an open approach to errors and weaknesses.

The question of the existence of degrees of misrepresentation up to deception also implies the question of the degree of reality of the previous research. The vast majority of research perspectives on external school development instruments do not address the

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significance of the self-representation dimension and its shades and characteristics for the validity of results or the effects of deception. If schools are prone to deception, and this with a rather soft inspection procedure, it is likely that they will return to the old ways afterwards: This probably explains why the effects of school inspections are generally weak to undetectable.

The investigations have various methodological limitations. One central limitation is the lack of a comparison group, e.g. perception of school visits during a traineeship: Are comparable assessments made here in view of misalignment with comparable consequences for motivation and emotion? Since the situation of a classroom evaluation takes place in a training relationship and is only related to one person, not to a system, it can be assumed that the respondents react differently to such deceptions than in the case of a school inspection.

All studies examine only very small samples, so that no generalizing statements can be made here about the motivation for impression management. Whether there is a culture of deception, as Ball (2015) suggests, based on a situation perceived as contradictory, or the preservation of identity plays an important role (Baumeister, 1982), or the perceived competition with other schools justifies deception or loyalty with one's own college even reinforces the deception and lowers one's own moral compass (Gino & Bazerman 2016) cannot be answered at this point.

It may be more about what constructive ways of dealing are learned than what more destructive ways of dealing are experienced. Where there is deception, there is no constructive learning experience. Future experiments could take such a positive situation more into account, exploratory studies could also ask more about it.

We want to conclude this discussion with three provocative conclusions:



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1) Deception by schools vis-à-vis school inspections costs the taxpayer a great deal of money that is badly invested, because where lies are told, mistakes cannot be corrected and are obviously not necessarily corrected.

2. Pupils who witness the deception run the risk of being demoralized. Their moral compass will spin or be wrongly adjusted from the outset.

3. Schools that deceive do not fulfil their state mission - education for maturity.

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