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1. Introduction and objective

For decades, political judgement has been considered an important goal of civics lessons. Even back in 1968, Engelhardt found it necessary for political judgements to be subject to rational considerations. At the same time, he apparently came to the conclusion that „the most difficult problem for lessons was pupils forming judgements and discussing those judgements, which typically vary" (1968, 42). Rationality and difficulty are two terms often heard in philosophical discourse about political judgement in civics lessons (Massing 1997). Making political judgements is viewed as an essential ability for democracy, and in light of fake news and populism, arguing based on facts is once again being emphasised.

Because philosophical-normative expectations of political judgements remain vague and general, they are accepted by the community but subject to various interpretations. Weber's old differentiation between factual and value judgements is often cited in this context, but when it comes to political decisions, this distinction can be problematic. In politics, factual judgements can also include value judgements. Even though political judgements require previous knowledge of the facts, they usually also have normative reasoning behind them. The analytical lines are just as blurry between other categories of differentiation such as prejudices, prior judgements, comparative judgements, or descriptive and prescriptive judgements. How political judgements are different from those in language or biology lessons is also controversial.

Judgements are formed by weighing content and then taking a side. When judging moral, political, or literary content, the focus is always on discovering connections between aspects that were originally not related. In terms of content, judgements are first guided by knowledge competences in specific areas. Existing knowledge about a domain-specific area is the basis for drawing conclusions about other knowledge. Hilligen expanded on this and placed it within the didactic formula „see, evaluate, act" in his school textbook (Hilligen 1957). After making a knowledge-based judgement, the pupils are to describe what possibilities they have for acting. Political didactics are also expected to evoke

judgements that delve into the content of the matter being discussed (Wein-brenner 1997).

There are many different ideas about how to realise the objective and content of a political judgement in political didactics. In the following section, examples will be described. Based on this, we will show how difficult it is to determine the quality of a political judgement in terms of content analysis or from a philosophical perspective. Finally, the competence model for the ability to make political judgements is explained (Manzel/Weißeno 2017). In this contribution, political judgement is understood as a competence. Judgement competence is the ability to argue based on justifications, weigh the facts, and decide about political matters in a way that is correct from a factual perspective. This competence can be researched using empirical, systematic methods. In conclusion, the findings from two political didactics studies on political judgements are presented which reveal that quality is a problem in civics lessons.

2. Conceptualisations of political judgement in political didactics

Political judgement is described using various terms in political didactics. Some understand it as „attitude forming" with the call to political action, others believe it requires rationality and the consideration of facts and categories. Still others find it is necessary to create non-normative criteria that can be operationalised to assess the judgement.

The same terms repeatedly appear in discussions of political didactics. For example, Sutor (1971, 271) assumes a civics education that has both a rational and moral objective. He aims to combine insight and conscience as well as conscience and emotions in a „conscientious way of forming political judgements." The goal is to „discuss political problems in a factual way, and this means going through the process of information-gathering, analysis, explanation and even problem-solving." He also believes that rationality requires justifications and an examination of several different aspects of each issue. If rationality is to be exercised properly, however, then this criterion is rather vague. At any rate, it is not a criterion that can be easily operationalised.

Grosser (1977, 58 ff.) focuses judgement on the content of civics lessons, emphasising the degree of complexity in the judgement. It should be rational, free of contradictions, and consider the facts and interdependency of the decisions as well as the complexity of the decision-making process. Just as Hilligen, he believes the ability to make judgements is a prerequisite for political participation. Complexity

remains a vague criterion, however, that is linked to a description that is elaborated in some way but is not connected to the facts and values discussed in the lesson.

Massing (1995, 217 ff.) takes a closer look at the terms and calls for instructors to teach the standards of evaluation or criteria for making judgements in their lessons. The criteria are to be developed in relation to the respective content of each lesson. In civics lessons, knowledge and insights about fundamental values, institutional safeguarding, structures, and driving forces of political actions are to be considered in realistic ways. Individual judgements are then made in the space between the problem and the decision (problem-solving). His three criteria for justifying political judgements are rationality, efficiency, and legitimacy. Political measures are rational and efficient if the actor who is planning weighs purposes, means, and unintended consequences against one another, thereby finding an improved way to realise the goal. However, political decisions are also to be based on values. Value-based rationality corrects rationality based on purpose and can be considered part of the category of legitimacy. The pupils should therefore behave like responsible politicians and make their individual judgements in similar ways. The three categories serve as a heuristic way to find justifications.

Because Massing's judgement model only offers heuristics and does not set any requirements regarding content, the results are very diverse but also extremely difficult to predict. Pupils could arrive at their judgements e.g. simply from the perspective of their values/ideology, giving other categories only a secondary consideration. The assessment of a measure's legitimacy could include a subjective, prescriptive component and not necessarily a domain-specific content. One question that remains open is how the quality of a judgement can be assessed in a way that can be operationalised.

More recent political didactics contributions make a greater effort to describe the quality aspects of a political judgement with the terms described above. Schröder (2018) postulated a space of judgement, not defined in any more detail, which has a far-reaching influence on forming and conveying judgements. His most important quality characteristic for political judgement is a complex architecture for the justification. Girnus (2019) looks at the link between legitimacy and judgements/arguments. For her, evaluating arguments used in a public discourse of legitimation should be the focus. Agreeing on arguments brought forth means accepting certain political actions; a broad acceptance of political action is therefore subsumed into legitimacy.

A cursory look at previous political didactics suggestions has shown that judgements are linked to terms such as normativity, complexity, legitimacy, efficiency, rationality, problem-solving, contents, decisions, justifications, and par-

ticipation. The lesson contents of a political judgement are seldom emphasised because a separation is not often made between the levels of the political public and lesson topics. What has also not yet been clarified is how, despite their analytical efforts, the terms used can be operationalised for research and for giving marks at school. They do not allow for any form of systematic research because there is no underlying theory, and no connections are made with the international discourse on political judgements.

3. Theory of political judgement competence

There have been several attempts in political didactics to empirically capture political judgement competence based on the normative expectations described above. Even though there was a great deal of effort behind some of the studies, the findings were not particularly convincing because they were not designed systematically and were therefore interpreted based on the authors' preconceived ideas. The same also applies for the first competence models that were used for research in this area. Only after a great deal of experience in empirical praxis did Manzel and Weißeno (2017) develop a theoretical model (Figure 1) that is intended to mitigate the previous problems of operationalisation.
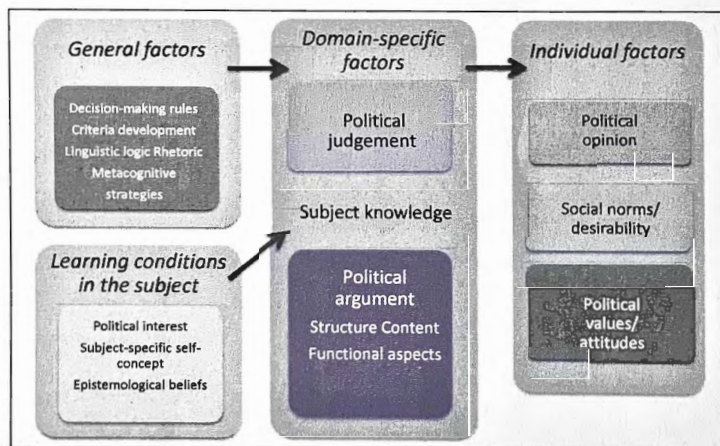
Figure 1: Model of the capacity for political judgement (Manzel/Weißeno 2017, 71)

The model of political judgement competence defines judgements in contrast to opinions as arguments, justifications, conclusions, evaluations, and decisions that are correct in terms of the factual subject matter. It postulates five levels of judgement that build on one another with increasing degrees of complexity. The argumentation competence is defined using competence theory in a manner specific to the context and thus related to content. This means that the respective political scientific terms and political concepts are to be applied when making a judgement about political issues depending on the situation.

In civics lessons, pupils are required to evaluate events occurring in the real, current political world. When doing so, they make individual decisions about specific situations. The learning is oriented on competences when they rely on facts for and against solutions. The facts must be weighed against one another and presented before then formulating an independent, justified position. In this problem-solving situation at school, complex connections among justifications arise due to the controversial evaluation of facts (cf. Gronostay 2014, 37 ff.). Gronostay focuses on oral arguments in the classroom in her studies. Spontaneous, creative opinions can be introduced in lesson discussions, but when a judgement is required that must be given in writing, pupils are not to state opinions but are instead to reflect on the facts and values taught in the lesson. As required by the curricula, the judgements can be marked based on their factual content. When completing these tasks, not all pupils are successful in formulating their own decision on the issue. The decision can be required to be given according to the 'Beutelsbach consensus', but the mark cannot be based on which position is defended in the decision (Weißeno 2017).

The 'complexity' of a judgement is to be determined according to the model of judgement competence by relying on the number of arguments/facts, counter-arguments, and the subsequent process of evaluating and weighing these. The complexity of the task is defined both by the amount of information and facts that need to be processed for the solution and by the connections among the information units. The model focuses on the connections made in the responses, which are used to describe the levels (Manzel/Weißeno 2017, 74 f.). The quality of a judgement is increased when the pupil weighs many different factors and possibilities in the course of the argument. This makes it possible to operationalise political judgement as a dependent, step-by-step cognitive process. It is then also possible to continue to work based on the level that was achieved. With this model, the quality can be measured descriptively (not normatively).

Besides the graduated aspects of judgement, the model accounts for the importance of political knowledge that must be processed in the judgements. The

theoretical model of political knowledge in the form of domain-specific concepts (Weißeno et al. 2010) thus exists. It has already been empirically validated numerous times. Pupils can apply the political terms included, a total of 30 concepts and around 220 related terms that can be used to understand and describe current political contexts. According to the model of political judgement competence, making judgements must always include elements of political knowledge. Using judgement competence in specific contexts relies on this knowledge.

Political judgement competence refers to finding solutions for tasks described in lessons with the help of the terms and concepts listed in the political knowledge model. Producing arguments and judgements therefore also represent one aspect of political knowledge, as specialist terminology is to be applied with the defined political terms. When making political judgements, these terms are used when applying general cognitive mental processes such as deductions or comparisons. The requirements arising from this can usually only be successfully met toward the end of the 10th grade.

Domain-specific judgements include political values such as freedom, equality, justice, peace, and sustainability. They are included as subject concepts in the model of political knowledge. These political values may be understood in different ways, but they are not completely open to interpretation. The space for interpretation that is valid in democracies is continually adapted to social reality by the judgments of the German Federal Constitutional Court, among other instances. Political values are therefore not only normative, but can also be defined along a subject area spectrum with the boundaries defined as right and wrong. This allows them to be differentiated from personal values.

It has been shown that the context-specific performance of judgement and argumentation can be described based on political scientific terms using subject knowledge. The structural model of the ability to make a judgement as presented above can serve to differentiate learners' absorption of political knowledge from other factors and from general knowledge. Measurement findings, which will be reported in the following section, offer initial empirical evidence for the structure assumed.

4. Empirical findings

Testing took place in 2015. The respondents were 401 pupils in years 11/12 at a *Gymnasium*. Nearly equal numbers of male and female pupils took part (49.9 %: 50.1 %). They were presented with a 45-minute test of judgement, consisting

of six text-based tasks describing open-ended political events/issues. The pupils were asked to adopt a personal position with regard to the issue, weighing up the arguments in an essay. The responses were coded once with the level of judgement achieved and once with multiple levels, enabling the use of various analytic methods.

A political knowledge test with forced-choice items was also used as a testing tool. The pupils received multiple-choice tasks with four possible responses, including one correct answer. The response data was coded dichotomously (correct/incorrect). Both testing tools were used at the start and end of the school year as part of a pre-post test design. Teachers were informed about the project objectives. To review the construct validity, measurement tools for basic cognitive abilities were also used. Basic cognitive abilities were measured using the IQB (Institute for Educational Quality Improvement) test for upper secondary level pupils from the state of Baden-Württemberg to measure fluid and crystalline intelligence (BEFKI) (Wilhelm/Schipolowski 2010). Participation in the study was voluntary for the pupils. The total duration of all the tests was 90 minutes. The test was conducted by trained test administrators in 27 classes.

First, the findings will be reported that were calculated based on a multilevel coding of the judgement test at the second time of measurement (Weißeno/Weißeno 2021). The judgement levels are assumed to be dependent upon one another here. This was used to measure judgement complexity. A higher level requires all previous tasks to have been solved. The test was scaled using a testlet model of the item response theory. The validity of the model is determined using the testlet model, by comparing the variances of the testlets with the total variance of the test. If there are higher variances on the testlets in comparison to the variance of the test as a whole, then the response processes within a testlet are dependent on one another. All testlets show significantly higher variances.

The EAP/PV reliability of .61 is low, due to the small number of testlets, the difficulty of the test, the size of the sample and the testlet model. However, the test was able to achieve a total variance of .78, which can be classified as good. Political subject knowledge had a latent correlation with judgement competence of r = .52, providing evidence of a correlation. The respondents' fluid intelligence had a correlation of r = .28 with political subject knowledge and r = .23 with judgement competence. As expected, political knowledge and the ability to make political judgements can be differentiated from basic cognitive abilities and measured validly with the test.

However, a large proportion of the pupils did not even reach level I, that is, they only made unjustified claims or did not relate their response to the question

posed in any way. In two testlets, over 60 % reached level I, and for the other four testlets the proportion was between 20 % and 45 %. The pupils did not achieve the required complexity, meaning that the test was too difficult for them.

Similar results were found when modelling independent judgement questions. Here, the change in one school year was analysed. Trained raters allocated the responses to the argumentation level achieved (interrater reliability $r_t = 0.91$). The pupils' political argumentation and judgement showed very little change, and it was not significant (in more detail, Schmidt forthcoming). Very few pupils reached the higher levels in argumentation. In both the pre-test and post-test, the majority of pupils reached levels zero or one. In contrast, the pupils' knowledge of subject concepts had minimally increased to a statistically significant degree. These findings show that competences in political argumentation and judgement do not improve equally even if basic conceptual knowledge increases.

5. Discussion

This contribution indicates that pupils can include factual assessments in their political judgements. However, only a small minority is able to do so. The question therefore arises as to whether this competence is effectively promoted in civics lessons. The theory-based study confirms the approach of using simpler criteria for the judgement levels and complexity of the structures described in these. One important finding is that the ability to make judgements correlates with political knowledge. Without subject knowledge, there can be no domain-specific judgements. It was shown that the desired requirements can be fulfilled in practice with the competence-theoretical model of judgements.

The findings give new ideas not only for political didactics theory and research, but also for civics lessons. The studies have revealed and precisely defined a quality problem in civics lessons. Making political judgements is difficult, perhaps too difficult, for the pupils. This is especially the case when it comes to weighing many facts. In practice, the different individual, normative suggestions for making judgements were not effective. Teachers developed their own criteria. There seemed to be extremely diverse ideas about what exactly a political judgement is, which led to the requirements being just as diffuse. Another possibility would be to implement the theoretical requirement with targeted practising of political judgements in essays, or with other suitable methods of cognitive activation. The prerequisite, however, is that the pupils and teachers are systemat-

ically familiarized with the criterial requirements in judgement processes – although this does not seem to be the case so far.

With this initial empirical support for the theoretical model of judgement competence, the hypothesis can be posed that it is possible to close the „open flank" of political didactics and civics lessons. For this to be successful, pupils and teachers must first become familiar with the theoretical model. Criteria based on levels, as proposed by the model of judgement competence, would need to be included in teacher education programmes, and education at teacher training institutions should be adapted so that the goal of teaching the ability to make political judgements can be achieved. This would allow better assessment of judgement processes, and a clearer demonstration of the dependent levels.

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