…TO BE A CHILD OF ONE’S TIME
A study of childhood with special consideration of upbringing and education in Senden, Germany

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study is to look into contemporary childhood in Senden, Germany, and to find out about the interconnection it has to the aspects of upbringing and education. The report explores the opinions of teachers and parents concerning this issue. Furthermore, the study gives an idea about different types of understanding childhood.

The report at hand is a qualitative research and the main data collection was carried out by conducting semi – structured interviews. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Nine interviews were carried out during July 2011 in the municipality of Senden in Germany. The interviewees were teachers of a secondary school as well as parents from this municipality. The data displays teachers’ and parents’ opinions on the upbringing and education of children as well as opens up ideas about international comparison studies such as PISA and the idea of an all – day school implementation throughout Germany.

The main results of the study were that two pictures of childhood could be found in all of the interviews. One which showed childhood in a way that the interviewees would like to have it and the other which showed the childhood which can increasingly be found nowadays and for which the interviewees saw the need to change. Moreover, the concept of an all – day school was perceived quite positive in case it would be put into practice in a proper way.

As a conclusion, the study constructs a picture of a childhood that increasingly becomes institutionalized and less individual - related.

Key words: childhood, education, upbringing, Germany, Qualitative research
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1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since the results of the PISA study (Programme for International Student Assessment) – which compares school achievement in many different countries around the world – were first published in 2000, there has been a lot of discussion on all levels of the German society. Everybody analyses Germany’s educational institutions and seems to have an opinion for necessary change. The media is full of new results and stories and everybody has a big interest in the education and upbringing of German children. It would not be true to say that there had never been discussions about the German educational system in the past but as German people had to deal with quite bad results from the first PISA study the starting point for an increasingly growing discussion was given.

Inspired by the discussion about the German educational system - with all its activities and changes taking place or being called for - an increasing interest was established which generally dealt with the whole situation of children nowadays. Upbringing and educating children became part of the discussions, in addition to the question of whose responsibility these two issues are.

Exactly these above mentioned matters became of interest to me. I started wondering whether – and if so how – modifications in the education system as well as on the idea of upbringing make a difference in the way people perceive childhood. Everybody appears to be concerned with the current education system and values of proper upbringing. Accordingly, in this paper I wish to examine the interrelation of childhood, education and upbringing and find out how teachers and parents in Senden, a municipality in Germany, feel about it.

Data collection involved the research method of interviewing. The interviews provided the basis for the analysis of the teachers’ and parents’ opinions. However, before analysing the interviews I will begin with giving the reader some background knowledge on the study, though, as well as referring to some already existing literature on the topic of childhood, education and upbringing. Additionally, I will describe my research methods before coming to the analysing part of this study. I will conclude by
giving my own point of view on the findings and ideas for possibly following studies in this area of interest. Finally, I will describe my professional development during the process of writing this research.

2 CHILDHOOD

Since the phenomenon of childhood plays an important part in this study, as can also be seen in the title of my thesis ‘...to be a child of one’s time’, it is of need to take a look at it very carefully and in a detailed way. Childhood and its perception are a very complex topic and can be investigated in many different ways. To narrow it down, I will try to understand the concept of childhood through the principles of education and upbringing.

It will be of importance to keep in mind that childhood is nothing constant and that there is not one truth about childhood. Childhood is a changing phenomenon which alters due to values and ideas of people who look at it. Additionally, childhood has a different meaning when considering e.g. place and time which I will refer to later.

I will now consider different concepts of childhood, also keeping childhood throughout history as well as in contemporary Germany in mind.

2.1 Concepts of childhood

„Die meisten Menschen legen ihre Kindheit ab wie einen alten Hut. Sie vergessen sie wie eine Telefonnummer, die nicht mehr gilt. Nur wer erwachsen wird und trotzdem Kind bleibt, ist Mensch.“ (Erich Kästner, deutscher Schriftsteller)

Most people put their childhood aside like they do with an old hat. They forget it like a telephone number which is not valid anymore. Only that one, who becomes an adult and still stays a child, is a human being. (Erich Kästner, German writer)
I am now going to have a closer look at the very complex phenomenon of childhood, which cannot be considered in one unique way only. In this part I will open different attempts of defining childhood which are either related to physical, psychological or social approaches. I will take a look at e.g. a legislative point of view, a temporal point of view as well as psycho – pedagogical point of view and an approach to define childhood through a social science’s point of view.

First of all, basically any adult has his or her own ideas about childhood which often is associated with one’s own experiences. Subjective opinions about differences to modern childhood which are seen by each person are easily made. Hence, it is hard to define childhood although every one of us has gone through it.

One way of stereotyping childhood could be through legislation, considering a child as a minor. This roughly means that a child under the age of eighteen (fourteen in certain matters) cannot be legally persecuted for his/her criminal action nor does he/she have full legal rights such as driving a car or buying strong alcohol. ‘Die Volljährigkeit tritt mit der Vollendung des 18. Lebensjahres ein.’ (At the age of 18 years, a person becomes of full age) (Bundesministerium der Justiz 2011). Due to the UN convention on the rights of the child, a child is a person below the age of 18 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2011).

Defining childhood can also include seeing it as a dualism, if it is considered as the opposite of adulthood. Adults are seen as independent and knowing people, children as dependent and ignorant. (Päällysaho, lecture 15.9.2009.) The idea that childhood can be regarded as a time in which a human being needs support, is not able to live alone (Honig 1999, 172), could be connected to this.

Up to the present day there have mainly been two different approaches through which the phenomenon of childhood has been studied. One of them considers childhood as a psycho – pedagogical phenomenon, the other one looks at childhood as a social phenomenon. I will now give a short overview concerning both approaches.

Examining childhood through psychological and educational sciences mostly refers to seeing childhood as an individual phenomenon. It is about studying a child – as an
individual – and examining this person throughout the time period of childhood. Here, childhood is considered as a phase in a person’s life which this person goes through, develops and learns in order to later on become part of the ‘adult society’. Therefore, childhood is perceived as a phase of ‘becoming’. (Aapola – Kari, lecture 15.9.2009.)

On the contrary, social sciences consider childhood as a phase of ‘being’. It is not the child as an individual that is studied but instead childhood itself is looked into as a phase within life. Individual children are part of this phase of life but then pass through it and move on but childhood as a structural part of society is always there although the children being part of it change. Compared to the psycho – pedagogical approach, this idea of looking at childhood is a relatively new one. (Aapola – Kari, lecture 15.9.2009.)

If childhood is considered as a structural part of society and a phase itself, it becomes quite clear that external factors have an influence on it. Childhood must be studied in consideration of matters such as culture, society and religion.

While some cultures consider childhood in which children are part of the working society - fulfilling tough work - as normal, other cultures refer to this as a cruel wrongdoing (Stearns 2007, 9). Also, a child who grows up from an early age on getting up at six o’clock in the morning in order to help the parents with their work certainly has a different understanding of childhood than a child who does not have to help at all at home. Another example is that growing up as a child soldier or during war time, growing up in a broken environment or experiencing a nature disaster or poisoned environment surely brings along different associations to childhood than for those people who grow up in a peaceful little community with all kinds of resources.

Hence, childhood is influenced by structural conditions, people and circumstances in the surroundings. Furthermore, time has a huge influence because modifications in ‘being a child’ throughout time are inevitable (Stearns 2007, 215). Changes in terms of socialisation and therefore happenings which take place in today’s world have an influence on childhood and being a child (Mansel 1996, 9). Childhood obviously depends on many factors on economical, social, societal and cultural level. Additionally, time and place have an impact. All these factors bring in different ideas, norms and values which lead to different perceptions of childhood. Thus, childhood can
be called a social construction. The idea of childhood being socially constructed is shared by many sociologists. Although they see differences, they all agree that the picture of childhood changes from place to place and time to time (Haralambos and Holborn 2008, 758).

Alanen (1988) refers to childhood as an ever – constituted result of decisions and actions of particular historical social actors, in their economical, political and cultural struggles that potentially concern the whole spectrum of their interest.

In summary, childhood can be examined and looked at in many different ways and with various attitudes, as well. Therefore, it is not easy to understand this phenomenon. Probably even asking ourselves about childhood and its development, many of us might feel that our own childhood was a lot better than childhood is nowadays. Adult people tend to have a romanticized picture of their own childhood, probably more romanticized than it actually was (Mansel 1996, 18). As a matter of fact, without asking what today’s children think about their childhood, many adults consider their own childhood as better than their children’s. There is no doubt about children of today having a totally different point of view on this topic as each one does only have his/her own childhood to experience. Depending on each person’s own thoughts and experiences of childhood, this special time in a person’s life can hence be considered as the happiest time of life or not existing or a really dark time of a person’s life.

In the following subchapter, I will examine the phenomenon of childhood throughout history before continuing with the subsequent subchapter of childhood in contemporary Germany. I consider these points as necessary as we have just learnt how important it is to include the context and time of childhood. Throughout the following subchapters we will thus learn, how childhood was perceived in the past in contrast to how it is perceived nowadays.

2.2 Concepts of childhood throughout history

If childhood is considered as a cultural or societal phenomenon, it is as well important to consider its respective context. What did the society look like during a certain time
and how was the phenomenon of childhood perceived within this certain society? A short discourse of childhood throughout history will be provided in this subchapter.

The concept of childhood changed during the epochs of history and it becomes quite clear that a changing childhood often goes along the lines of changes within education and upbringing, too, as we will find out throughout this chapter. In this subchapter, I am going to open the discourse about childhood from a European perspective and will later on especially look at it from a German point of view.

For understanding the phenomenon of childhood, it is essential to know about Philippe Ariès - a French medievalist who focused on childhood and family from a historical point of view - and his idea about the ‘discovery of childhood’. Although Ariès has been criticised a lot for his work it is a fact that his ideas on childhood opened stage to the whole discussion about this phenomenon. Ariès’ main claim is that childhood as such, a special time period for the child which is opposed to adulthood, could be seen for the first time during the Middle Ages. Following Ariès, there was mainly no concern about childhood before the 17th century. Children were thought of as ‘reduced adults’ and the world appeared as a place where something such as childhood was unknown. (Ariès 1977, 92.)

During the 17th century upbringing got a new meaning. It was now important to show love and care for children. Being a child meant as well being in need of protection and upbringing. It was regarded an object which one had to be responsible for (von Hentig cited in Ariès 1977, 10). Additionally, schools and education became more important during this time and together with the family they played a big role in the upbringing of children. Those matters which could not be provided by family were provided by school. For Ariès, the development of childhood was a change to a time of suffering as a child lost his/her freedom through spending a lot of time in schools and therefore he regarded childhood as some separated ghetto away from the world of adults.

Contrary to Ariès’ opinion, Lloyd de Mause, an American psychologist, argues that childhood did not become a time of suffering but that the change of childhood during time could be seen as story of progress. He actually refers to the history of childhood as ‘a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken’ (de Mause 1982, 1).
Towards the end of the 17th century a child was seen as capable of learning as John Locke described it. This was perceived as a strong contrast to the earlier belief which was spread by Christian faith that each child was seen as impure and of original sin. (Stearns 2007, 93-94.) The British philosopher John Locke, one of the most important Enlightenment thinkers, also famous for his ideas about liberalism, understood a child’s soul as a ‘tabula rasa’ (as an empty space which can be filled with knowledge through experience and perception) and argued that children could move ahead with careful upbringing. (Stearns 2007, 85.) Also, the Swiss Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was inter alia a philosopher, fought for the point of view that children should be seen as individuals and that they should receive good education and have an access to a school system which enables them to develop their creativity (Stearns 2007, 85).

With the development in Western societies during the 18th and 19th century more and more children attended school (Stearns 2007, 89). Although at first only the wealthier people were able to send their children to school, this changed during the ongoing industrialisation as most of the works which had afore been done by children were now conducted by machines (Stearns 2007, 93). Education was seen as important for each child’s future and as children went to school instead of work it was quickly realized children were no longer of help for a family’s economical existence, on the contrary, they seemed a ‘burden’. This added to the process of minimising the number of children within one family as otherwise costs easily got too high. (Stearns 2007, 90.) Therefore, the modern picture of childhood changed through the idea of education instead of work, which also led to the reduction of the members of one family. A third reason was a lower death rate of children during their early childhood. This was due to the idea that if there are less children, parents concentrate more on them and their wellbeing. Also, sanitary conditions improved gradually. (Stearns 2007, 91.)

The idea of Enlightenment spread and this way, childhood became a time of learning. Furthermore, a more emotional relationship between children and their parents developed (Stearns 2007, 93-94).

What had started during the preceding centuries continued and finalized during the 20th century. The implementation of compulsory education spread around the whole western world between the 1860s – 1880s and children got the right to go to school (Stearns
Although, parts of today’s Germany issued some kind of compulsory education for girls and boys already earlier, compulsory education within the whole area of today’s Germany was put into practice in 1919 with the constitution of Weimar (Kölner Stadtanzeiger 2007). With the initiation of compulsory school attendance, childhood became intensively focused on education.

In the case of Germany it should be mentioned that the time during the first half of the 20th century surely had its own ideas and concepts of childhood, due to Germany’s history. Especially when the Nazi regime came to power, childhood became privatized. It was important to be and keep up the picture of a perfect family which consisted of a lovely and caring mother, a busy working father and their well educated and happy children. During this time, upbringing children was not any longer only the task of the family, the parents and probably schools, but instead many organisations of the state, such as Hitlerjugend. This was part of the ‘Gleichschaltung’ (cooptation) which had an impact on upbringing. (Alter et al. 2004, 312.) On the other hand, any non-state organisations were forbidden.

During the Second World War, this image of having a well protected and safe childhood was destroyed as teenagers and children became soldiers towards the end of the war and were often seen as ‘cannon fodder’, inexperienced boys who were needed as no other forces were available anymore. Also, it must be stated that within concentration camps, there was no longer any difference between being young and old. It was a sudden but general death of a safe childhood.

In the 1950s and 1960s the picture of a perfect family was tried to be achieved again, accompanied by well educated children, being able to play instruments and having a good general knowledge. This can also be seen in the change of the education system which took place as well as a rising number of academically trained people (Alter et al. 2004, 424). As the economy started to boom again and Germany was in the rebuilding of the society and state, the thought of a welfare state came up which brought an improvement in people’s living and thus improvement for the family conditions. Again, childhood was seen as a family childhood and each child should receive the possibility of having a safe childhood with the opportunity of learning.
The students’ movement during the 1960s brought new ideas on how to look at childhood and the matter of upbringing and education in the Republic of Germany. After many years of upbringing in a disciplined way the new idea was a so called ‘anti-authoritarian’ upbringing. Children should be raised and educated in a free way while learning how to question matters or be critical about them. In the 1970s, the idea of the ‘antipedagogy’ arose in which children should be left alone within their upbringing. (Heidenfelder 2009.) Until today, childhood has developed into a so called ‘modern childhood’, which is associated with custody, protection and giving space for learning. A democratic way of upbringing takes places which enables children to think and decide on matters on their own. Yet, the need for rules and limits is seen, too (Heidenfelder 2009).

After learning about different perceptions of childhood throughout the past, the following subchapter will describe what childhood in present-day’s Germany looks like.

2.3 Childhood in contemporary Germany

In this subchapter, I will describe childhood in contemporary Germany by looking at changing family structures, the role of the child within the family, the influence of media and technology as well as childhood in a globalised world. Additionally, I will look at the offer of free time activities which originate from a half-day school which is the most common school type in Germany. I take the above mentioned factors into consideration as they will be of importance for my analysis.

While in the past the picture of a family was more or less seen in a homogenous way, referring to a father, a mother and some children building a family – sometimes including grandparents - nowadays the picture of a family is heterogeneous. Not only a ‘father – mother – and – children – group’ counts as family, but instead it can also consist of two mothers, children and no father, as well as the other way round. Furthermore, patchwork families, meaning two partners who both bring children from a former relationship or marriage with them into a new relationship, are not unusual anymore. There can also be single parent families as the rate of divorces has increased
immensely. Whereas the annual rate of divorces in the Federal Republic of Germany had always been under 20% until the 1970s, it has risen to over 50% in the past 10 years, since 2001. (Theologische – links.de 2011.) These kinds of changes bring new challenges and opportunities to children, as well. If more and more children grow up with parents getting separated or living on their own, their own image of family and parenthood changes and brings along psychological aspects which did not have to be considered years back when parents used to stayed together - not because they were necessarily always happy but just because this was the way society functioned.

Changing old family structures might also result in children nowadays taking over a different role within the family. They might have to grow up faster when both parents are full time workers and they spend the time after school on their own. Children might look for different social interaction, in case a child has fewer siblings and is therefore in need of looking for playing partners outside of the family.

Additionally, it can be argued whether the role of a child within the family has changed due to a more open relationship between children and their parents, also concerning the aspect of discussions and including children in decision making. Nowadays, in many families things are not imposed on children anymore but instead discussed and agreed on together. Parents do not just put matters on children but on the contrary, ask their opinion and sometimes even learn from them.

Moreover, probably influenced by these new constructions of family, children in today’s world experience another way of playing than their parents did. Playing is often influenced by technology and media. Children used to play games with other children – often outdoors – in the past but this behaviour diminishes day to day. Instead, media and computer games become a more important value in children’s lives. Which consequences does this bring? It is argued that children lose their creativity for playing as they have too many toys and nearly everything seems accessible.

Conditions affecting childhood have changed and so children also have a different way of playing. They do not make up things anymore or imagine something and they often do not play freely outside in the nature with sticks or stones which signify something different than they actually are. Also, teachers often criticise children’s physical abilities
and movements and it appears to become more and more difficult for them to control their body in ‘easy’ exercises such as balancing or walking backwards. Many children in today’s world do not know any outdoor group games, which the generation of their parents or grandparents used to play, as these kinds of games are hardly ever played anymore. Instead, a growing amount of free time activities can be done being seated (Stearns 2007, 195). Side effects such as problems with overweight are possible.

Playing is also influenced by – as mentioned above – technology and the internet. Today’s children are able to use these technologies probably better than their parents and they learn how to use them at a young age. This can be seen as an advantage as well as a disadvantage. Children surely gain experience on how to use these media and can check for knowledge and information on the internet. They can also get a global point of view and it might enable them to be in touch with people from the other side of the world daily, from one second to another, if they want to. This, in certain parts, influences the relationship between parents and children. Many children give advice to their parents on how to use computers or the internet because they are more familiar with it than their mother or father who did not grow up with these media. The widespread picture of only parents supporting and advising their children at all times needs to be reconsidered. Still, internet and television play a major role. It is nowadays part of everyday life and for example the expansion or reduction of daily television time is often used as either gratification or punishment (Hurrelmann 1994, 169).

It can be seen that children get in contact to all kinds of media from early years onwards and through this also to its dangers and a ‘consume world’ which they are vulnerable to. Especially during the late 20th century, consumption of children expanded all over the world. According to Stearns (2007, 194), through globalisation the same articles could be found everywhere and the same music was played everywhere. The question about a growing ‘global youth culture’ came up. This does not mean that there are no country specific or regional specific songs or toys, etc. anymore, they still exist. It just became more likely that a young person in Australia would know the same song of that Spanish band as a young person in Canada.
School, as another determining factor of childhood, must also be taken into consideration so that it will be useful to now take a brief look at the German school system, although this will also be discussed more detailed later on.

The normal and common school model in Germany up to now is not an all-day school. Instead, children get out of school around midday. This leaves them with a whole afternoon free of school and a lot of hours to spend away from the educational institution. Yet, it needs to be mentioned that the German school system is changing and a growing number of schools offer ‘all – day schooling’ either in a voluntary way or compulsory. Resulting from the traditional German school model of a half – day school, a wide range of free time activities can be found such as different music lessons, sports clubs and others which give children the opportunity to spend time there. Thus, youth centres and clubs or just places like cinemas and swimming halls attract young people during the afternoon, evening and weekend.

Through this wide offer of activities children seem to spend more time taking part in organised activity than playing on their own. It is stated that children are ‘lacking time for free time’ (Ziegler 1996 cited in Mansel 1996, 75). This means that if they have free hours to spend, they most likely spend them in clubs instead of just playing freely with their friends. Free playing is an activity, though, which makes children use their own creativity and helps them to explore the world (Smith 2010, 59). It does not mean that there is no free playing in clubs but generally more adult – led activities can be found in these activity centres. Being able to use their own creativity for playing is essential for children and part of a learning process (Smith 2010, 60). In today’s world, the time for this free playing increasingly vanishes and gets replaced by organised activities, often planned by adults (Valentine 2004 cited in Smith 2010, 60). These activities, e.g. football clubs or art lessons, offer new skills and socialisation to children and they might be a useful and inspiring opportunity for children to spend their time. Children get in contact with other children of their age who do not necessarily attend the same school, they get exercise and new knowledge or skills and they hopefully often do something they really like to do.

An even more important topic today is that children live by a strict timetable (Ziegler 1996 cited in Mansel 1996, 75). A child might have a (different) activity every
afternoon of the week, sometimes even two on the same day, and although this child might like his/her hobbies, having these each and every day of the week might become too much. A little girl being interviewed about her free time activities described that she liked having her different hobbies almost every day of the week but that she would sometimes just like to play with her friends instead (Ziegler 1996 cited in Mansel 1996, 75). Even during their free time, children are more often put under pressure.

Also parents nowadays face the problem of having a job and taking care of their children’s activities. Some parents are too busy and there might even be cases of parents not being interested enough or able to take their children to meaningful activities (Ziegler 1996 cited in Mansel 1996, 75). A phenomenon of today’s world is that children’s free time is a lot more organised and planned than it used to be and because of that spontaneous and wild playing vanishes to a greater extent as Ziegler states (1996 cited in Mansel 1996, 76).

Within the last paragraphs it could be noticed that school plays an important part in the childhood of children in contemporary Germany. As mentioned earlier, external factors have an impact on childhood and the implementation of compulsory school attendance surely brought a vast change for children who from that time onwards spend an increasingly amount of their time in educational institutions and with learning. Therefore, in addition to the main key concept of this thesis, namely childhood, I will in the following also introduce the matter of education and upbringing. With children spending a lot of time in school education takes over a growingly important part as well as the matter of upbringing does which will be shown in the subsequent subchapters. Thus, upbringing and education must be considered determining factors for the understanding of childhood.

2.4 Education

Education - as well as the phenomenon of childhood - can be defined in numerous ways. In this subchapter I will shortly introduce some ideas on education in general. After that, I will give some background knowledge on the German education system as it is of use to gain an idea about it in order to understand the later part of my thesis.
Subsequently, I will continue with defining the concept of upbringing in the following subchapter.

Education, as it is seen in general, is the process of spreading and gaining of knowledge about certain issues. It is not only the knowledge which people gather within schools and universities but also in any other surrounding and situation. Education can be achieved through a person’s learning and researching as well. (Becker and Lauterbach 2008, 11.) The process of gaining knowledge continues throughout one’s lifetime.

Often education is associated with educational institutions such as schools. There is, however, also the idea of defining a ‘life world education’ beside the institutional one. The family is a main instance within this ‘life world education’. In a family knowledge, which is close to experience, is mediated. (Grundmann, Bittlingmayer, Draveneu, Groh – Samberg 2010 cited in Becker and Lauterbach 2010, 51.) It differs from e.g. school knowledge which is often referred to as bookish and not that close to real life (Grundmann et al. 2010 cited in Becker and Lauterbach 2010, 54).

It is argued that the level of education a child has depends on the parents’ level of education, cultural orientation and social interaction (Grundmann 1998 in Grundmann, Bittlingmayer, Draveneu, Groh – Samberg 2010, 53).

Education can additionally be considered as a practice of organising practical knowledge and knowledge gained out of actions (Grundmann et al. 2010 in Becker and Lauterbach 2010, 53). A different kind of education might therefore be needed or be of advantage in differing circumstances and situations.

2.4.1 Background of the German education system

In the following I will shortly give an in view on the German education and school system since my study is connected to education and therefore also to schools. For a person who is not familiar with the system in Germany, it might be quite hard to follow without knowing the basics of the system.
To start with, Germany is a federal republic and consists of 16 federal states. School and educational policies fall within the scope of the federal state policy. Therefore, every federal state has own education policies even if some main matters are the same throughout the country. North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is the federal state in which my study takes place.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, there exists a so called ‘Tripartite school system’. After school enrolment all the children go through four years of primary school education. After primary school it depends on a student’s grades which of the secondary school he/she attends. There are generally three options, all of which offer different opportunities and ways for the students, according to their needs and abilities. In brief, these options are as follows: Gymnasium is attended by pupils who leave elementary school with good to above average grades and who are likely to pursue an academic career later on in life. It is the only school that offers the possibility to do Abitur, which again enables pupils to go to university after finishing school. Realschule is a school for students who have good to average grades and who later on have to decide whether they want to carry on to Gymnasium after year 10 or find an apprenticeship and prepare for work. Hauptschule is a school that was designed for students with learning difficulties or sub-average grades. It has a high practical level in the education and aims to prepare students for work life after year 10. Generally, students completing Hauptschule do not pursue an academic career but find work in practical jobs, mainly in craft and trade. There are other possibilities such as a school which includes all these three different kinds of school, called Gesamtschule, too. Still, the main options are Gymnasium, Realschule and Hauptschule.

Some of the repeatedly discussed topics within the Germany society deal with the German school system itself. It is questioned whether it is beneficial to have a primary school for only four years and after that a division of the students to three different kinds of secondary schools in accordance to each child’s school achievement during the first four years of school.

Even during these days there is a very current connection to the topic of education. With the beginning of the new school year 2011 – 2012 in North Rhine-Westphalia, the model of a so called ‘Gemeinschaftsschule’ (common school) will be implemented
which has been discussed during the last years. This model enables children to stay within the same class community for a longer period than the normal four years of primary school. Throughout the federal state about twelve model schools carry out the idea in which children then complete the first 7 – 10 years together. Some of the arguments in favour of the idea - and as Dr. Ernst Rösner sums them up - are, that a longer learning period in the same class community leads to a greater equality in education and includes children from a poorer educational background better. (Neumann 2011.)

After gaining an idea about the education system in NRW, I will now move on to open up the concept of upbringing.

2.5 Upbringing

In addition to education, it is also important to explain the phenomenon of upbringing as it is often closely linked to education. Upbringing could be reflected on as the process in which someone’s character is formed and developed. It is connected to social behaviour and interaction and eventually it aims at building up a person who is independent and emancipated (Das deutsche Erziehungs – Infoportal 2011).

Equally to not being able to cover the phenomenon of childhood through one single valid definition there is neither one right definition for upbringing. Upbringing can be totally different from one family to another, even if the culture, religion and surroundings are similar.

It could be stated that parents decide on the way they let their children grow up (Schwarz, Silbereisen 1996 cited in Zinnecker, Silbereisen 1996, 229). Depending on their own childhood and upbringing, they either aim at a similar way of upbringing or change matters compared to their parents. The way adults look at childhood influences their way of acting towards children and this also has an influence on the way they educate or parent their children. If a mother is e.g. of the opinion that it is important for children to read a lot and that they should not watch too much television, she will most likely try to bring reading close to her children, maybe read a lot to them during their
younger years and give them books as presents. She will try to limit television times and will try to attract her children’s attention to something different.

On the other hand, parents cannot decide every matter within their upbringing. There might be external factors which influence their upbringing and they – as parents – do not have power to change them. A couple could e.g. want to raise their children in the countryside surrounded by beautiful nature but due to the work conditions and no other possibilities they have to stay in their apartment in the city.

Furthermore, within a society many norms and values exist and they have an influence on the upbringing as well. Whereas a child in Germany might learn that it is polite to clear the plate and finish offered food, in some communities in e.g. Zambia it might be seen as impolite as there should always be a bit of food left for the dead ancestors. Therefore, upbringing will differ a lot from one place to another due to external influences and parental decisions.

2.6 Education and upbringing in contemporary Germany

I will now take a look at education and upbringing in modern-day Germany in reference to earlier studies on this topic which describe e.g. the changing role of the family and the influence this has on the children and childhood. Finally, the ambivalent role the media plays for children will be considered.

Due to differences in family life and structures and also due to the fact that nowadays a greater amount of children grow up with both parents working (at least part time), changes in a child’s daily routine take place, too. More and more mothers are part of the working society which means that their sons and/or daughters are not able to contact their mothers during special times of the day while those are at work (Zeiher and Zeiher 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 392). In the past, it was part of a functioning family in Germany that mostly the mother stayed home and cared about family matters as well as house and home work. The mother was the one being at home when the children came back from school. She was the one to cook for them, to care for them while the father was at work. This picture of motherhood and family changed and
because of that, because of a growing number of mothers working away from home as well, new ways of children’s supervision had to be found. Actually, in Germany compared to Finland, this process was quite a major step and discussed a lot. The phenomenon of ‘Rabenmutter’, meaning an uncaring and bad mother, could be linked to those women who decided to give up their role as a stereotypical mother and started to work part or full time again although having small children. This was not seen as normal and in the beginning some people talked badly about these women. These days, it is quite normal that also mothers work away from home. And although German upbringing and education institutions or places are discussed all the time, many places to which even small children can be taken to, exist.

Still, through mothers and fathers being at work, often less time as a family is spent together. Having a common lunch in the family disappears often as parents are at work (Zeiher and Zeiher 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 392). Thus, children might be in some after school clubs or with foster mothers during midday. Children have become latchkey children during the years, leaving the house in the morning together with their parents and returning late in the afternoon. Items even small children take along are keys, a watch and money (Ennew 1992 in Qvortrup 1993, 120). This shows that they have to learn how to be responsible and rely on themselves quite early and it brings the necessity of knowing how to take care of one self, as well.

A shift within the parent – child relationship took place, starting in the 1950s, which lead from parents who wanted their children to listen and obey to parents who now want their children to take responsibility and be independent (Honig 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 215).

Growing up in Germany nowadays becomes gradually institutionalized and this is a sign of temporary childhood (Qvortrup 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 120). Not only schooling with compulsory school attendance from the age of (latest) seven years onwards is part of this but also institutions such as nursery schools, kindergartens, after school cares and others. Additionally to these, as mentioned before, there are a lot of free time and afternoon clubs and activities to choose from, plus youth centres and playing centres.
Considering, for instance, the free time activities of today’s youth leads to the question of in how far any or many of the offered activities are educating. If argued that during the past many children developed skills such as creativity when playing freely outside with their friends, is there any learning aspect in what children experience nowadays during their free time considering that most of the activities are planned and organised by adults (Valentine 2004 cited in Smith 2010, 60)? There should be a clear difference between children playing on their own and children interacting in organised activities but this does not mean only one way is effective for the child’s learning. It just seems as if there is a qualitative difference in what children learn while playing freely and what they learn in planned activities (Smith 2010, 61). Also, how much education and upbringing takes place in all these institutions? It is considered that upbringing not only takes place within the family but also in many professional, methodical and specialized institutions (Honig 1993 in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 208). Can a child’s free and creative playing be compared to an afternoon club that offers activities such as team ball games? Is there a clear cut between which of these two is beneficial for the child and which one is not? Are organised free time activities there to entertain the children and take care of them while their parents are still at work or do they actually have another meaning, the meaning of educating or teaching something new to children?

Again, the ambivalent relationship of children and the media should be mentioned shortly. Studies show that the older a child grows, the higher the media consumption gets and the lower the free playing gets. Surely, children might start reading more or listening to the radio but most of all the watching television activity grows. (Lukesch 1991 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 481). The relationship to the media is mentioned as ambivalent as it does not only bring dangers such as (age-) inappropriate matters but also the possibility to learn and educate oneself through television shows or the internet. Both aspects, positive as well as negative ones, need to be seen judging the growing consumption and use of the media. Another question is though, whether media might be an important part of another sign of contemporary childhood, which is individualisation. (Qvortrup 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 121.)
2.7 School and childhood

Starting school at the age of six or seven years, school plays a huge part in each German boy's or girl’s childhood, therefore I will give a short in—view on school and its influence on childhood.

A main aim of school is to give basic knowledge and basic skills concerning different fields such as reading, writing and calculating to its pupils and to prepare the pupils for working life later on as well as give the certificates to pupils which they need to enter working life (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Nauck 1993, 567). School is more than that and for it is each child’s lebensraum, living environment, shared with other pupils of the same age, it is also essential for social interaction and development (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 568). During school time, the interaction between students and teachers as well as the one between students on their own, should include a certain level of values and virtues which are important to be learnt for life later on (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 567). School basically dominates each child’s everyday life, next to family life, and has a huge influence on performance development, a child’s personality (within school and in general) and also on his/her social development during childhood (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 570).

Failure and success during school play a big role in a child’s development and influence motivation and anxiety for future school tasks or tasks out of school. They influence a child’s self-perception and also a child’s self-confidence (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 572). Therefore, failure in one subject at school brings anxiety and angst and might take along a lot more than just bad grades in this one subject. The same goes for the relationship between students and teachers or other students. If a student is scared of a teacher or feels uncomfortable within class, this can have enormous effects on his/her performance. A teacher influences a student’s self-development, wanted or not. As well as the students influence the one of teachers (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 572/3).

By reason that in school a child is in contact to many other children of the same age, a child’s social life is closely connected to school as this is the living environment of
children. Still, it should not be forgotten that in most cases the family carries on to be the child’s central place, closely followed by the school as well as the peer group and other activities. (Pekrun and Helmke 1993 cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 573.)

As can be seen, next to families, schools play an immense role in a child’s life. But what is the interaction between families and schools like? Since the late 1970s, parents put increasing pressure on their children because they want them to get a good certificate from school for graduation. Even at the end of primary school parents put an enormous pressure on their children as with the school report from primary school it is decided which secondary school a child is able to attend. Parents seem to fear that their child might not have any future if he/she not at least gets to go to Realschule, even better Gymnasium.

2.8 Summary

After getting an idea on childhood in Germany during time and also on upbringing and education nowadays, many questions come up which will be dealt with in the research part of my thesis. Within this first, theoretical part of my study, we found out how childhood was perceived during the years and how it is perceived in contemporary Germany.

A main aspect which should be mentioned again is the dependence of childhood on time and circumstances. It could clearly be noticed that childhood during the 1940s in Germany was different from what it is like nowadays. This is also due to the fact, that e.g. mothers take over a different role in society. The cultural background of the surrounding the child grows up in also plays a crucial role for the way childhood is perceived and lived out. Accordingly, the way childhood is conceptualized is dependent on a number of factors which differ from time to time and from society to society, so childhood can never be looked at as a universal concept. Rather, childhood is a very flexible concept that is being filled with meaning by each person individually. Thus, childhood can be called a social construct.
We also learnt about the interconnection of childhood, education and upbringing. Depending on the context, education as well as upbringing have a different meaning for the perception of childhood. In case one of these three phenomena changes, it will have an influence on the other two.

Throughout the chapter, we discovered that for the situation in Germany, children were named to be more responsible and independent nowadays and it seems that childhood gets institutionalized and pedagogised to a greater extent. This will be an interesting matter to investigate more thoroughly. Hence, in the following chapter, I will introduce the area of my study, its aims and finally my research questions.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research at hand is a study of childhood with special consideration of upbringing and education in the municipality of Senden in Germany. The study looks at the phenomenon of childhood especially by taking into consideration the topics of upbringing and education and their connection through the eyes of the people who are responsible for it.

Many people make a clear distinction between education and upbringing. Education is often considered the teachers’ job whereas upbringing is the task of the parents. Yet, the question has to be asked whether this perception is true. Has there really been this kind of development from the past to present times? What about a possible interaction between upbringing and education performed by teachers and parents?

This study will investigate the above mentioned issue and through interviews with teachers and parents find out how this topic is apprehended from various perspectives.

The aim of this research is to look at a picture of childhood and find out what education and upbringing in contemporary Senden, Germany add to this picture. Throughout the study we learnt that childhood, education and upbringing are interrelated with one
another. If one of them changes, this will also affect the others. I will nonetheless try to separate the phenomena in my query. Therefore, I came up with the following research questions:

1. How is childhood defined by teachers and parents?

Teachers and parents are both deeply involved with children as well as the ideas of upbringing and education. Through interviewing teachers and parents, I am interested in finding out whether these two groups have the same ideas about childhood as could be found in the literature review. Additionally, I would like to gain an idea about the connection of childhood, education and upbringing which could be considered to form some kind of triangle. This is why I came up with my second research question which is connected to the first one.

2. How do education and upbringing determine childhood?

As also Alanen (1988) states, families and schools are perfectly legitimate objects in studying children and childhood, for the simple reason that the modern, Western childhood is a familialized and scholarized one. Therefore, I will try to find out how people perceive childhood while looking at it through the aspects of education, which used to be connected to school and upbringing which was linked to family.

In order to eventually answer these questions, I will, in the following, introduce my research methodology before I will elaborate my research outcomes in the subsequent chapter.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

In this chapter, I will explain which methods I used for my data collection and why. Furthermore, I will describe where I conducted the research and why I chose exactly this area.
4.1 Methods

Since I wanted to find out about personal opinions on the upbringing and education and its impacts on the society, I decided to do a qualitative research, using guided interviews as a main source to gather information. As Holliday (2007, 1) argues, ‘Qualitative research presents a statement about reality and social life that has to be continually argued and reaffirmed.’ I believe that this idea works well with my whole study because I work on a topic that continuously changes and therefore needs to be questioned over and over again during time.

Besides conducting interviews (see charts as appendices), I collected and studied documents such as newspaper articles, science – magazines and other literature. Through this I could especially gather a lot of information on the history of childhood and concepts of childhood, upbringing and education in general. These documents were primarily important for me to gain an insight in the topic in the very beginning.

4.2 Area and target group

I conducted a total of nine interviews with teachers (three female and two male ones) of a secondary school (grade 5 – 10) in Senden and four mothers who all send their children to school in Senden. Senden is a small municipality with about 20,000 inhabitants in Germany. As I grew up in this village, doing my research there seemed like a good idea as I am familiar with the surroundings and environment and therefore able to relate my findings excellently to the circumstances. After conducting these nine interviews I felt that I had gathered sufficient data in order to take an introductory look at my topic of interest.

All of the interviews – apart from two – were done in the normal surroundings, in this case school or people’s houses - as I tried to follow the idea of ‘qualitative research taking place in natural settings’ (Creswell 2003, 181).
There are many different ways of how to conduct interviews. Referring to Birks and Mills (2011, 75), ‘interviews may be highly structured or completely unstructured.’ My interviews were led in a semi-structured way. For my interviews, I decided to prepare special questions beforehand in order to cover certain areas which I wanted to gain knowledge about. Additionally, I tried to use many open questions in the interviews which aimed at making people talk about their ideas and feelings quite freely. By doing this I hoped to make people talk more deeply about what is important to them and I tried to give them time to express themselves. If I felt that they had a need to talk about something, I asked them to explain more deeply and by this, I think I was able to see what was really important to them. Some of my interviewees were prepared to share their opinions more detailed than others and because of that the lengths of the interviews vary from about 30 minutes to an hour. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Nonetheless, I felt it was important to additionally take notes during the interviews. Through this I would be on the safe side even if the recording or the recording equipment failed (Creswell 2003, 190).

The interviews were conducted within a period of four days. Beforehand, I had been in contact with the governing body of the school already in order to present my thesis idea and give an insight. The teachers were asked to join me for the interview spontaneously so that they did only have a slight idea what the interview was about a couple of minutes before answering to my questions. Concerning the parents, the situation was a little different. I contacted some by phone as I knew they had children at this school in Senden and others just because of their background (social worker) or family situation (having many children). As mentioned above, all of my parents’ interviewees are female. This was not done on purpose but it just turned out to be that way. Yet, this may also be due to the fact that in Senden it still seems to be the case that the majority of men works full-time and hence it is hard to make interview appointments.
4.4 Ethics, validity and perception

Before conducting each interview with either a teacher or a parent, each interviewee was asked for permission to use the data from the interview for the analysis. I additionally asked them for permission to use a digital voice recorder for taping the interview (for my personal use only). Last but not least, I asked them to sign a paper which stated exactly this and fortunately all of them did, so that I was able to use the data for my study. Silverman (2000, 175) considers validity as another word for truth. I tried to make sure that I used the data I collected through the interviews in a proper way and this is why I decided to tape – record and then transcribe the interviews word by word. My interviews aimed at gaining knowledge about the feelings each interviewee had concerning my research topic. Thus, the results of this study cannot be considered universally applicable because feelings are always subjective. Nonetheless, the idea was to gain opinion of people involved in the education and upbringing matter and therefore, for this study, the data was sufficient. As my interviewees’ names are not relevant for my study, I promised not to use them and I will also not give any other too personal information. When referring to the interviewee in quotations during my analysis I will just state whether the person is a teacher or a mother, the gender and the age group. This information will be found in brackets right after the quote. I decided on sharing these data because I believe that the ‘profession’, the gender and the age might influence one’s opinion on the topic and therefore could change one’s point of view.

I am aware of the matter that certain circumstances or constellations might bring slightly different outcomes from interviews. Therefore, I would like to mention that although I knew some of the interviewees a bit better than others, I tried to be as open within the interviews as with the ones I did not know at all. Also, I would like to say that I did not mean to conduct interviews only with people I knew but that instead for example the teachers were chosen at random. Still, as Senden is not a very big place, it could not be obviated that I also talked to people I had seen or talked to before. I do not feel that the matter of my personality, background, gender or profession made any change concerning the outcome of the interviews.
4.5 Analysing the data

After finishing the transcription of my interviews, I made a plan on how to analyse them. Analysing data is about making sense out of it, arranging it and trying to understand the meaning behind single statements and data pieces (Creswell 2003, 190). For that reason, I read through my data over and over again in order to get the main aspects and ideas and summarize the gathered information. Within the whole process I had myself being guided by some of Adrian Holliday’s (2007) ideas on doing and writing qualitative research. Accordingly, for analysing my data, I found myself organising it into different groups. As stated by Holliday (2007, 91), ‘A common way of doing this is to take data from all parts of the corpus and arrange it under thematic headings.’ I decided on the groups because certain topics came up repeatedly during the interviews and could be summarised in special blocks which I will refer to later on. After doing this, I decided to use a ‘narrative passage’ for analysing the data. A ‘narrative passage’ is a method for transmitting results of the analysis, for instance a discussion with interrelating topics or a thorough discussion of numerous themes (Creswell 2003, 194). I used the data in a discussion which covered different topics that came up in the interviews.

I thought about looking for different categories on how to perceive childhood but while I was reading my interviews in order to find out how exactly I would like to analyse them, it became quite clear to me that there were basically two simple and main ideas of childhood in all of the interviews. The first one was seen as a ‘perfect childhood’ through the eyes of the interviewees and the other one respectively as a childhood which can often be found nowadays and is in need of improvement. This is why I decided to start my analysis by describing these two different types of childhood as I found those to be the two outstanding groups as mentioned by the interviewees. I will compare one with the other and pull this through different subthemes which I also gained through my interviews. In short, in the following I will guide two different ideas of childhood through the categories of familial support, contact and interaction between the school, the family and the child, free time activities and engagement and will power. After that, I will separately discuss the themes of education and upbringing and the impact they have on childhood. This is done because I got a lot of information and ideas about this through the interviews and feel it important to mention about - at least - some of them.
The following part of my work includes not only the analysis of the interviews but also steps of interpretation of the material. I decided to do so because the issues are interconnected with one another and gear into each other and therefore it does not make sense to separate them. I made use of the narrative approach to qualitative research which e.g. embeds quotations of the interviews with interpretations of the interviewees and author (Creswell 2003, 197).

It appears important to me to mention that the following picture, which might arise, has its origin in the statements of my interviewees. It is about their ideas and thoughts. All the topics that will be discussed in the following chapter were brought up during the interviews by the people involved.

4.6 Limitations

I would like to mention that what is written below could surely appear to just be seen in a black and white manner and without any grey areas. Also, findings are always subject to other interpretations. As Brewer and Hunter (2006, 25) explain: ‘…scepticism plays a legitimate and important part in research.’. Therefore, the reader is welcome to be sceptical but will probably understand why I chose this way of analysis when reading the following pages. Any similarities to already existing terms or definitions on childhood that might come up are co– incidental and not intended. As this topic has been researched a lot I cannot obviate that similarities to other works might be seen.

5 RESEARCH OUTCOMES

In this chapter, I will first of all go through the ideas about childhood as they could be gained through the interviews I conducted. Childhood will be examined within the context of earlier mentioned categories of familial support, contact and interaction between the school, the family and the child, free time activities and engagement and will power. After that, I will investigate the connection to upbringing and education on
its own and at the end of the chapter consider the idea of an all-day school because its implementation is an ongoing topic of discussion within the society.

5.1 Images of childhood in Senden

Surely, it is quite controversial to discuss the images of a ‘perfect childhood’ versus those of a childhood which is in need of improvement. Yet, during my interviews I felt that people repeatedly referred to some ideal images they had of childhood. The interviewees separated these images quite strongly from many happenings which are concerning today’s children.

Subsequently, the two different types of childhood will be referred to as ‘Bullerby’ – and ‘Huckleberry Finn’ – childhoods. These names were chosen as the underlying ideas of these kinds of childhood, transferred through the books by Astrid Lindgren and Mark Twain, depict the main aspects of my findings.

Astrid Lindgren (Swedish author) wrote the novels about the Bullerby children who live together with their families in a small village in the Swedish countryside. These children play together, go to school together and experience new and exciting things together every day. Their childhood appears to be full of interaction and spending time exploring the village’s surroundings, always being sure about their parents’ caring protection and their own mutual support. Of course, there are everyday troubles taking place, as well but while reading the novels, the majority of readers probably associates a felicitous childhood when thinking about growing up in Bullerby. A sheltered and carefree time of growing up, full of adventures besides coping with and overcoming day–to–day troubles and challenges becomes visible. A picture appears which seems to tell: Whatever it is, together we will make it and in the end everything will be fine.

Mark Twain (American author) is the writer of Huckleberry Finn’s stories. In the sense that it is not connected to parental care and support, Huckleberry Finn experiences a quite free childhood in contrast to the Bullerby children. He is a boy growing up without parents. His father is a drunkard who neglected him. For a while Huckleberry lives in a foster family which he then leaves to instead live on his own and travel down
the Mississippi river, experiencing many adventures. He might not have too much school knowledge but during his journey he learns what matters and is important in his life. Life teaches him lessons through all kinds of different people he meets and their impacts on him. Huckleberry Finn does therefore neither have an ‘ordinary’ family background nor an ‘ordinary’ way of life. Nonetheless, he learns and develops as a person by what he experiences.

I would like to emphasise that not every single aspect of the childhoods given in the books matches the two kinds of childhood from the interviews completely. What these associations show, though, is a basic understanding of two different kinds of childhood that are characterized by very different elements: Whereas the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood must be considered a lot more sheltered and cared for, the ‘Huckleberry Finn’ – childhood stands for a much more independent and self – reliant time of growing up. In the following, these two images of childhood will be compared to one another.

5.1.1 Familial support

Throughout the interviews different conditions were mentioned by the interviewees which they considered as important for forming an ideal childhood. Familial support, which should especially be provided for the children by the parents, was one of them. This support can be emotional support as well as being physically present but it is also about interaction with the children, listening to them and spending time together. Additionally, interest and support for the child’s behaviour at school was referred to as essential. In the following paragraphs, I will go through these different elements more thoroughly.

From the data I collected, it could be seen that being at home when the children return from school during midday is an important part of offering support and help for the children in their younger years. Through all of the interviews with parents I conducted, I got the knowledge that none of them had been working full time while their children were young and attended the first years of school or kindergarten. If they worked they did part time jobs during the morning when the children were not at home in any case. Only later on they started to work part time or full time again when they felt that their children were old enough to cope on their own at home. This attitude or behaviour of
mothers staying at home could be brought into connection to the idea of the former West – German family model in which the male was the breadwinner and the female stayed home providing home – based care to the children (Ostner 2010).

Mothers explained that if a child experiences something which bothers him/her or something great and exciting it is only natural that he/she wants to talk about it right away to closely related persons who are concerned or interested. Therefore, if a parent is there when the child comes home, he/she will hear any kind of news right away as the child is still processing the recent happenings. Consequently, the parent learns and knows a lot about the child’s life and thus is able to tell on the child’s expressions and actions what sort of day the child has experienced. This might not take place as easily if a child just gets to see the parent during the evening hours when everybody comes home from work. By then, too long a time has gone by or the child has talked about matters to someone else already and is not as concerned with the subject as much any more as when it was still brand new. As a result, some information is not received by the parents but just gets lost.

The parents in my interviews considered it important to be at home when the children come back from school to just be there for the children and listen to them. Furthermore, they discuss the day with the children or might help them with their homework. If parents or at least one of them is at home when the child returns home after a long day at school or in kindergarten, the child is given the opportunity to throw all its problems, hesitations and worries at the parent. A common meal with the whole family is considered as important, too – if possible. This is a time in which communication between all family members can take place.

Also, some parents support their children in doing homework during midday since they tell them to do so right away so that the afternoon is free for playing. Thus, there is some kind of control from the parents about whether their children do their homework or not and about the learning progress their children make.

It is nice if parents support their children and I believe that many parents do it as well and they do it really well. (…) but from a certain age onwards one should be responsible for it oneself… (Teacher, male, 31)
Many parents think that it is important to help their children start out and hence they check on their children’s homework during the first grades. Later on, it becomes more of the student’s own responsibility and is a part of learning to organise one’s own life.

Additionally though, it appears that many teachers took it for granted that parents support their children or in cases in which they cannot do so for whatsoever reason, organise private lessons for their children.

I know about one teacher, who told me, a maths teacher, who told me that of course ¾ of the class have to take private lessons because otherwise they will not be able to follow my teaching, but that’s what it is like. And I e.g. do not think that is normal. (Mother, 54)

Sometimes, even if parents want to support their children, they are not able to do so. Through the interviews it became quite clear that although not too many changes within school seem to have taken place, at least the level of education must have increased.

I believe that the level of teaching became significantly higher. (...) Well, what they (the students) do in maths, is for me sometimes ‘bohemian villages’, I have never heard that in my life, what they are doing. (Mother, 48)

(‘das sind für mich böhmische Dörfer’ = lit.: that is for me like bohemian villages; meaning that one does not understand or know anything about it even if someone else tried to explain. Maybe it is like the expression ‘it is all Greek to me’ in English.)

Another issue which was clearly seen as important is the support and involvement of parents for their children’s success at school. For a child to successfully go through school, in most of the cases it is essential that also the parental home is actively and supportively involved. On top of that, it appears as not being too important in what way parents decide to bring up their children (e.g. authoritarian or laissez – faire) but what really matters it that the child experiences care, devotion and learns about attitude and humour (Bruhns 2011, 12).

Parents attend parent - teacher - meetings in order to show that there is someone else behind the child and it is not on its own besides the obvious of finding out how their child is doing at school.
I always tried to attend parent-teacher-meetings, simply because I wanted to know who the teacher/person is my children work with and also to show, that I—as a mother—am interested in the school life of my children, to show the teachers that there is yet someone else behind the children. (Mother, 54)

This at least takes place in primary schools but continues for most of the interviewed parents throughout their children’s whole school career. Also, the attendance at school celebrations and class parties takes place. It needs to be said that all kinds of activity from the parents’ side decrease with the children getting older. It seems that parents help their children to get on the right path and support the children a lot during the first years and afterwards when the child is on the ‘right way’ the supports vanish a little bit.

So then, what does the other side look like, where children experience a childhood that is not considered to be good for them; that kind of childhood which is often seen by teachers and parents nowadays; that childhood which many children experience in today’s world?

Is one aspect that they are on their own? Compared to the earlier described parents who are at home when the children return from school, in this case no one is there waiting for children to come home or to check whether they do their homework or not as some interviewees argued. The homework or school work control might work out in a different way in these cases. When children come to school without doing their homework on a regular basis the teacher notifies the parents about it with the wish for change, as in the parents making sure that the homework is done. Thus, the school or the teacher comes in as a third instance intervening in the communication between the child and parent. This can still be problematic when children withhold information.

The children get this time schedule from us and we write in it, when I would like to talk to the parents and there the daughter just misapplied it and then told me that her mother could not make it. I believed that (…) and by a really stupid coincidence afterwards it came out into the open. (Teacher, female, 33)

Another question is whether these children have to be more responsible than others of the same age. They carry the responsibility e.g. of simply entering the house, having a key ‘around their neck’. Sometimes, they also visit after school clubs but since there is
no special guideline of how these clubs should be done, a variety of good and not that
good clubs can be found.

Whereas the cooperation with school seems ‘to be enough but not satisfying’ in the
‘Bullerby’ - childhood example, school and teacher cooperation and parents
participation in other cases do not seem to work out at all, as could be recognized
throughout the interviews.

Parents that do not take part in anything, that are mostly those parents with
children who have problems anyway. (Teacher, male, 51)

Some parents do not care at all about their child’s performance at school. They do
neither attend parent-teacher-meetings nor any other school meetings, celebrations or
information evenings, even if they get invited directly by the teachers. As all of the
events happen on a voluntary basis, many parents just do not feel the need to attend.

First of all, one has to get through to them and then one has to make an
appointment with them. In most cases they are employed or do not have time or
do not want, whatsoever be confronted with this problem because they are
anyway maybe overburdened with their problems already. (...) If I make a
parent-teacher-conference about drug problems or internet problems, then those
parents who are interested in it but can handle the matter anyway attend. Those
parents who have problems with their kids, especially in these matters, they will
not attend. That is the big problem and I cannot force them to come. (Teacher,
male, 51)

In many cases, it is fact that there is no teacher – parent cooperation at all and this
surely has an influence on the child’s performance, because no interest in the child’s
school career is taken by the parents.

5.1.2 Contact and interaction between the school, the family and the child

In order to achieve the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood - as it is seen by teachers and parents in
the interviews - the contact and interaction between the school, the family and the child
was referred to. Therefore, the following paragraphs will describe the contact between
these different instances.
For the sake of the child, the student, good cooperation with the school as well as with the teachers is necessary and should be strengthened. All the interviewees saw the importance of gaining certain background knowledge of the student and the families as well as it would be wished to know a little bit more about the teachers in order to know who it is the children are dealing with.

Furthermore, with the intention of serving the child’s best interest, it is necessary for teachers and parents to be in bilateral contact so that reasons can easily and as early as possible be found or seen when a child behaves in a weird way or performs badly at school. If no interaction takes place, possible reasons will not be seen and this will not be for the benefit of the child.

I have a student who was adopted and I had never known that, and he had had a lot of difficulties with his real family... (Teacher, male, 51)

Only through own research the teacher found out about this and had wished to know about it earlier in order to understand actions as well as reactions of the student better.

...for me the contact to the parents is often not enough, but eventually, how could I gain better contact, and accordingly, when should this happen? (Teacher, male, 51)

Gaining, having and keeping contact between teachers and parents (families) seems to be an obstacle. It is not seen as sufficient and both - teachers and parents - feel the need for a better cooperation; however, each group regards the other group as responsible for making the first move. Teachers would like to know about (sudden or deeply moving) changes within the family as parents would like to be informed if the attitude of their child changes dramatically and/or suddenly during school attendance. This last argument is supported by Sacher (2004) who refers to school and its provision of information as insufficient (cited in Griebel and Niesel 2009, 63). Moreover, parents would like to know a little bit more about the teacher as a person. Referring to an article written by Griebel and Niesel (2009), a teacher becomes an important person for the parents, a person whom parents need to rely on and build up trust to. Neither teachers nor parents feel that the cooperation partner informs about any important happenings in time, if at all. A further problem is that if parents inform about family or personal
matters they feel that teachers block these. One example is that a mother told about problems her child might face at school because of a big change within the family and in return was asked why she came to inform about it as it would be a normal happening within the life of many families. Therefore, no extra thought or kindness could be given to the child. The mother on the other hand just wanted to let the teachers know about the issue so that they were aware of it, nothing else intended.

It was also considered as beneficial by the parents if teachers had a greater knowledge about the students’ situation within the village.

Many teachers do not come from Senden, accordingly they do not know what kind of activities are offered here nor what kind of conventions and customs. (Mother, 54)

An example was given that teachers kept scheduling exams and tasks for that day which is exactly one day after a carnival celebration which is traditionally held every year and is the biggest event of the year for an area of the village. Of course, students would struggle writing class tests this day but since teachers did not know, they also did not care and had classes write tests.

For a mutual understanding contact between teachers and parents is essential. Be that as it may, it became clear in the interviews that contact, especially from the teacher’s side, is only wished for if there are problems. Parents stopped attending parent - teachers meetings when they were repeatedly told ‘Ah, Mrs. …, yeah, everything is fine. How are you?’, as they did not feel that they would have to go to meetings if teachers were not able to say anything of importance about their sons or daughters. Only one teacher says that he also contacts parents if the child has done something really well and not only in negative cases. Asking a mother whether she ever got a call from school about something good or positive her children had done, she replied with an obvious ‘Ach Quatsch!’, meaning ‘Ah, nonsense!’ in a very harsh way. This statement is in accordance to school communication as Walper and Roos (2001) understand it, claiming that school communications seem to be restricted to discussing problems (cited in Griebel and Niesel 2009, 63). For enabling the best possible support for the child a bidirectional communication is of need and also seen but still not established.
Although the relationship between teachers and students can still be very similar to the one in the past and thus quite hierarchical, as parents see it, teachers claim that they use more and more methods which lead away from pure teacher – centred teaching and make their pupils act or debate topics in addition to using group work. Curricula changed and teachers aim for an education that is more active and in step with actual practice.

The contents of the teaching changed, well, the curricula have changed during time. It is more users - oriented. Well, I think it is closer to life. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s) (This statement refers to a Realschule and its curriculum. It could be different in other school types.)

Some mothers were still of the opinion that the curricula are too specific in many cases. Knowledge children gain is considered as too specialized and the need to make it closer to real life was seen. If a person wants to specialize in a certain area, university studies could do that. Instead a bit more ‘everyday knowledge’ should be included in the curricula because many things considered as ‘average and everyday knowledge’ are actually not any longer as neither families nor schools teach them to the children. Also, it is considered as necessary to teach interdisciplinary as also real life is not just packed in different categories but every thing is linked to each other. This would be of importance to be learnt at school, as well. Besides, some teachers prefer being part of the student group instead of acting as the ‘leader’ who is above the others.

My teachers back then did not manage to show that e.g. they are part of the class community as well. (…) and I believe that at the moment we pay more attention to where the students are, what kind of students do I have in front of me and how can I get knowledge across to them in the best way. (Teacher, male, 31)

The idea of working in a community or group becomes more important and the ‘we’-idea with it. In a ‘Bullerby’ – childhood children should not feel constricted or looked down on; they should have the feeling of being part of something big with the purpose of advancement.

As mentioned by one teacher, there is some kind of triangle of parents, teachers and the students and through this cooperation the best possible outcome for the student should be achieved. In order to make it work the cooperation and most of all communication
between the participants need to be improved. It is also important that all the groups are included in action taking and not only one or two of them. If there is a decision to be made concerning the student, it is beneficial if all parties know about the matter and what is going on, at least until the child reaches a certain age.

Well, most reasonable, I think, is, when one accompanies the child while going to talk to the teacher so that one gets to know both points of view. (...) Well, and then it depends on the age of the child. (Mother, 48)

Whereas from a teacher’s point of view parents would be wished for to do a little bit more of upbringing and reflection about whether or not they would like to teach a child behaving like their own, parents wish for some more information, even if the child is not a problem child.

Well, if there is nothing from their point of view to talk about then I think that they (the teachers) would like to be left alone. (Mother, 52)

What does the cooperation look like if one hears a statement like this?

One cannot at all be in contact to the teachers, if one wanted to. (Mother, 46)

5.1.3 Free time activities

Teachers as well as parents mentioned free time and free time activities within the interviews when they talk about childhood. After analysing the data from the interviews, it appears that in a child’s free time a mix of organised free time activities and time for themselves and meeting friends gives a description of the perfect picture. The subsequent paragraphs will deepen this topic and look at organised activities as well as ‘free time’. In addition, the support and involvement which parents need to provide in connection to organised free time activities will be considered. Furthermore, a ‘timetable childhood’ as well as the influence of media will be dealt with.

Organised free time activities are part of the child’s socialisation. Mostly, children and parents choose these activities together although the child is the one who tells his/her wishes and ideas. Still, some parents make suggestions, too.
Well, partly. Often it (ideas) came from the children and I always supported it. Because I think, doing something is alright … (Mother, 52)

Only in one case it was said that a child ‘more or less’ voluntarily takes part in a certain activity.

It is not her ‘favourite thing’ but she has to (do it) because mum says sport once a week is necessary. It is not alright if you just stay home. (Mother, 46)

It can be recognised of what significance these activities are for parents, being concerned with their child’s wellbeing.

Moreover, organised free time activities such as sport clubs, music clubs or any other social happening clubs have an educational value, may it be connected to school knowledge or general knowledge. For all of the interviewees it was visible that education takes place also during the afternoons or evenings within organised leisure time.

They (free time clubs) carry out a lot. That is, for me, also an educational institution, sport clubs or music schools or other clubs, whatever. (Teacher, male, 51)

All participants within the research also took it for granted that having children participate in organised free – time activities includes the support and involvement of the parents. If the parents do not care about their children’s leisure time, they will not propose their children to take part in any club nor will they discuss ideas with the children, comply with e.g. driving services or buffet gifts for sport events. Teachers also consider it as another positive aspect about free time if parents spend a lot of time with their children as well as take them on family trips. These can be educational and good for a child’s development, e.g. visits to the zoo where the children learn a lot about animals and nature.

On the contrary, a childhood full of organised free time activities was condemned, especially by some mothers. Mentioning the phenomenon of a ‘timetable childhood’ awoke massive criticism. Although organised free time activities are wanted, it is clearly not wanted that children have a large amount of different organised activities
every day. As Jenks (2005, 67) mentions, the whole being of a child is delineated and paced according to a timetable. There appear to be certain times for everything a child does, be that eating or sleeping. Timetables are surely used in schools but that is not the only place where children act according to timetables. Thus, a timetable and its regularity take over a part in a person’s life and therefore influence one’s style of life (Jenks 2005, 81). Time is a strategy of control (Jenks 2005, 67). Jenks (2005, 81) outlines, that for a child even ‘playing’ takes place during a certain time of this regulated and divided day. The question is whether this is really wanted.

What I considered upsetting was that during primary school time children are not able to make appointments on the way to school or at school. They make preliminary agreements and that with the proposition, we will ask again at home and then we will call. (Mother, 52)

The interviewees’ opinions coincide with Ziegler’s (1996) who feels that children seem to lack time for free time (cited in Mansel 1996, 75). In their opinion, children should have time just for themselves and should not have to clarify whether they have time in the afternoon to meet up with friends or not but just be free to do so. Acting like this, children seem really depending on their parents or the activities they have and live according to a strict timetable from young age onwards.

I found it shattering that children do not know in advance whether they have something (in the afternoon)… (Mother, 52)

Other comments about this matter described that it was clearly an advantage for the parents’ own free time and something to keep the children entertained with without doing anything about it themselves or getting them seated in front of the television.

Well, I do not know, maybe this is a prejudice; I always have the feeling that people just want to get rid of their children… (Mother, 48)

In general, the interviews showed that there is no need to entertain children the whole day every day as they need to learn how to handle time when they are on their own without getting bored or even experience being bored every now and then.
I believe that if these children do not have anything to do at times, they just do not know what to do with their time anymore… well, I find that quite horrible. (Mother, 48)

That media is of increasing importance nowadays is not only something which Hurrelmann (1994, 169) refers to, but it could also be seen in the interviews. It became clear that there seems to be a constant worry that children do not know what to do anymore with time they just have on their own without any technical devices such as computer, internet or television; it is the worry that they are not able to entertain themselves or use their imagination. Media and especially the internet are really two-sided phenomena which are not easy to judge about as they include so many things. In a ‘Bullerby’- childhood the use of these media should not be prohibited but instead it should be regulated and taken care of what they are used for. It is seen critically by teachers and parents if children use e.g. computers throughout most of their free time and as computers seem to be such a big hobby of young people, computer prohibition is used as a way of punishment if children misbehave.

Computer? Well, I find it, as well, completely horrible. (…) more often, that we had also said, well the computer will not be used for a week now… (Mother, 48)

Repeatedly the use of computers was described as a ‘waste of time’ or ‘useless’ as children only play games or spend a huge amount of time on social networks or any internet pages.

On the other hand, it is forgotten too easily that the usage of computers is not only for playing games or ‘wasting’ time but also research can be done and knowledge broadened as well as communication around the world enhanced. Moreover, the computer skills children nowadays have are immense and the computer ability of many children might be a lot higher than those of their parents. A lot of time is spend in front of computers and television which also leads to students coming to school the next morning overly tired and wondering why.

…and if one asks, ‘yes, I did this and that yesterday night until 10 pm and …’ (Teacher, female, 33)
Also, many students have problems with concentrating on just one single matter as teachers described in the interviews. They get bored with it easily as they are not interested in it and cannot force themselves to focus on it anyway. Through a short-lived society children feel the need to be included everywhere and know about everything that is happening around them. That is another reason why they cannot focus anymore on one matter for a longer time.

…this happens because they play considerably less outside, as we ourselves used to do or I did in the past, instead they hang around at home more often, in front of the TV, computer and think that it continues like that in school as well, that one sits down and in the front everything happens excitingly and if it is not exciting, then one cannot, unlike at home, change the channel but rather it just gets boring and this happens increasingly that it just gets too boring for the students… (Teacher, male, 51)

It seems students want school to be exciting and would appreciate it as some fun free time activity with not too high expectations and demands.

To push oneself, that is what I am often missing (in today’s students). Also, the meaning of ‘school’ to an individual. What kind of space school occupies. Free time is a very important thing, more important in many areas than school and that way school has a lower value. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)

Even if the teachers try to motivate their students through different methods to make the learning more active or effective, students get bored. Teachers try to work on the matter but the main aspect might be to keep bored students quiet so that they do not distract other students.

Then I have to pay attention that I, that they do not disturb, but in the end I cannot change the channel and/or do the jumping jack. I do have other tasks as being the animator and I have to apply some special knowledge. (Teacher, male, 51)

Additionally, it is of disadvantage to spend one’s whole free time with these technical devices and not do anything else. Children’s ability in physical activity diminishes for example and for some children it is hard to just throw and catch a ball nowadays.

… that they can do immensely less concerning their movements because they just do not move a lot at home anymore and are less active in sport clubs during
their free time… climbing up something or jumping over something gets more dangerous and exhausting for them… (Teacher, male, 51)

Here it is seen that parents should help out concerning this matter and be the ones who introduce opportunities to their children, also propose sport clubs or other organised free time activities which keep children from spending all of their time at home in front of the screen. Parents should show some interest in their children’s activities and guide them.

According to most of the interviewees, the familiar background has an enormous influence on the children’s free time activities. It is not only about the support or transportation (by car) to events, but also about attitudes. It helps e.g. if parents act as role models.

Well, if parents e.g. exemplify that they are committed to a club (…) then this gets carried forward to the children quickly and if the parents are less present then they (children) will more likely be at home on their own and find themselves in front of the computer. (…) Depending on what is exemplified to one… (Teacher, female, 33)

Furthermore, care and mindfulness towards the children are important as well as appreciation is. It was considered as a principle that these factors can be found and no child is just left on its own without any ideas or advice. And although granting one’s children a hobby might also be influenced by the parents’ financial situation and ability, a lack of money should not be used as an excuse for having the children at home in front of the television as also convenient opportunities for free or a small amount of money can be found, according to the interviewees.

As a result, the mix between occupied free time and free time which is literally free time for meeting friends or reading a book or similar activities is essential. It is about giving children meaningful things to do but also about giving them time to use their creativity for free playing or recreation, for doing arts, writing poems, playing outdoors. Parents are supposed to keep an eye on the children but give them free space as well. By this, positive development will take place.
5.1.4 Engagement and will power

Coming to the end of this chapter, these following paragraphs will consider the engagement and interaction of today’s students. The picture of the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood demands children to stand up for themselves and parents as well as teachers to support students according to their abilities and not put unnecessary pressure on them. Subsequently, these aspects will be looked into.

Unlike in the past, children nowadays dare to discuss with teachers and ask for explanations if they do not agree or understand something the teacher did.

Students nowadays are considerably open – minded and not as in snotty or naughty but they discuss their rights more, they do not let teachers twist them around their fingers anymore, as we did in the past, and are not daring to say anything but rather want to clarify matters. (Mother, 48)

Hence, children or young people appear more independent and it seems they have the heart to achieve something if they consider it important for themselves. The authoritarian structure seems to diminish in institutions such as school. Seifried (2011) explains that 50 or 100 years ago students felt powerless towards teachers. Nowadays, many teachers feel powerless concerning students displaying behavioural problems. Whereas politely asking for explanations occurs as a positive change, teachers on the other hand complain that students as well as parents get progressively judging and demanding and question or criticise more or less anything coming from a teacher if they are not satisfied with it.

...if I do not give the right mark then the mark is questioned right away. Not the child is called into question but the teacher is called into question. ... It is some kind of hobby of parents... the local value of teachers is just declining and parents think, they can join in any conversation and interfere and yes, I think that is a pity. (Teacher, male, 51)

In this way, proactive behaviour of students which was seen as something positive earlier is turned into something quite negative. It leads to the thought that children think that they can get through with everything. They do not need to question themselves or their own actions but just look for the blame in someone or something else. This shows
an ‘untouchable’ kind of thinking which works well with ignorance and an attitude of ‘I am right and I do not care what others say.’

When sending children to school many parents are supportive and try to help their child as much as possible in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the child. The question is how much support is supportive and what turns into pressure and brings negative effects? Although there is not yet any grading evaluation system in the first years of primary school, children need to learn how to interact within a class community for the first time and even if not with marks from 1-6 (grading system in Germany) their actions will be evaluated and this alone puts a lot of pressure on them. Also, Pekrun and Helmke (1993) argue that failure and success during school play a big role in a child’s development and influence a child’s self – perception and confidence (cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 572).

It is a big step for a child to be evaluated (…) and to find his/her position. (Mother, 52)

Therefore, it is only just and reasonable if parents try to support their children, maybe help out with homework and additionally teach their children that it is important to perform well at school and to put work into it.

Well, actually we (parents) always say, we go to work and you go to work, too. That is not your free time activity but instead has priority and it needs to be taken seriously and is important for your future lives. (Mother, 46)

Throughout the parents - interviews, the idea was gained that parents hope the best for their children when sending them to school; hope that they integrate well and get a good start in the new environment. The expectations were not linked to performance but more to accurate behaviour and fulfilling duties such as doing homework and taking the needed material to school. There was a hope that the children would do well at school but no expectations.

Contrary, parents feel that teachers put too much pressure on the children when they are expecting that every child needs to be perfect in their subject and thus in any subject as every teacher has the same expectation, seeing his own subject as the most important
one. The pressure put on children from school just becomes enormous and often children cannot manage.

A teacher should definitely know that he deals with different individual human beings who also all have different backgrounds. (...) I would just wish for teachers who do not teach subject matters but rather children. (...) showing a greater interest in the children and not only in their subject, in their teaching material. (Mother, 54)

In the best case scenario a child should be supported in accordance to his/her strengths and weaknesses and should be seen as an individual. It should be accepted that not every child can perform well in every subject and that everybody has strengths and weaknesses. Parents as well as teachers should be supportive and understanding and always acting in accordance to the child’s needs and abilities. Pekrun and Helmke (1993) mention that a teacher always influences a student’s self – development, considering this, the importance of a good relationship becomes clear (cited in Markefka and Naucke 1993, 572/3). Furthermore, it is important to let the child participate in decision making for those decisions that affect him/her directly. This is also of importance for the person’s development and his/her acting as an adult. (Limber and Kaufman, 2002; Melton, 2006 cited in Hevener Kaufman and Rizzini 2009, 429-30.)

In contrast, parents sometimes put a lot of pressure on their children without noticing as they just want the best for their child, as teachers explained. If a child struggles with performing well enough at e.g. Realschule, parents still do anything in order to keep the child at Realschule and not have him/her change to Hauptschule, no matter what that means for the child. This is due to a quite negative reputation of Hauptschule without this claim necessarily reflecting the truth. Parents prefer having their child at Realschule no matter how much he/she struggles and often do not consider the pressure and negative feelings the child has due to failure and bad marks. They endanger the child’s psychological wellbeing just to keep him/her away from Hauptschule.

The child, of course, needs to reach a certain graduation in order to advance. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)
In this case, also a lot of money is put into private lessons and this has an impact on the child again, meaning less free time and more educational work and in worse cases more pressure and feelings of failure, too, as grades not necessarily improve since matters are just beyond the child’s abilities. And although grading systems surely always have to be ‘discussed’ and will never be 100% fair - since giving marks is always led by a certain amount of sympathy or antipathy towards the other person - parents should consider the psychological effects which always receiving bad grades have on a child. Teachers also find a difficulty in parents expecting a lot from their children but not supporting them in any way.

Sure, they have of course the expectation, that they (the children) will make an acceptable graduation and well, do not care enough about the children from my point of view, accompany them too little here in school. Basically, it is just some kind of triangle in which we as teachers not only work together with the students but also have to work together with the parents and there is often a weak point in this ‘triad’, in this cooperation. (Teacher, male, 51)

Throughout these subchapters images of childhood in Senden were described. I will sum up the subchapter with a table that summarises the ideas in the following.

5.1.5 Comparing two pictures of childhood

The following table summarises and contrasts the aspects which, according to the interviewees, are defining factors of a ‘Bullerby’ – or ‘Huckleberry Finn’ – childhood. Parents are always involved in education, be that as silent or passive partners or active ones (Griebel and Niesel 2009, 64). It appears that factors which are of importance to achieve a ‘Bullerby’ – childhood are active parental support and involvement as well as interest in the child’s activities, be this at school or during free time. It is seen as important to show care and devotion and act together with teachers in accordance to the child’s needs and abilities in order to gain and maintain the best outcome for the child.

It is necessary to find methods for families and the educator to act together to promote the academic as well as social development of a child (Griebel and Niesel 2009, 64). In contrast, leaving the child on his/her own and neither showing any interest in the child’s school career nor other activities lead to a negative outcome. Communication, which is important in the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood case, is missing and the best outcome for the child cannot be achieved.
### TABLE 1: Two pictures of childhood

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bullerby – childhood</th>
<th>Huckleberry Finn – childhood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familial support</strong></td>
<td>* parental support and active involvement</td>
<td>* ‘latchkey children’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* child experiences care and devotion</td>
<td>* parents show little interest in child’s school career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* parents show interest in child’s school career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact and interaction between the school, the family and the child</strong></td>
<td>* good contact and interaction between teachers and parents</td>
<td>* less mutual contact and interaction between teacher and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* some background knowledge about everyone involved</td>
<td>* teachers only want contact in negative cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* update about sudden behavioural change of the child as well as influencing family situations</td>
<td>* parents do not participate in school happenings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free time activities</strong></td>
<td>* mix of organised free time activities/hobbies and actual free time for the child</td>
<td>* ’timetable childhood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* parents’ involvement and support in/for child’s free time activities</td>
<td>* children do not know when they are free to meet up with (school) friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* ambivalent role of the media (e.g. research and gaining knowledge)</td>
<td>* little parental support and interest in child’s activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* ambivalent role of the media (e.g. playing games)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement and will power</strong></td>
<td>* children stand up for themselves and their rights</td>
<td>* children act rebelliously towards teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* parents and teachers support needs and abilities of the child in accordance to his/her needs and abilities</td>
<td>* children might become selfish and ‘untouchable’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* teachers as well as parents are too demanding and put a lot of pressure on the child</td>
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In the subsequent subchapter upbringing and education will be considered in a more detailed way in order to find answers to my second research question of how education and upbringing determine childhood.
5.2 Upbringing and education

In the previous subchapters different conditions which are essential in order to gain the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood - as the interviewed teachers and parents perceive it - were discussed. In this subchapter, a closer look at education and upbringing will be taken as they have their influence on childhood, as well. What should the matters of upbringing and education be like for providing the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood?

All of the interviewees saw education and upbringing as essential within childhood and ensured that there is a strong connection between the two phenomena so that they should be thought about in interrelation to one another and not just on their own. Nonetheless, some interviewees identified education and upbringing as very different things. As upbringing and education build up an enormous part of childhood, it was worth finding out how teachers and parents think about these matters and who they see responsible for these issues today. Although, this complex of themes seems to be a hot spot within contemporary discussion because everybody considers it as in need of change, ideas on how it should be changed and who should do it differ quite a lot. In my interviews for the teachers and parents I asked the questions of ‘What is education/upbringing?’ and ‘Whose task is it in your opinion?’ and interestingly, the answers I got from both groups were really similar and can all be categorized in the same groups.

5.2.1 What is education? What is upbringing?

In the theoretical part of my study we already became aware of some attempts of defining education and upbringing. In the following, I will summarise the ideas the interviewees had about these two topics.

All in all, education was referred to as teaching general knowledge to the children, especially knowledge concerning the subjects at school. Upbringing, on the other hand, was about values and norms that form the character of a person and about social interacting skills. One mother reflected on upbringing and education as such and said:
I believe that a child who has a great character and no school knowledge, sure, it will not go far (…) but I think a good temper, therefore a good upbringing, is still worth a lot. Better surely, if one has a good education with it. (Mother, 48)

Upbringing was perceived as forming the child towards a cultural being and in close connection to education.

Well, that the child finds his/her way in your culture, in which you are living at that moment. Yet, it does connect to education as culture - led techniques are learnt within this upbringing already. But education goes beyond that scope (…). Knowledge transfer is very important here, but then as well other things which cannot be taught within the family such as group work and guiding to certain techniques. (Mother, 52)

It was partly hard for the interviewees to distinguish between both matters as they were identified as working hand in hand. Building up knowledge in the very beginning (teaching about colours or week days) is e.g. seen as upbringing work done by parents which teachers in schools should build up on later. Most important concerning upbringing is the acquisition of equitable social behaviour and interaction nonetheless. Interestingly, values which were explicitly mentioned to be important are honesty, respect and manners.

Well, the worst for me would be if a child lies (…) because that is an extremely high loss of trust which one experiences. So, lying would be really bad upbringing for me. (Mother, 48)

Having said this, education is then the part that builds up on the ‘upbringing knowledge’, deepening it and getting more specific. It is also about keeping children interested in matters and offering them opportunities to learn more. It is about making children use their brains and improving their interpersonal development. Basically, education was referred to as mainly dealing with regard to contents and professional learning.

5.2.2 Whose task is it?

For a child’s best possible outcome, upbringing and education should be collateral and done by parents, teachers and additionally other people who interact with the child. It
was mentioned that all the extracurricular activities children take part in are also instances that take over education and upbringing.

In principle extracurricular groups, music, sports, artistic activities, which are offered, take over upbringing tasks and technically offer education, as well. (Mother, 52)

The interviewees agreed that the biggest part of upbringing should surely be done by the parents but should be carried on by teachers at school, too. Nonetheless, parents should accompany the process and be aware of their own main responsibility. Hence, it is part of today's society that also teachers need to be included in raising children and turn them into responsible citizens.

Referring to Oberhuemer and Ulrich (1997), early – childhood – care and – education is part of the child and youth welfare system which includes a social pedagogy approach (cited in Leu and Schelle 2009, 5). In this approach, the matters of care, upbringing and education are considered as inseparable elements. Following this idea, also throughout a child’s life these elements should be combined, which leads to cooperation between different actors which are considered to at least provide one of these elements. This would e.g. include any free time club, institution as well as family and other people who are close to the child.

On the other hand, parents fail concerning the upbringing of their children within the first years already and do not spend too much time with them in any case. Parents do not show any interest in the child’s activity at school and do not go through newly learnt matters with the child. They do not manage to keep the child’s interest awake or enhance it although the interviewees regarded this as very important. Even teachers are of the opinion that in many cases they – as teachers - can just provide a learning opportunity but not everything can be covered. That is why it would be important to keep the child’s interest up at home and in the free time, as well.

But the deepening or keeping the interest, this has to happen at home when parents simply check up on something or take a share in what the child has learnt. And that one says, oh wow, ok, explain to me and tell me… (Mother, 54)
Moreover, basic manners or knowledge, such as being able to name the colours is often not known by small children any more before they go to school, as came up during the interviews. They oftentimes lack interaction skills and habits and just care about themselves. With changes in the society, many parents work full time during the day and just see their children in the evenings. It appears that many parents are then too tired or stressed to sit down with their children and teach them manners, values or knowledge which were considered as normal in the past. For that reason, issues which were considered as basic knowledge in the past can no longer be understood as common and everyday knowledge, as one mother described.

5.2.3 Problems and difficulties concerning upbringing and education

Concerning the issues of upbringing and education the interviewed parents as well as teachers realized some problems which have an influence on top of being caused by today’s society.

One claim, which was opened above, is that in many cases parents do not spend enough time with their children anymore for whatever reason. The society changed and in comparison to the past there are a lot more families in which both parents work. Also, due to new family structures, including e.g. single parent households, parents are forced to go to work in order to make a living and thus are not able to spend a lot of time with their children. This may cause that they neither have the strengths nor energy to learn with their children or teach them about certain manners and values. They furthermore might just see the children in the late evening after a long and stressful day and hardly find any time to sit down with the children and ask them about their day. This has an influence on the communication and perception of actions, as well. As this does not take place, some parents do not get to know too much about their child’s activities, feelings and thoughts and, as assumed in the interviews, there might not be time to teach a child how to behave in a way that is considered right by the majority of the society.

Sometimes problems are e.g. not even seen, because they (parents) are at work the whole day or they do not want to see them or do not talk to teachers about certain matters because they just do not recognize them. (Mother, 54)
Many of these children visit afternoon clubs or stay at school longer so that they do not need to be at home on their own. Through this, certain patterns which used to be learnt within a family are not passed on to them. They ‘learn’ their social skills and social behaviour in care institutions and seldom from their parents or within the family and so many things get lost such as basic knowledge of formerly well known every day commodities. Also, the phenomenon that there is a greater extent of families with only one child might not always be beneficial for the development of the children. It was imagined by the interviewees that an only child in many cases lacks certain social skills and that there is a bigger ‘Ellenbogenmentalität’ (dog – eat – dog mentality), meaning that every child just tries to get his/her own needs fulfilled without being able to cooperate or share.

That children just do not know colours anymore or games or that they are able to lose as well, because everyone just always, as an only child, within his/her family wins, because the advantage is automatically given to the child. Or also the matter of appreciation, that crayons do not need to be thrown away when they are stump but that they can be sharpened or should be sharpened (…). All this gets lost nowadays because everything is there in the lap of luxury and because often parents want to offer their children everything in the short period of time which they spend together. (Mother, 54)

These changes within society lead to a transformation in many schools, too. School nowadays needs to take over social tasks which used to be fulfilled by the family. Along with this, school of course still has the educational task.

Societal conditions changed in that way that family does not carry out what used to be carried out in the past. (Mother, 54)

Because of breaking down or diminishing family structure and societal structures social coexistence becomes a greater challenge, surely with an impact on children. They might feel lost or not cared for or just lacking certain habits, manners and knowledge which were taken for granted in the past.

5.2.4 Changing role of the school and teachers

All this changes the work of a teacher and due to these differences teachers should be able to show more social competences than they often have, as some parents claim.
School nowadays is clearly seen as a lot more than just an educational institution and many rules or ideas which should have been taught to children by parents before entering school are lacking, which makes it a task of teachers to fill in on that. They again have the primary task to educate the children and bring specific knowledge closer to them so where can time be found to teach children manners and basic things they should already know? The time teachers need to invest in making a class a group and in forming rules is time which is taking away hours and hours of knowledge transfer concerning certain subjects which would be the main task within a school. Still, if the surrounding for students does not work, also teaching will fail and thus it is necessary that certain rules and manners are established.

Well I cannot, if the upbringing is not, if the surrounding is not in order, then I cannot facilitate or teach something. That is an important matter that needs to be connected. Otherwise school cannot function. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)

But the more one needs to work on the settings, the more time for conveying knowledge to students gets lost. Additionally, an increasing amount of tasks and problems which are handed over from parents to teachers, the blame which schools have to take in for many matters increase, too.

…If something does not work, then school is somehow the one thing to be blamed. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)

If school is the instance taking the blame because families and their influence on upbringing seem to be decreasing, are there changes which should be made in order to support children in a better way?

5.3 Need for an all – day school?

Previously, many discords and inconveniences that exist in the field of contemporary education and upbringing were described. And exactly these struggles bring new thoughts and ideas into the discussion of Germany changing its school system to an all-day system in the whole country.
During the interviews, I felt that often parents as well as teachers were still sceptical towards the idea of an all-day school, no matter what advantages they could notice. And although all of the interviewees recognized beneficial as well as contra productive features in the idea, many times it appears that it seems challenging for everyone to completely let go of what the system used to be and try to move on to a new one.

In the following, I am going to investigate the idea of a change of the school system and with it the changes in childhood. The main issue to be considered is the approach that should be brought about and additionally and obviously the end result. What should be achieved and how?

Throughout the interviews it became quite clear that a vast change like a modification of a school system cannot be arranged within days or months. The issue takes a lot of planning and observing and can only be put into practise step by step. Changes within society such as both parents working and therefore children in need of nursing or the lack of learning manners and values today’s children often seem to have, lead to the idea that quality supervision for children is needed.

An all-day school seems like a plausible way to achieve this, keeping the children busy and active within a learning environment as well as challenged during the adult’s working hours. Even if many schools in Germany have different kinds of after-school clubs or supervision already, it is not area-wide and comprehensive. Different schools offer different after-school activities and have different possibilities as well and there is no overall curriculum how these clubs should function. Therefore, the pedagogical or psychological care in these activities can be questioned, too, and not always a positive outcome for a child taking part in the club can be promised. While these clubs are e.g. supposed to offer support with homework or suggest and provide different free time activities for the children, there are in fact examples which show quite oppositional behaviour. Examples are clubs which have no trained staff, being unable of supervising the children in a safe way. Having these cases, would it not make sense to implement the all-day school and have a professional supervision until the late afternoon as the children just go to school for a longer time during the day? This would make sure that they spend their time in an educational environment under professional supervision.
The idea behind this sounds simple and profound. Schools should extend the lessons until the late afternoon. In almost any other country children go to school during the afternoon and it is not an excessive demand for the children. They cope perfectly and achieve great results in learning. So, why not do it in Germany, as well? PISA shows that this is the way to do it and if Germany adapts to this thought, too, then problems within education should diminish and the outcome should be better. Despite, what many do not consider is that PISA is an educational study and does not pay attention to upbringing as a main concern. What should also be thought about is, in what way an all-day school works. Is it only lessons for the whole day or are there free lessons in between or a longer lunch hour or different clubs to choose from in the afternoon?

Listening to the teachers I talked to, I learnt that most of them considered it impossible to teach during the afternoon in the same way they do during the morning. They referred to children who have difficulties concentrating during the morning lessons and how would it be possible to keep these children focused during the afternoon then, especially if they have never made that experience before and it is a novelty to them. Whereas - also in Germany - older students, e.g. those in the last three years of school before getting their Abitur, do have afternoon lessons, most of the younger students go home at the latest around half past one and because of that are really not used to staying in lessons for the whole day.

But still, what the ordinary citizen learns from the state about PISA is that other countries do better although or as a result of having all-day schools. Furthermore, students for at least the last decade got used to hearing about the prime case example of Finland whenever they started to complain about too much work or changes which should be made. Teachers seem to love referring to Finland while describing that social interaction, health care and education are all connected and carried out in a better way in the Northern European country than in Germany. As Allmendinger (2011) states, there have never come so many people to Finland or Canada to have a look at how school functions better than here (in Germany). PISA results whatever the circumstances are; I do not want to discuss outcomes or what is right or wrong about them in this study. I would just like to refer to what I learnt during the interviews. In general, international comparison studies, such as PISA, were seen as beneficial. It was judged as favourable to have these studies just in order to compare and improve.
I think it is very important because only the one who compares himself to others, who competes to others, can change for the better. (Teacher, male, 31)

The results international studies show, reach the public and this is considered as advantageous because it should get clear to everyone that changes in the school system are needed and in general, it is useful to consider other ways of working or new ideas which can be gained through these tests. A discussion needs to be initiated and then solutions for each country must be found within the relevant country.

Contrary, the attempt of studies comparing different school systems was thought about as difficult. Tests were not seen as objective.

For me tests are not objective in terms of being able to say that this is really the better school system now. This is the way it could work and we should also do it this way. Well, I think that this is a fairly simple conclusion. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)

Furthermore, teachers felt that it is always the schools that need to make a lot of changes due to bad results in the studies but other instances, such as the department of education, are not too concerned and not enough is done about achieving a better education from the political perspective. A need is seen in e.g. changes of conditions at schools. Without making certain changes, there is no sense in adopting practices from other countries if they just cannot be applied. What is wished for by many of the interviewees are smaller classes, containing less students, and more financial aid being put into the education system. Necessary changes as employing more teachers and staff could be achieved if more finances were available. The task of educating students would become easier if there were less students matching one teacher and this teacher could spend more time with the students on educational as well as upbringing matters. Therefore, more individual care could be given to pupils.

In the end, I would simply hire more teachers and reduce the class sizes. Actually, it is quite easy to improve our education. (Teacher, male, 51)

So far, most of the interviewees felt that changes have been made too hastily which do not bring improvements at all.
Principally everything is blandished here in Germany but nothing happens. It just continues becoming worse with our education. Our education just continues becoming worse? (Teacher, male, 51)

Hence, if changes are being made, these should be well grounded and thought over and not just done all of a sudden. If schools change everywhere in the country to all – day schools, the methodology and ideas of school should be reconsidered, too. Would it be worth paying attention to the way of teaching especially in the afternoon lessons, the structure and opportunities school buildings offer?

Most of the schools in Germany are not built for an all – day teaching. Schools often do not have the capacity for school canteens nor any recreation or club rooms. Many times they do not have the facility for a big amount of different activity clubs or the needed equipment for those either. Whereas in other countries, such as the USA, students can choose to take part in different clubs during the afternoon, this is rarely possible in Germany. There is some offer of activities but the range is not that big and there is no money or sponsoring put into those. So far, it was more that these clubs or activities would be out of school happenings and not in connection to the schools at all. Would this show another step while changing the school system, take independent clubs in and let them make offers within the schools?

Also in all – day schooling: I can imagine quite well that students stay in schools longer (…) it can work and for many children it can be quite important that they have this kind of environment because it might not work at home properly, but this can only happen if it is organized in the right way. (Teacher, female, beginning of her 40s)

It is believed that all – day school in Germany could work just fine; there is no strict acting against it in Senden. As mentioned earlier, it appears that the interviewees are not too familiar with the subject of an all – day school and therefore a bit suspicious. But the main reason is that the whole process should be worked on in order to make it a well organized change to the better and not just a rushed one.

I think that school must have a greater value, nowadays in the field of all – day schools; I believe that school nowadays has to put more effort into this but then the possibilities from the outside must be provided. (Mother, 52)
The last statement in the previous paragraph gives us an insight on why a proper all-day school can be of importance these days due to societal and familial changes.

Yes, let’s say it that way; for parents, who need to work, it is a great thing because the children are cared for properly and brought forward, too. And for parents who prefer having their children around a bit longer, it is different. It depends on what you want. (Mother, 48)

One thought was that in case school plays a bigger role in children’s lives and family time diminishes as it seems to be at the moment, it would be important to also have another approach to education. This is not necessarily meant for the ordinary subjects, including Maths, German and English but e.g. for the afternoon activities. With the claim that everyday manners and knowledge get lost, school could open up and for instance work together with senior citizens. This would strengthen the community idea and old and young people could work together in a mutual way of giving and taking while also sharing everyday knowledge.

People out of ordinary life could come and say, ‘Come on, let’s build a nesting box for birds together, I will show you how it works and at the same time we can make an excursion to a nearby swamp and see where birds breed and what they look like.’ Well, just to get ‘the life’ closer to schools. (Mother, 54)

Whatever the changes within the German school system will look like, it is important to pay attention to the needs of the children and whatever the struggles teachers, parents and officials have, it should not be forgotten about that all the actions are eventually concerning the greater good for the child. It is not about blaming one another or working against each other, neither seeing who is wrong or right.

If a change of the system is done too rapidly and thoughtlessly, it will not be of benefit for the whole society. Concerning the implementation of all-day schools one parent gave a clear statement:

I would wish that it is not necessary. (Mother, 52)

Still, this parent thought that the all-day school will come and therefore has the idea about it as a more or less boarding school upbringing with educators, right facilities and
a lot of work in smaller groups in which students also live. They will live together, do their homework together and take part in different activities. Moreover, food will be prepared together and home tasks fulfilled. There will be a special worker ‘housemother/father’ for every group, too.

Yes, well, you have to somehow compensate for a family. (Mother, 52)

Whether a change in the school system takes place or not, almost all of the women and men interviewed, considered it as important to employ other professionals as just teachers at schools. Clearly, the need to do so was seen as bigger when all – day schools were to be implemented area – wide because then school should turn into a living environment even more. Within schools a need for social workers, nurses, psychologists and caretakers was seen. One of the opinions against these professions at schools, though, was that if it is managed to employ more teachers to schools and therefore make the relationship between students and teachers more personal then teachers could be there for students with problems or difficulties and could help them out as well. Even today there are so called guidance counsellors having an open ear for students and referring them to a psychologist or other people in case they need help. It is just the question in how far students feel comfortable going to one of their teachers to talk to and in how far teachers are capable of giving support.

6 CONCLUSIONS

So far, some main results could be summarized here which came up during the analysis of the interviews. Firstly, throughout the whole interviews mainly two pictures of childhood could be gained, the ‘Bullerby’ – childhood and the ‘Huckleberry Finn’ – childhood. As one of them is some kind of ideal type and the other basically the opposite, one needs to keep in mind that both pictures appear quite extreme and a possible way of experiencing childhood will also lie anywhere in between these two ‘end points’ of the scale. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe that childhood in
Senden is perceived this way by teachers as well as parents. Both groups have equal ideas about what childhood should be like and should definitely not be like.

Furthermore, it could be seen that education and upbringing are closely related with one another and additionally have an effect on the composition of childhood. This could be observed while analysing the interviews as well as in the theoretical part of my thesis.

Another result of the interviews is that in general the idea of an all-day school is received well if the implementation of this kind of school is done in a proper way and not rushed. Through this, the interviewees were of the believe that a well conceived and planned school with a good programme can be of benefit for children, especially for those, who would belong to the category of ‘Huckleberry Finn’ – childhood.

A last point which is worth mentioning is that teachers as well as parents feel the need for a mutual and well-functioning cooperation, interaction and communication with one another. Only by achieving this and working together as partners the best possible outcome for a child can be achieved.

After having outlined the main results of the interviews, I will now draw my own conclusions.

Childhood still depends a lot on the background one has and more precisely, on the family background. How much time do children and parents spend together, how big is the family, do family members interact a lot with one another or do they basically just live together side by side? There are many small matters that influence one’s growing up.

Parents’ attitudes and behaviour as well as the interaction within the family influence one’s growing up a lot. Even if mostly unconscious, a person growing up copies the parents’ behaviour or just adapts certain patterns. So concerning a child’s education and, more precisely, a child’s attitude towards school and learning, one should investigate the parents’ behaviour, as well. If a parent does not show too much interest, a child might feel this attitude and adopt it to himself/herself. Although parents do not always say what they think straight away, in some cases children can sense it and change their
actions in accordance to what they think is right or what would coincide with their parents’ behaviour.

Now, if parents do not go to parent – teacher – meetings even if they are specially invited, what does this say about their attitude towards childhood? Do they think the issues discussed during this evening do neither concern them nor does their child face any problems? One could argue that they are too exhausted to go or even give away the responsibility they have for the child. Without doubt, it is not possible to generalize about these matters and parents might have several reasons for not attending. Still, an increasing number of parents seems to push the responsibility of their own child’s upbringing into someone else’s hands, for instance to the schools and teachers. If something goes wrong, parents tend to blame the school. It displays an easy way out.

This raises the question of why they do not stand up and take time for supporting their child in growing up. Part of it is caused by tiredness and exhaustion. Children need care, and helping them grow up is a full time job bringing new challenges. After all, one works with an individual human being who has his/her own mind and ideas and thus cannot just be told to do something in a certain way but needs to be explained or talked to. Many parents need to work long days in order to make a living. Others do not necessarily have to work but prefer doing so, gaining more recognition. Thus, it is hard to mobilize energy for the family after a long working day.

Since children have to stand up for themselves a lot earlier nowadays, childhood becomes an independent one in the sense of children having to cope with a lot of matters on their very own from an early age onwards. As a consequence of a constantly faster and more short-lived society children have to cope with the ‘eternal universe’ that opens up to them. Whether it is filled with useful or harmful matters needs to be considered. Exactly here, the idea of a virtual childhood comes in. Children spend more time on their own than they used to as they have to rely on themselves more, too. If they do not go out and play with friends, they stay home and are on their own until their parents return from work. That is why media, especially TV and computer (the internet) play a huge role in their lives. This leads to the idea of virtual worlds competing with real life, the family of technology (television, computer, internet) competing with the real family.
It appears that television or internet personalities take over ‘expert’ roles in education and upbringing. The internet, being open to everyone, contains a certain danger because it enables everyone to post whatever he/she feels like. Statements are taken as true although they should be questioned. Many people do not bother to challenge topics on the internet because they take their truth for granted. The ability of criticising or challenging matters or taking a look at them from different points of view has to be taught. Life becomes less lived but more observed through the media.

Moreover, spending time together or talking about one’s day become rare in a fast running society and as a fact; children spend more time with technical devices. Not always to the detriment of the parents who see their children as entertained.

In a wider sense, a short-lived society often has an influence on children’s behaviour. It appears that children lose the ability of being patient as everything needs to happen here and in an instant. It is harder for them to concentrate on just one matter at a time and they seem to give up a lot easier than children in the past. If possible, no challenges are taken because it is tried to avoid difficulties. If there is an easy way to achieve a goal, it will be taken.

But exactly these values getting lost - like patience, endurance, and concentration – make me wonder which influences this will have for the whole society later on, let us say when these children will start their working life.

There exists the phenomenon of parents pushing their children to the limits - or beyond - in order for them to get a good occupation and thus a good life later on. Teachers as well as parents put pressure on the children to perform well at school with education as the ‘number one’ priority. But where is the limit here? Childhood turns into a phase which is considered as a development step towards life later on, as an adult, in the working world. It is regarded as a time of learning for the benefit of the future and judged as only a passageway with not much meaning on its own. It appears to be less about upbringing but more about developing. This again shows quite a strong opinion about childhood from the adult’s point of view. It is not a time on its own but a passage to adulthood.
In spite of all this, I do want to mention that especially in more rural areas and smaller communities, a cared for and family-based childhood can be found. There are parents who accompany and guide their children as much as possible or needed and teach certain rules and patterns of behaviour to them which are considered as important for interaction within the society. Furthermore, there are children who spend a lot of their time outdoors playing with other children from the neighbourhood and complaining to their parents if they call them in when it gets dark because they would like to continue playing.

Also, interaction between teachers, parents and children seem to work out well if all people involved work together on finding solutions for a child’s problems or difficulties in case there are any. The idea is not about how to improve the outcome in a short run but instead in a long run and in a sustainable way.

Childhood remains a multidimensional phenomenon which can never be defined through just one statement. Every person has his/her own idea on it and there are numerous ways which can be chosen in the upbringing and education of a child.

However, the important point is the bringing together of education and upbringing and all partners involved in this process acting in concern. It should be clear that fighting or blaming the respectively other does not help and is of no benefit for the child. It should be remembered that everybody acts to bring out the best of the child and for this matter is does not matter if it was the teacher’s idea or the mother’s or the clarinet teacher’s as long as it is of help for the child. Also, education and upbringing of children should not be a trigger for power struggle between the actors involved and this is often forgotten.

In the end, I would like to present my final research outcome on how childhood is perceived. Despite the fact that there have always been and will always be many possible ways of how to look at childhood, the following aspects kept constantly recurring and thus are of relevance for my study.

Care institutions or afternoon clubs take over an important role nowadays because both parents are full time workers and after school clubs seem to be a good option in order to not have young children on their very own during the whole of the afternoon. Still, at
present these clubs or institutions cannot too often really replace home or family care and therefore it happens that certain manners, behaviour and values, such as honesty or respect get lost and are in many cases not taught to children anymore. Due to the fact that children also spend less time with their parents the transferral of this knowledge from parents to children does not take place either.

Nowadays, the question of who has the responsibility for the upbringing of the children is difficult to answer. Even if, in the past, this responsibility was carried out by the parents or the family most of the time, it now appears that children are pushed back and forth between different entities. Is it still the family, the parents or the school or any kind of club that takes over the responsibility? If the idea is that the upbringing is done together then all these different instances are involved but it often looks like one party just tries to push the responsibility to another and in the end the child is bereaved.

What became quite clear is that families/parents lose at least part of their responsibility to other parties and the role public institutions take over gets increasingly important. Not only because of that, the school system is questioned and tried to improve by implementing an all – day school.

Furthermore, the child develops a different attitude towards his/her life. Instead of e.g. the family having a high value in the life of the child, the child is the most important person to him-/herself and has to rely a lot on him-/herself. Family as a whole seems to be in danger of losing its status and importance for the family members and within the society, too.

Due to the fact that childhood becomes increasingly institutionalized, the value of personal relationships diminishes. Everything takes place within clubs or institutions and there is no or not a lot of any human and personal responsibility anymore also due to the vast number of children being cared for. As already mentioned, also the personal interaction and the communication and interaction between, let’s say, just two people seem to be reduced. Childhood does not appear to be any kind of personal/private matter but instead a matter for the whole society so that responsibilities are distributed among the society and thus less binding.
Nevertheless, the process of institutionalization has not completely taken over all aspects of childhood. Concepts of childhood might be changing all the time and different attitudes to it will be found. In my opinion, there are places and families that keep certain values and manners alive and thus these will be carried along during times.

In which way childhood is perceived and whatever kinds of childhood children in Senden, Germany experience nowadays, in the end it is about the opportunities which are opened up for today’s children that also have an impact on the future of the community as well as the whole society. Therefore, I would like to conclude this work by quoting Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974, 1):

‘…If the children and youth of a nation are afforded opportunity to develop their capacities to the fullest, if they are given the knowledge to understand the world and wisdom to change it, then the prospect is bright. In contrast a society which neglects its children, however well it may function in other respects, risks eventual disorganization and demise.’

7 FURTHER STEPS

As Brewer and Hunter (2006, 79) put it:

The studies that are feasible at any given moment are confined to particular places, times, persons, and variables. Each study is only a sample of a much larger universe of studies that might logically follow from a research problem’s theoretical formulation.

I also consider my completed thesis as an opening towards the topic of the interplay of education and upbringing and its influence on the society in Senden, Germany. There are many further aspects which should have been taken into account as so many important matters have come up during the interviews but due to a lack of time and space this could unfortunately not take place in this work at hand and could instead be a great starting point for further works.
Not only a deepening of the mentioned issues could be used for following studies but also the opening of topics such as the position of teachers, the benefits and disadvantages of having a tripartite school system and school and education policies in general. Furthermore, it could be of interest to consider the idea of opening schools to the public and working together with the local community as well as thinking about a re-definition concerning the profession of a teacher. While categorizing my material, I unfortunately had to leave so many valuable points gained through the interview out of my analysis. Each of those would have opened up a whole new point to the discussion and this could never have been referred to within this paper. Nonetheless, considering these aspects in further studies would be a solution.

Especially, referring the issues to the society and showing the influence the whole matter has on the community and lives of everybody mixed with political aspects and ideas would be valuable. As Hannah Arendt stated, parents have a double responsibility in the upbringing of their children. It is important for the living and being of the child as well as for the maintenance of the world. A ‘no – proper’ upbringing will have an influence on the society. (Bruhns 2011, 17.) But as mentioned above, unfortunately I was not able to fit all these aspects in my work.

8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

First of all, the whole process of carrying out research and writing a thesis taught me a lot about academic studies and time management.

For me, the most difficult part during the whole thesis process was to find a topic which is circumscribed enough to work with it. Frankly speaking, although I had the topic before conducting the interviews and doing my research, I was somewhat confused by changes which continued to occur and in retrospective they did not make it easier.

While conducting the interviews I was surprised how ‘easy’ it was for me to do so and I actually enjoyed talking with the interviewees about the topic. During the interviews I
learnt that although people talked about matters in different ways and with different words, in the end they often all meant the same. It became obvious that everybody should work together in order to implement positive change and also my interviewees actually seemed to know that. Still, concerning their position within the matter they clearly looked at the topic in the way which was closest to them and which affected them the most. Maybe it would be beneficial to bring teachers and parents together and discuss a study like this. I definitely learnt to listen to what was actually said and also to what was said between the lines.

It was a time-consuming process to do the literature review and work with the material of earlier studies. Also, reducing the research material to some main points was demanding. During the interviews too many good aspects worth analysing came up and it was hard for me to just put some aside and not include them in my study due to the reason of going beyond the scope of this bachelor thesis.

All in all, I am quite happy with the outcome of this work although it only opens up a challenging issue which is influenced by many other points that should be referred to in future studies. Doing this research was a great learning experience that also taught me to be patient and strengthened my will power in being determined to finish this study within the timeframe I had made.
REFERENCES


Ostner, Ilona 2010. Farewell to the family as we know it: Family policy change in Germany. In German Policy Studies, Vol. 6 (1), 211 – 244.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interviews for the teachers chart (translated)

- Introduction of the interviewee (including name, age, gender, profession, years in the profession, etc.)

- Feelings and thoughts about:
  - Qualification and studies for becoming a teacher
  - Starting as a teacher at a school
  - The profession/occupation nowadays and in the past
  - Comparison between now and then

- Contact to the parents and families

- Thoughts about education and upbringing

- Thoughts about free time and activities

- Further thoughts:
  - Discussion about education in Germany in international comparison
  - Students and social interaction, social activities
  - Discussing the contemporary education within schools, keyword: humanistic education
  - Discussion about an all – day school
  - School as lebensraum/ living environment
  - Changes within schools, other employment opportunities?
APPENDIX 2: Interviews for the parents chart (translated)

- Introduction of the interviewee (including name, age, gender, profession, years in the profession, etc.)
- Background about the person’s children and childcare institutions
- School nowadays and in the past
- Ideas about teachers and their job attitude and education
- Own children’s start at school
- Own children’s school time compared to own school time
- Contact to the teachers and school
- Thoughts about education and upbringing
- Thoughts about free time and activities
- Further thoughts:
  - Discussion about education in Germany in international comparison
  - Students and social interaction, social activities
  - Discussing the contemporary education within schools, keyword: humanistic education
  - Discussion about an all – day school
  - School as lebensraum/ living environment
  - Changes within schools, other employment opportunities?