

# Practices of (e-)valuation in physical education. A discourse-ethnographic study on constructions of achievement-related orders of difference

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## Abstract

This study deals with how and as what scholastic achievement is produced in practices of valuating and evaluating in physical education and which norms and ideas are referred to in the process. The discourse ethnographic study is based on ethnographic observation data in PE lessons at a secondary school, interviews with PE teachers and the analysis of articles from practice-instructive journals aimed at them. The analyzed data shows that practices of (e-)valuating become an issue above all when it comes to questions of fair grading against the background of a student body that is perceived as (increasingly) heterogeneous. In this sense, constructions of achievement are linked to normative demands for justice in the sense of equal opportunities, which must be met in teaching practices. Perceived differences between pupils, such as their physical abilities or their previous sporting experiences, are constructed as differences that jeopardize equal opportunities (for example in terms of achievable values or grades). A field of tension therefore emerges between a perceived difference between pupils against the background of a planned equality (same age, same class, supposedly equal starting conditions) and the institutional demands for a fair, because legitimisable, differentiation of these in-/comparable pupils by means of grades. This entanglement of comparisons, values and differentiation, as shown in the present study, allows scholastic achievement to be understood as a difference that is constitutively linked to the production of comparability. This draws attention to practices of establishing comparability as the basis of constructions of difference. With regard to the current state of research, the findings of this study are thus in line with existing studies that have already emphasized the relevance of achievement as a central dimension of difference in schools, as well as those that argue in favor of simultaneously focusing on the production of equality when researching constructions of difference. In addition, the present study can also be understood as a study in the field of sociology of evaluation and here in particular for evaluation practices in the contexts of education and sport, as the underlying data provides a detailed insight into the everyday realization of practices of (e-)valuation in physical education.

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