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Soft Governance in Education. The PISA Study and the Bologna Process in Switzerland

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Soft Governance in Education
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the importance of governance of international organizations (IOs) to Swiss policy making in the field of education. The focus is on the Bologna Process driven by the European Commission, and the ‘Programme for International Student Assessment’ (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The theoretical framework draws on sociological institutionalism and rationalism. The results demonstrate that IOs gave impulses for domestic reforms by applying diverse governance instruments. National transformation capacities of veto-players and cultural guiding principles on education in Switzerland were not able to hinder these impulses as supposed. Instead, the empirical findings show a surprisingly high impact of IO governance instruments, particularly of standard setting, coordinative activities and discursive dissemination on reforms in Swiss education policy-making. This is because IO governance modified domestic guiding principles on education so that they matched those of the IOs. Another reason is that the domestic level strategically used the international initiatives of PISA and Bologna to overcome long-standing backlog of reform.

KEY WORDS

Bologna Process, Direct Democracy, Education Policy-Making, EU, Federalism, International Initiative, International Organization, OECD, PISA Study, Switzerland, Veto-Player

CONTENTS

Soft Governance in Education

The PISA Study and the Bologna Process in Switzerland

1 INTRODUCING SOFT GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION POLICY

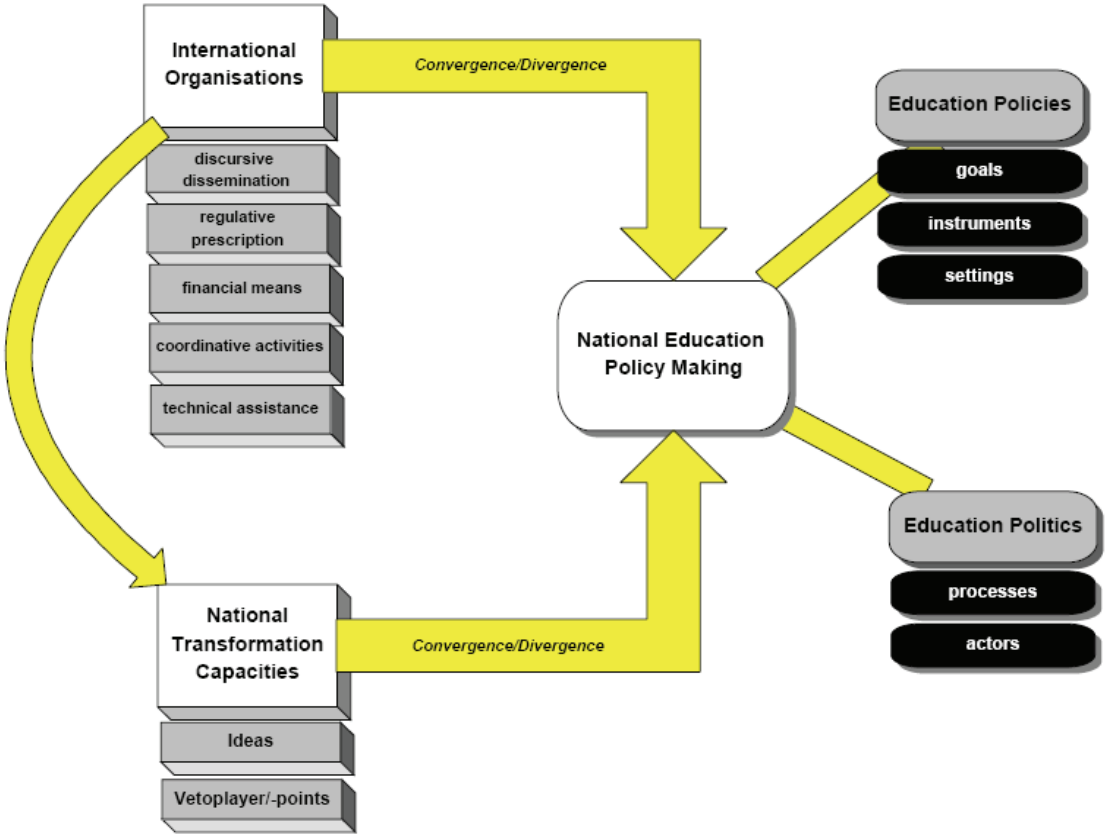
As the importance of knowledge for the economy steadily rises, education policy is becoming a key factor for economic growth, competitiveness and social integration. Therefore, the adaptation to international developments and discourses in the traditionally nationally hold policy field of education has become inevitable for any country (Drezner 2001). On the international level, the aim of enhancing global competitiveness is the special focus of diverse educational initiatives furthered by international organizations (IOs) such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The two most outstanding international initiatives in education policy making in the last decade are examined (Stöckling 2005). First, the intergovernmental ‘Bologna Process’ of 1999 is an initiative with the aim of integrating European higher education as the most important example of international higher education policy, nowadays driven by the European Commission. Second, the ‘Programme for International Student Assessment’ (PISA) is a study on student performance in secondary education performed by the OECD every three years since 2000.

As a consequence, the new international actors in education, the OECD and EU, turned the two-level game between the cantons and the Federation in the federalist country of *Switzerland* into a multi-level game in the last decade. In this context of educational internationalization, Switzerland takes a special position. On the one hand, Switzerland is not a formal EU member (Fischer/Nicolet et al. 2002; Sciarini/Fischer et al. 2004), but has taken part in the Bologna Process as a bottom up initiative since its very beginning. Thus we assume a weaker influence of Bologna in Switzerland than in EU countries, since the EU is a key Bologna actor. On the other hand, as a founding member of the OECD and participant in diverse OECD education programs, we expect the PISA Study to have a high influence. However, institutional settings in Switzerland hardly further reforms (Bonoli/Mach 2000). Federalism, direct democracy, and consociationalism not only prolong decision making processes and involve many veto players in the domestic sphere, but also handicap coordination with IOs and other countries. These facts make Switzerland an unlikely candidate for policy change induced by IOs. In a similar vein, the two international initiatives are least likely cases for changing the education policy making of countries: They are voluntary, legally non-binding initiatives and can be categorized as so-called ‘soft governance’. The resulting question is: Do international organizations have an impact on education policy-making in Switzer-

land, and if so, what are the consequences for policy-making and what are the underlying causal mechanisms?[1]

Figure 1: Theoretical Model



Source: Leuze/Brand et al. 2008

This paper thus addresses how the PISA study and the Bologna process have influenced Swiss education policy making. To identify the causal mechanisms, it draws on the *theoretical approach* of Leuze/Brand et al. (2008) that combines institutionalist with rational approaches. The dependent variable of *national education policy making* is conceptualized as consisting of policy and politics (see Figure 1). Changes of national education *policy* may be promoted when IOs influence national debates and reform pro-

[1] The research presented in this paper is part of a research project on *International Education Politics* conducted at the University of Bremen, Germany. http://www.sfb597.uni-bremen.de/pages/forProjektBeschreibung.php?SPRACHE=en&ID=14 The aim of the project is to explore new international dynamics in educational politics and their effects on states and individuals based on comparative case studies of Switzerland, Germany, England, and New Zealand. Research for the project is conducted under the framework of the Collaborative Research Center *Transformations of the State*, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). http://www.state.uni-bremen.de/For assistance in preparing this paper, I would like to thank Julia Engelbrecht, Philipp Weiskirch and Alexander Akbik.

jects in education. Policy consists of policy-guiding *goals*, the *instruments* to reach these goals, and the *settings* of these instruments (Hall 1993). National education *politics* may also be impacted by IOs. It refers to both the decision making process, the involved actors, and the formal and informal decision making procedures. New actors emerge in the policy field of education: As IOs increasingly prepare policy, national actors - e.g. social partners, scientists, and professional associations - become more involved in educational decision making. This may trigger changes in the decision making process: IO instruments, such as conference organization, upload important steps of the preparation of reforms on the international level.

Figure 2: IO Governance Instruments

Governance Instrument	**Dominant Function**	**Examples**
Discursive dissemination	Establishing ideas	UN Promotion of Sustainable Development OECD Promotion of Lifelong Learning
Standard setting	Prescribing behaviour	UN Recommendations OECD Benchmarks
Financial means	Transfer payment	World Bank Financing EU Project Financing
Coordinative activities	Execute surveillance	EU Open Method of Coordination OECD Peer Reviewing
Technical assistance	Support structures	UNESCO support for education statistics UNESCO support for educational planning

Source: Jakobi 2009

National education policy making is influenced by IOs via five *governance instruments*: discursive dissemination, standard setting, financial means, policy coordination and technical assistance (see Figure 2). The most comprehensive and ontologically distinct governance instrument is *discursive dissemination,* to which the other IO governance instruments are related. In order to influence debates on certain policy issues, IOs make use of this governance instrument as they produce policy models and ideas for national policy making. The governance instrument of *coordinative activities* describes the ability of an IO to manage and coordinate political processes by gathering the key actors to promote the implementation of certain policies in its member states. Governance by *standard setting* refers to the provision of rules for policy, which can range from normative activities to formally binding prescription. In the form of hard law, this type of governance includes the regulations that are binding for the IO’s member states, which is the most direct type of governance. However, this paper concentrates on standard setting as soft law. In this case, IOs produce standards for mutual examination and assessment which may trigger new constitutive norms. T*echnical assistance* is a different governance instrument often used in developing countries. It relates to the supervision

of policy implementation by an IO. IOs directly convey knowledge of how to develop a specific policy in the nation-states via this instrument. This type of instrument has often been set by international treaties or may be a precondition for financial means, the final instrument. By transferring financial resources to countries, IOs apply the instrument of *financial means*. In this way, they can give incentives and promote the implementation of specific policies on a local, regional or national level.

With the help of these instruments, IOs may cause policy change within a country, and even convergence across countries. However, the degree to which states will respond to these international stimuli is mediated by *national transformation capacities*; most importantly the factor of veto-players and the ideational factor of nationally rooted guiding principles of education[2]. Change towards international aims is assumed to be furthered by the existence of only few veto players, or by a medium degree of misfit of national aims with IO aims. Applying this theoretical framework, change in national policy making depends on the independent variable of IO governance instruments (international argument) and on national transformation capacities (domestic argument).

To investigate this multilevel game between the two IOs and the non-EU member country (Putnam 1988), the case studies on PISA and Bologna empirically draw on the *methodological approach* by Nagel/Bieber et al. (2009) which relies on the qualitative methods of semi-structured expert interviews, document analysis and secondary literature (Bogner/Littig et al. 2005; Meuser/Nagel 2004). The interviews were conducted with twenty-three specialists of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission and Swiss education policy makers such as political and administrative actors, social partners and scientists and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (Martens/Brüggemann 2006) between March and November 2008 on the basis of interview guidelines. The recorded interviews were completely transcribed, coded with a pre-defined scheme and analyzed using MAXQDA, a software for qualitative data analysis. A coding scheme was applied to guarantee the anonymity of interviewees.

Regarding research, education policy is the stepchild of policy analysis, in particular with regard to internationalization processes, as it is a formerly nationally held policy field. It is mostly examined by education scientists and sociologists, only less frequently by political scientists. Moreover, their rare studies have another research focus so that many questions on policy making have remained unaddressed. The overview of the development of research undertaken since the mid 1990s on international higher education

[2] *National change,* however, might not only be caused by the two transformation capacities outlined, and, even if so, these may also interact with other national conditions. Alternative variables which may influence education policy-making are, for example, the size and type of the economy or the qualification and age of the labor force.

provided by Kehm/Teichler (2007) shows an increase of theoretically and methodologically ambitious studies without a dominant methodological or disciplinary ‘lowest common denominator’. The central topics of research on higher education internationalization are mobility, mutual influence of higher education systems and internationalization of the substance of teaching and learning to institutional strategies, knowledge transfer, cooperation and competition and national and supranational policies. However, research on the influence of international initiatives national education systems is still underdeveloped. Europeanization effects on higher education policy have been studied by Bache (2004: 3) who states that these effects do not only differ across but also within countries, while changes of policies and institutions are more common than those of identity. He explains this with the fact that international pressure for reform on individual countries differs as well as countries’ reactions to this pressure, depending on how pressure fits with domestic practices and preferences. Systematic research on the effects of PISA on national reforms in education policy making is extremely rare (Martens/Wolf 2006: 147). Hokka/Kallo et al. (2004) assess the effect of OECD policies in general on the nation state, but do not assess the effect of the PISA studies. Therefore, research on this topic must draw on and generalize from studies on mechanisms of diffusion and soft governance. From an actor and structure theoretical perspective, the study of Swiss education policy examined in the light of internationalization by Osterwalder/Weber (2004) analyzes whether or not actors and their programs have adapted to the internationalization of education policy. While actors preferring diversity previously outnumbered those advocating unification, today the last group is gaining power as the increased presence of IOs is becoming the common reference point for both groups.

Even today, there is still a lack of scientific studies researching the mechanisms through which the international level influences national reforms in these policy fields. In contrast to the existing literature, my aim is to examine the mechanisms through which international initiatives exert influence on Swiss education policy making. based on the least likely case of Switzerland in order to contribute to internationalization research. To this end, the next chapter focuses on education policy making in Switzerland, i.e. the current education system, its German and French historical roots, and the context of internationalization (chapter 2). The third chapter elaborates on the changes in education policy making since the 1980s, most prominently the remarkable reforms induced by the Bologna Process and the PISA Study - despite reform-hindering domestic settings responsible for the backlog of reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. In the fourth chapter I evaluate the influence of IO governance and national transformation capacities on reform processes in Swiss education policy making by conducting an empirical analysis predominantly based on various expert interviews and analysis of various documents; I demonstrate how the international initiatives were able to impact Switzerland and how

they functioned as triggers for significant domestic change. The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings, points to subjects of further research and embeds the research in the context of general developments in the field of internationally induced education policy reforms.

2 EDUCATION POLICY MAKING IN SWITZERLAND

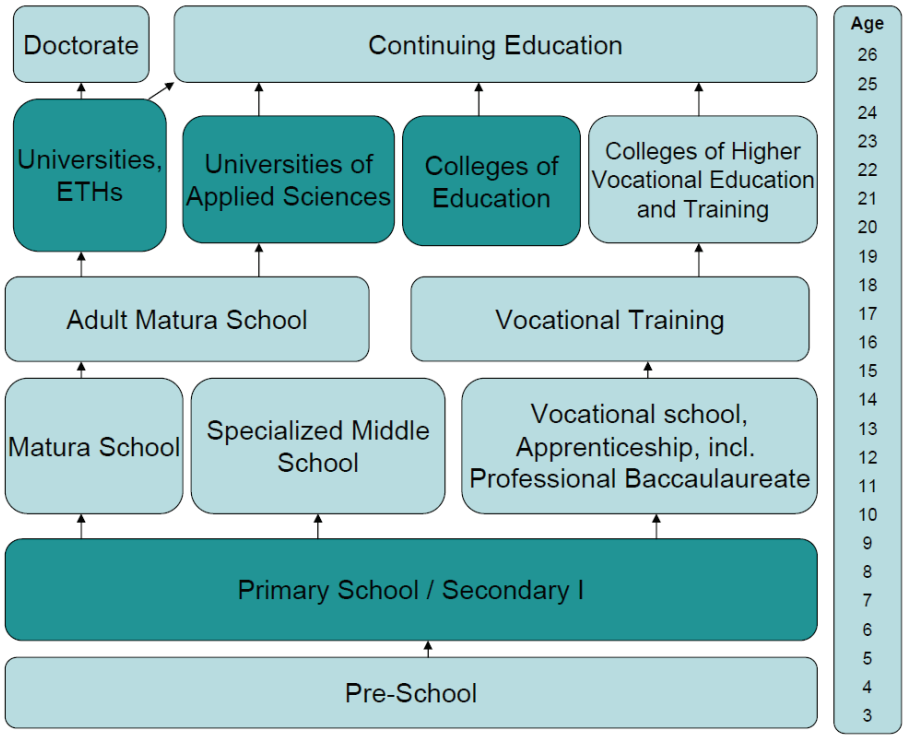
There are 26 different cantonal education systems in Switzerland. However, it is possible to speak of one system due to intercantonal agreements. The complexity of joint decision making (Scharpf 2006), competences and legislative processes as well as of the constellation of actors and their roles in Swiss education policy making reflects the political features of direct democracy, subsidiarity, and federalism (Scharpf 1988; Hega 2000). According to the constitutional article 61a on the ‘Swiss Education Area’ (Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 1999), the Federation, communities, and cantons, which constitute the main veto players, share responsibility for various parts of the system.

Like the United States, Switzerland is a federal state that delegates substantial power over education to the community level. Its highly heterogeneous education system is regionally influenced. The French-speaking *Suisse romande* is endowed with potent cantonal departments with professional education experts while German-speaking cantons rest on non-vocational or lay administrators at community and district level (Hega 2000). They try to only abolish discrimination in cantonal policies under joint supervision (negative integration), whereas the *Suisse romande* shifted policy making from the communities to the superior authority. Each canton holds regulatory and financial power for obligatory schooling and the university located within its boundaries (Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 1999, article 63). The primary responsibility for education and culture is held by cantonal education departments, which coordinate at the national level via the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK). The Federation has jurisdiction over ETHs and FHs, supports cantonal universities and encourages research. It bears the costs of ETHs and cantonal tertiary institutions and research. Uniquely, there is not one federal education authority, rather two: The State Secretariat for Education and Research in the Federal Department of Home Affairs is responsible for obligatory schooling and universities. In contrast, the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology in the Federal Department of Economic Affairs is in charge of the FHs. The Federation and cantons jointly coordinate Swiss higher education and take account of the autonomy of the universities (Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 1999, article 63a).

2.1 The Structure of the Education System

The international initiatives under study particularly affect the levels of lower secondary and higher education (see Figure 3, shaded boxes). In the case of Swiss lower secondary education, the structure is rather complex. It starts after primary school and forms the second and last part of obligatory schooling, until grade nine. Depending on the length of primary education, which ranges from four to six years, lower secondary education consists of three to five years. In most cantons, there are school types with different requirements. Pre-professional schools regroup students who are more interested in manual jobs and do not have any selection criteria for entry. They provide practical education to prepare pupils for basic vocational training. Pre-gymnasiums - sections with higher requirements - aim to prepare students for grammar schools which deliver a Federal maturity diploma. They include a selection for school entry, with the choice between a science and a literary stream. The third section of school types does not foresee any selection based on student performance.

Figure 3: The Swiss Education System



Source: own account, based on http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/themen/bildung_en.html, last access: 20 March 2009

Two types of institutions are included in the dual Swiss higher education sector, with the same status but different philosophies. First, traditional universities – ten cantonal universities and two federal institutes of technology (ETHs) – center their instruction on

basic research and teaching, applying an academic approach. ETHs are federally run universities involved in scientific and technical research. Having a high global reputation in providing research, teaching and services of an advanced international standard, they provide technical subjects, in contrast to cantonal universities. To attend university, students must have earned a Matura, the leaving certificate of the 4-year grammar school. There is no *numerus clausus* for subjects at university, except for medicine at German-speaking universities. Second, universities of applied sciences (FHs) have the same educational task as universities, combined with elements of general vocational education. In contrast to universities, they take a practice-oriented approach through a close link between teaching and applied research.

2.2 Historical Background and Guiding Principles of Education

Like other European education systems, the Swiss system has its origins in the 19th century. The Swiss history is marked by a permanent struggle for educational competences between cantons and the Federation. After having been in the hands of the church for some centuries, schooling was made a state policy field by the first federal public education law during the Helvetic period from 1798 to 1803 (Hega 1999). The Constitution of 1848 transformed the loose federation of sovereign cantons into a federal state. However, the Constitutional Revision in 1874 left little political authority to the Federation, except for the areas of higher education and vocational training. Since the Constitution and its revision, primary education in public schools is free, compulsory, state-controlled and secularized, and education policy is the prerogative of cantonal governments. Finally, the struggle against federal influence on cantonal systems was successful, when the ‘school bailiff’ proposal was rejected in an 1882 referendum.

In the 20th century, the education system lacked intercantonal and international cooperation. Although the EDK had been created in 1897 as a platform for the coordination of cantonal school systems, the cantons took their own paths until World War II. Accordingly, a federal department for education was never established (Hega 1999). The developments from World War II until the 1960s are of expansion and differentiation. The need for interior mobility increasingly required intercantonal – and later international – coordination, so that the EDK had to create four regional coordination areas. However, the conflict between unification and decentralism was also reflected in the new expansion period around 1970. This was stopped by economic depression, during which school reformers tried to revise the system totally. Due to the growing demand for education and mobility, a Concordance Treaty on School Coordination, or *Schulkonkordat*, was concluded in 1970 to coordinate the beginning of the school year[3], school

[3] This aim only was reached in 1985 after a popular referendum.

entrance age, the length of time for obligatory schooling and for gaining a school leaving examination (EDK 1970). However, this important legal instrument for unification was highly contested and did not lead to the establishment of a supracantonal or national authority (Hega 2000: 7).Surprisingly, Switzerland developed from a leader in educational expansion regarding student enrolment in primary schools in the late 19th century to a laggard hundred years later. By the 1970s, it fell behind all western European countries in student ratios in fulltime secondary schools and universities. OECD (1992) education statistics show that relatively low Swiss higher education entry and graduation rates in the 1970s and 1980s did not follow the pattern of educational expansion experienced in other OECD countries. The reason for proceeding higher education expansion cautiously was – and still is today – to sustain high quality and to match educational supply to the demand of the employment system. During expansion, the education field differentiated, as new actors appeared and traditional players provided themselves with scientific staff due to the demand for rational education politics (Osterwalder/Weber 2004). For example in higher education, the Federation created a scientific council in 1965 to enforce a harmonized policy vis-à-vis the cantons. The federal law on higher education promotion in 1968 established a Swiss higher education area and transferred the coordination and harmonization of cantonal universities to the Federation. Like in 1874, the attempt to empower the Federation failed again in the 1973 referendum, as a constitutional amendment for education was rejected by the cantons (Hega 1999). Even today cantonal diversity and regional disparities in school systems, enrolment rates and education opportunities are striking and cause problems for intra-Swiss mobility of students and teachers.

The historic development of the Swiss education system brought about specific guiding principles for education. They affect the impact of recent reform processes, but also may undergo processes of change themselves. Both the region and the phase of education determine guiding principles. Due to the split education system following the German and French model, regional differences exist with regard to guiding principles for education. In the German part, the Swiss school system follows the German tripartite model. Humboldt’s ideal of unity of research and teaching as well as academic oligarchy is prevalent in Swiss higher education, as German ‘institute universities’ served as a model for Swiss universities (Clark 1983: 50; Horvath/Weber et al. 2000). In contrast, in French-speaking Switzerland the model of all-day school is supposed to compensate social inequalities. In higher education, the state takes a more central role.

In addition, guiding principles differ according to the educational level. The connotation of education in secondary education is rather political; in higher education it is economic. In secondary education, the performance principle was very strong in the 19th century, but its importance decreased with the development of the welfare state. Since

Switzerland's foundation in 1848, school has become a factor of societal cohesion and the focus was no longer placed on the individual. Education is considered a cultural good and civil liberty according to Dahrendorf (1965), and aims at equality of opportunities. As competition was feared to trigger performance variation and a loss of quality and equality of opportunities, the education system was kept in public hands and the free choice of school was not granted (Interview CH15, CH18). Another core function of the education system is social mobility, i.e. to overcome formal societal barriers of sex, religion and social background. In contrast, higher education is inspired by contradicting aims: there are macroeconomic principles, as education is considered the only resource for competing with other nations. On the other hand, microeconomic principles aim to further human capital and stress a high selectivity by competition via performance. However, the German Humboldt model regards education as a form of self-actualization. The publicly financed system with comparatively low study fees contributes to the aims of social mobility and accessibility (Interview CH03, CH05, CH13, CH15).

2.3 The Context of Internationalization

A complex division of responsibilities between the cantons and the Federation as well as historic guiding principles mark the character of the Swiss education system. However, in the last decade, novel international developments challenged these former constellations. Recent internationalization processes of Swiss education are particularly determined by its participation in the PISA study and the Bologna process.

An influential and major constituent of the OECD's educational work has become the PISA study, initiated in the year 2000 (OECD 2008). The PISA results did not meet the Swiss expectations, although they were often significantly above the OECD average. Swiss children scored better in mathematics (in all three studies they were above the OECD average) than in literacy and natural sciences (in PISA 2000 they were under the OECD average, in 2003 and 2006 above). This revealed that some students were not prepared for entering work life, particularly those of immigrant families (EVD 2008): As in most OECD countries, economic, social and cultural background is decisive for school performance. Accordingly, media attention to the PISA study in Switzerland was high (Stöckling 2005; Martens/Niemann 2009). As deficits in literacy are regarded as a relevant social problem and illiterates are marginalized in society, the media proposed education measures - as realized in the reform project HarmoS elaborated on in chapter three - by referring to the example of the PISA 'champion' Finland (SGB 2007).[4]

[4] Online: http://www.presseportal.ch/de/pm/100003695/100550715/schweizerischer_gewerkschaftsbund_sgb, last access: 24 May 2009.

Since its very beginning Switzerland has participated in the Bologna process (Bologna Declaration 1999) to match its education system with the surrounding EU states. With regard to the introduction of the Bachelor and Master structures, the implementation of Bologna[5] has made considerable progress in Switzerland: Since fall of 2006, all first year students have been entering Bachelor programs. Presumably, in 2010/11 more than 95% of students will participate in Bachelor and Master courses (BBT/SBF 2008). The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced rapidly in all Swiss higher education institutions.[6] Officially, its stage of implementation is 100 per cent of the total number of higher education programs. However, a national student survey revealed that there are still many differences between institutions or subjects regarding the use of ECTS and workload per credit (BBT/SBF 2008). The reaction of Swiss actors to Bologna in the media was rather substantial and very positive. The criticism mostly concerned the manner of implementation in Switzerland, not the aims of Bologna, and depended on the class of actors: Political and administrative actors in education were proponents, while students tended to have a critical position or stressed the need for improving implementation.

3 LATEST REFORMS IN SWISS EDUCATION POLICY MAKING

From the 1980s well into the 1990s the joint decision trap[7] in the federalist country (Scharpf 2006: 847) made the Swiss education system experience a backlog of reforms. However, despite the high number of veto players, Switzerland underwent various transformative processes in the last decade. While in secondary education, rearrangements concentrated on the project HarmoS, there were various areas of reform activity in higher education such as the establishment of the FHs, the Bologna implementation, and the ‘Swiss Higher Education Landscape’ project. These reforms fall in different dimensions of policy making.

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5 The implementation is coordinated by a steering committee of delegates of federal offices, the EDK and the three types of higher education institutions. At the institutional level, the implementation of the legal framework is overseen by the three executive bodies, the rectors’ conferences.

6 Online: http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/themen/uni/universitaeten_en.html, last access: 20 March 2009.

7 Scharpf (2006) describes the trap as a situation in which the contribution of institutional settings to considerable shortcomings of joint policy making is related to two requirements: decisions of the central government depend on the approval of constituent governments whose agreement must be (nearly) unanimous.

3.1 The Domestic Harmonization of Secondary Education

The educational constitution ranks among the core reforms in Swiss secondary - and also higher - education (see Figure 5): By harmonizing cantonal education systems, it aims to both enhance international competitiveness of Switzerland and to enhance intra-Swiss mobility. In May 2006, the population and the cantons agreed by great majority on the new articles on education in the Constitution (Aprentas 2006). Surprisingly, veto players did not hinder reforms in this case, but actually paved the way for far-reaching change. Responsibilities in the system did not change and for elementary school still lie with the cantons. However, the cantons themselves have to coordinate as they are obligated to regulate structural indicators unitarily. Most recently, the Federation has a means to generate pressure for domestic harmonization, as it can declare a concordat as nationally binding if cantons do not reach an intercantonal solution. This harmonization is intended to enhance the effectiveness of obligatory schooling.

As an indirect reaction to PISA and in order to implement the constitutional article, the most outstanding reform project of the last decades was introduced in August 2009 (Maradan/Mangold 2005; EDK 2007): the school concordat HarmoS[8] (see Figure 5). Although the intention to harmonize was not new, the attempt to enhance mobility and quality by harmonization was successful for the first time. HarmoS goes beyond the school concordat of 1970 (EDK 1970), which did not suffice for further harmonization and even hindered reforms. After coordination had failed in the 1990s, the EDK created the basis for far-reaching harmonization of core indicators, such as school entrance age, school obligation and length, aims and transitions of educational steps.

HarmoS has diverse instruments to this end (see Figure 4). First, it introduces superordinate basic education aims for obligatory schooling for five subjects: languages, mathematics and natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, music and art, and sports and health. To develop of competence levels for these subjects, Switzerland draws on international activities produced in the context of PISA (EDK 2004). HarmoS postulates for obligatory schooling a local standard language and competences in a second Swiss language and another foreign language. Second, structural benchmark figures determine the length of school phases and increase the number of years for obligatory schooling from nine to 11 years - eight years for primary school including two years

[8] After the formal procedure of consulting cantons, German- and French-speaking teacher associations and parent organizations, and subsequent revision, the EDK passed the concordat in June 2007. From autumn 2007, the ratification process took place in the cantons, by the cantonal parliament or in a referendum. The necessary number of ten cantons was reached in April 2009, so that the EDK decided to put the concordat into force in August 2009. From then on, the concordat was valid for the ratifying cantons that had to make legal adjustments within six years. Online: http://www.edk.ch/dyn/14901.php, last access: 26 May 2009.

basic level or Kindergarten - depending on the canton - at age four, and three years for upper secondary education to enhance early learning. The transition to upper secondary education is planned for vocational education after the 11th school year and for Matura at the Gymnasium after the 10th school year. These regulations require some cantons to change the school system, which increased costs and caused some opposition. Third, for quality assurance, the introduction of the instrument of national education standards shall reduce diversity and harmonize the aims of the single education phases. The standards have been introduced, in particular, due to the results of PISA 2000 (EDK 2004). Instead of on the cantonal level, curricula and teaching material will be henceforth developed on a language-regional level. HarmoS also involves scientific education statistics and monitoring as an instrument for planning and politics: as a pilot scheme, the educational report of 2006 provides data on all educational levels of Switzerland. The first regular report, to be published in 2010, will assess the performance of the education system in terms of the three criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and equity (SKBF 2006). Finally, the organization of instruction during schooldays is structured by blocks and there is an offer of optional daycare tailored to market needs.

Figure 4: The Instruments of the Reforms Project 'HarmoS

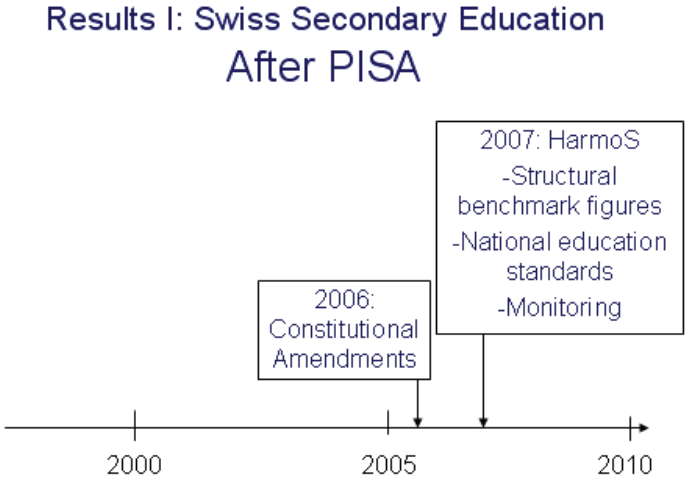
1. Subordinate aims of obligatory schooling	Basic education aims
	Language teaching
2. Structural benchmark figures	School enrolment
	Length of levels of education
3. Instruments of system development and quality assurance	Educational standards
	Curricula, teaching aids and evaluation instruments
	Portfolios
	Educational Monitoring
4. Organization of the school day	Basic schedule and day structures

Source: own account, based on the Intercantonal Agreement on the Harmonization of Obligatory Schooling (EDK 2007)

Due to these developments of the new educational constitution and HarmoS, the roles of the EDK and of the cantons have changed. The EDK has been established as an impor-

tant steering body above the cantonal level (Criblez 2008: 286). The EDK has emerged as a new political level in the Swiss political system, a result of the complex horizontal and vertical ‘joint decision making’ (Scharpf 2006) in education. Its function is to hinder federal solutions in the competence area of the cantons, but simultaneously to pressure the cantons for harmonization and coordination (Criblez 2008: 286). The EDK has been strengthened by the new educational constitution, as it has become the most important actor for harmonization – in contrast to the Federation that comes last, i.e. only if the coordination between cantons has failed.

Figure 5: Reforms in Swiss Secondary Education



Source: own account

In no other policy field is cooperative federalism as well advanced as in education. This development has substantially constrained the educational autonomy of cantons, which no longer applies to a single cantons but only for the collectivity of cantons (Criblez 2008: 292-5). The single cantons no longer determine education politics; rather it is determined by the cantons united in the EDK. This means that it has become increasingly difficult for cantons to opt out of harmonized policies. Additionally, the pressure for adaptation to HarmoS guidelines is high because non-conforming cantons run the risk of being blamed for a federal solution. In the future, a canton cannot elude new intercantonal agreements. Otherwise it can be coerced by the Federation to obey them (Criblez 2008).

3.2 The International Harmonization of Higher Education

A phase of non-reform marked Swiss higher education in the 1980s. However, in the run up to the referendum on EWR accession in 1992, structural problems of Swiss education became apparent: The conditions for international comparability and foreign rec-

ognition of degrees were not given. In order for Switzerland to be able to operate internationally, structural changes and adaptations towards international developments had to be introduced (Criblez 2008). Therefore, the Swiss Parliament passed a law in 1995 that created FHs and colleges of education, with FHs functioning as another type of higher education institution in addition to universities (Fachhochschulgesetz 1995). Previously, only polytechnics and higher commercial or administration colleges had provided professional education. This tertiarization of higher vocational education upgraded them to a status comparable to that of universities.

The goals of the 1999 Bologna Declaration[9] (BBT/SBF 2008) were comparatively quickly and comprehensively implemented in Switzerland in the following years, so that it was often called ‘poster child’[10]. Shortly after 1999, Swiss higher education institutions recognized the significance of this reform, initiated Bologna related legislative reforms (see Figure 6) and established project organizations. Bologna concerns many actors in Switzerland and requires national regimentation for guaranteeing uniform and coordinated reform implementation. The ‘Bologna Directives’, which are legally binding for universities (SUK 2003) and FHs (Fachhochschulrat EDK 2002), were adopted to accomplish this aim. The directives state that the implementation of new structures will be completed by the end of 2010 (BBT/SBF 2008). Although they leave enough leeway for the cantons, the directives fix a uniform framework for the introduction of new study structures, ECTS, the admission to Master studies, the title awards and reform implementation. They are based upon the 2000 convention on the cooperation in higher education institutions between the Federation and university cantons. Moreover, to counteract the problem of changing studies of university and FH, the Rectors’ Conferences achieved an agreement on the permeability between the three types of higher education institutions in 2008 that enables transition on the condition of some supplementary performance records. While the university cantons have consequently adapted their legislation, the FHs commenced a parallel Bologna reform: the Federal Act on Universities of Applied Sciences was partially revised in 2005[11] in accordance with the new study structures to enhance national and international compatibility and competitiveness of degree. It provides the legal foundations for the introduction of Bachelor and Master studies that started in fall 2005 and 2008, respectively, and established quality

[9] Regarding the Bologna coordination during the period 2008-11, the SUK will effect a monitoring project considering all core Bologna characteristics (Ryhn 2009: 190).

[10] Online: http://www.studienreform.uzh.ch/bologna-uzh/national/080915_Bolognatagung_Bericht.pdf last access 11 June 2009.

[11] Online: http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/hochschulen/00213/00222/index.html?lang=de, last access: 20 May 2009.

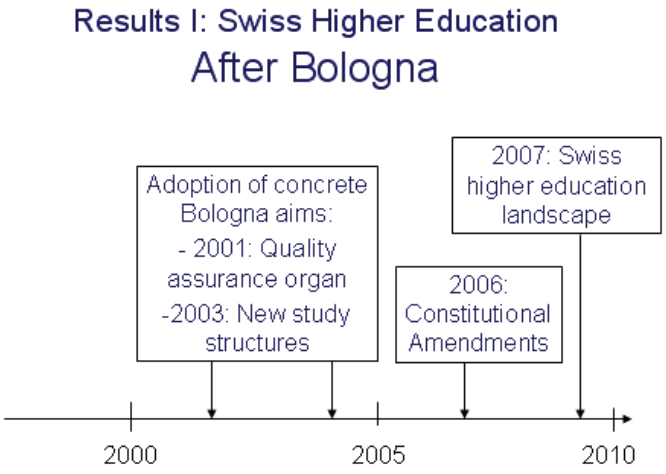
and accreditation systems. Moreover, in addition to technology, economics, and design, the act put the areas of health, social matters and arts under guidance of the Federation.

The Swiss constellation of actors was modified by the Bologna process in three areas. First, particularly against the background of financial shortage, Bologna changed the division of power in favor of the executive branch of the government at the expense of the legislative. The federal government gained power by providing financial means and having clear competences, as universities alone never would have been able to introduce Bologna (Interview CH07, CH14). Second, the cooperative federalism in Switzerland was enhanced by the establishment of the SUK in 2001, which strengthened the cooperation between Federation and cantons. The SUK, which consists of representatives of both the Federation and the cantons, received the financial and policy-making power, and its directives became binding framework regulations. This guaranteed the feasibility and bindingness of Bologna. For the first time, guidelines could be made binding for all universities, while formerly the SUK could only make recommendations (Interview CH02). Moreover, the federal government made the CRUS responsible for Bologna coordination in universities in 2000. The government itself would not have been able perform this task because the cantons would have rejected this as an intervention in their field of competence (Interview CH02). For the FHs, the KFH has gained weight by cooperating with federal and cantonal authorities and acting as the coordinating body for the Bologna implementation in the FHs. Hence, these three higher education institutions– SUK, CRUS and KFH - have become the most important players due to Bologna and its successful implementation (Interview CH14). Third, the increased autonomy of higher education institutions required new QA mechanisms, so that the responsible actors for QA changed: While formerly the Federation was responsible, since 2001, the independent, agency-like ‘Organ for Accreditation and Quality Assurance’ (OAQ) sets requirements related to QA, prepares the decisions for accreditation and regularly checks compliance.

The last substantial higher education reforms came into action for harmonizing cantonal systems due to the rising cross-cantonal and international need for coordination. The revision of the Constitution (Article 63a on higher education) stated that the Federation and the cantons must enhance their cooperation to jointly steer higher education institutions and guarantee the quality of Swiss higher education via contracts and the transfer of competences to common organs (see Figure 6) - without fundamentally changing the existing division of competences (Interview CH13). It created the necessary preconditions for a strong all-Swiss steering of the whole higher education area, transparent financing orienting on performance and results, strategic planning and a

better task sharing among higher education institutions.[12] In May 2006, the people and the cantons approved this revision in a referendum with a high majority.

Figure 6: Reforms in Swiss Higher Education



Source: own account

New legislative foundations were created for both the Federation and the cantons in order to implement the constitutional duty of simplified higher education steering. The Federal Law on Promotion and Coordination of Higher Education Institutions (HFKG) draft has produced high interest during its consultation process, as it will establish of a unitary Swiss Higher Education Landscape after its expected coming into force in summer 2009 (see Figure 6).[13] It is intended to guarantee quality, competitiveness, coherence and efficiency of the system. For this aim, it replaces the federal decrees for universities and FHs, and thus will be the Federation's only legal basis for the financial promotion of cantonal universities and FHs, and for the political steering of the whole Swiss higher education area together with the cantons. This facilitated steering helps to regulate the entire higher education sector uniformly. Parallel to and based on the federal law, a new intercantonal agreement, or concordat, on higher education is in preparation by the EDK. It will include intercantonal financing that is regulated today in two agreements for universities and FHS. The EDK gave this concordat in consultation at the beginning of 2009.

[12] Online: http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/dokumentation/publikationen/grundlagen/factsheets/FS01_Hochschulsystem_e_2008.pdf , last access: 20 March 2009 and http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/themen/uni/hls_de.html , last access: 20 March 2009.

[13] Online: http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/themen/uni_en.html , last access: 25 March 2009.

3.3 Comparing Reforms in Secondary and Higher Education

This chapter set out to provide a picture of the political changes in Swiss secondary and higher education since the 1990s. It utilizes certain evidence that an unusually high number of comprehensive reforms were introduced in Swiss education. In the field of secondary education, changes were most striking in policy, and the least in politics: Policies changed with reforms consisting particularly in the intercantonal concordat HarmoS aiming at the harmonization of obligatory schooling by harmonizing structural benchmarks, and establishing education standards and language-regionally unitary curricula. According to the new educational constitution, not only the Federation and the cantons are bound to cooperate, but also the cantons among themselves (polity). Of course, changes in polity also involved changes in politics. Although responsibilities in the system did not change, the Federation was given more far-reaching competences in cases in which the cantons do not reach a solution.

Likewise, in higher education, the changes in policy were the greatest, in polity the least. Bologna-related reforms mainly consisted in the introduction of the two-tier study system, the ECTS, and a QA system in all cantons. Interestingly, while intending international harmonization, the international initiatives led to domestic harmonization: a more unitary Swiss education system has come into being. For polity, the new Constitutional Article on higher education aims to improve cooperation between the Federation and cantons by committing them to joint steering colleges and universities. Politics changed as new actors entered the scene, due to the establishment of the OAQ and the FHs, along with the KFH and the FH Council.

For the enactment of substantial reforms in Switzerland at the turn of the century, PISA and Bologna played a central role (Aprentas 2006). The international imperative of harmonization was furthered by intra-Swiss developments that expressed the increasing need for cross-cantonal coordination such as mobility issues. Interestingly, the contents of the reforms in the two educational sectors point in a similar direction. HarmoS and reforms implementing Bologna aim at harmonization of education standards, structures such as the length of study or schooling, and QA in the cantonal education systems. Consequently, the Swiss education system is becoming more unitary in both sectors. The trend towards domestic harmonization was even reflected in the appraisal of the educational Constitution of 2006 by the cantons and the people.

While the period from the 1980s well into the 1990s was determined by few changes, the amount and intensity of Swiss education reforms increased dramatically in the last decade. Consequently, reform activities can be divided into two periods, a rather passive and a highly active one. The cutting lines are the PISA study since 2000 and the Bologna process of 1999, which reveal the important role of international initiatives as catalysts of Swiss reforms.

4 GOVERNANCE INSTRUMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Even in a policy field like education that is skeptically defended against exogenous invasions, voluntary informal methods used by IOs can be successful in influencing the national level. The impact of IO governance instruments - used in the context of Bologna and PISA - on Switzerland was actually very high. These instruments do not directly change domestic policymaking, but are mediated by national transformation capacities such as veto players and nationally rooted guiding principles.

4.1 The Influence of PISA on Secondary Education

For the introduction of latest Swiss secondary education reforms the influence of PISA was decisive. Lacking authority in education, the OECD cannot enforce its aims but it can use the various soft governance instruments at hand to influence its member states. Standard setting in its soft form recommends a certain behavior and concrete objectives. By providing comparative data, benchmarks and rankings, PISA creates a normative pressure by enhancing the competition and performance orientation. The introduction of education standards to monitor outcomes was furthered by PISA and institutionalized by regular education reports. For example, PISA brought this issue forward to enhance social mobility and integrate immigrants so that, in the context of HarmoS, the length of obligatory schooling was extended to also include the kindergarten level. In addition, the number of years in grammar schools was discussed to be diminished to prolong the number of years spent together by pupils of all tiers.

PISA is said to have the strongest form of influence via discursive dissemination, namely by means of conferences on PISA, HarmoS or the OECD's 'Centre for Educational Research and Innovation' (Interview CH08). This brought education back to the political agenda and put some topics in a new light, such as equity of chances, fairness, and possibilities of participation, which in turn changed national guiding principles. PISA triggered HarmoS by changing the historically evolved guiding principle of "being the best" into a more critical self-perception (Interview CH07, CH17), as well as towards more equality and equal opportunities in education. Social discrimination has turned out to be very high (Zahner/Moser et al. 2002), and one's position in the education system is still to a large extent 'inherited' due to the selective system. Thus, PISA helped to implement the principle of equal opportunity that is constitutionally guaranteed in Switzerland (Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 1999). Moreover, the economic rationale for education was introduced by PISA. Thus, the principles are based more on education as human capital than as a civil right (Interview CH05). As the international level started to influence Swiss principles, the old Swiss principle of performance returned, though it competes with various historic principles such as the myth of public schooling, equivalence of all teachers, and no free school

choice. However, nowadays the individual, the free choice of school and competition have become more important (Interview CH15).

Governance by coordination is the precondition for providing comparative PISA results. By organizing expert conferences on PISA, the OECD shows best practices and rankings, and recommends measures to overcome national problems. Competition between countries was enhanced by the PISA ranking (Interview CH05). Acting as agenda setters, PISA and the referenda on HarmoS increased the significance of the education system in the national public perception and reestablished education as a topic on the political agenda (Interview CH08, CH18). International comparison as well as the fear of federal intervention led to HarmoS. The idea was, given the rising European mobility, to abolish sectionalism, and to understand education as federal task. In contrast, HarmoS was created because the EDK refused to make the task of education federal. This has indirectly to do with PISA, because Switzerland was not the best, it enhanced the pressure. Nevertheless, the actual pressure emerges because one wanted to avoid the federal solution (Interview CH6). In contrast, the IO governance instrument of financial means does not play a decisive role in the context of the PISA study because countries have to pay for the studies themselves and it is not desired that the OECD makes concrete corresponding demands to the countries.

The strongest veto player concerning HarmoS – the core reform inspired by PISA – is the Swiss People’s Party, which is still intensively trying to hinder HarmoS by organizing referenda against it. It accuses the EDK - the traditional guardian of the diversity of the Swiss education system - of centralization of obligatory schooling and intervention into cantonal responsibilities. The main criticism is the school entrance age of now four years and extracurricular day care. Nevertheless, its referenda are not likely to be successful, as reforms are strongly needed (Interview CH13).

In sum, ‘PISA was considered a salvation by most policy actors’ (Interview CH07), as it was highly responsible for Swiss secondary education reforms by demonstrating necessary improvements in the system and providing examples of best practice of other countries. The OECD was able to further its interests effectively by disseminating ideas and setting standards. Its recommendations affected not only educational policy making, but also indirectly social policy, for example by stressing support for immigrant students. Although some reforms triggered by PISA had been discussed for a long time, the PISA impetus triggered the breakthrough: ‘The OECD influence is comparable with a consultancy that is called to corroborate decisions from abroad that were already made.’ (Interview CH18).

4.2 The Influence of Bologna on Higher Education

Bologna is perceived to be ‘the biggest reform since Humboldt’ in Switzerland (Interview CH02), particularly due to its ability to simultaneously foster both international and intra-Swiss harmonization of structures and goals. Its power cannot be explained without referring to the European Commission. The international actor had to enter the ‘forbidden’ area of national higher education very delicately or ‘crabwise’, as it does not have any legal competences or coercive mechanisms in education towards the signatory states of Bologna. Moreover, Switzerland - as a non-EU member - would have repelled direct intrusion in this domain. Hence, the Commission as a BFUG member exerted indirect influence via soft governance instruments to release transformations in the Bologna countries that would build the European Higher Education Area (Borrás/Conzelmann 2007).

As a voting member in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), the Commission contributed to the Bologna Stocktaking exercise through the contributions of the Eurydice network producing country analysis and comparative overviews. Via Bologna, the Commission provides a platform for the international and national discussion of educational topics, thus spreading international policy models via transnational communication and policy learning in the Bologna countries. The Bologna seminars, in particular, reveal the importance of this instrument of discursive dissemination. By making diverse recommendations and circulating publications that were used as terms of reference for the reconstruction of the Swiss higher education system, the Commission influenced domestic policy making. For instance, it disseminated the idea of stressing competition and economic effects of education, so that focus was placed on QA. The implementation of the aim of employability was realized by introducing the new study structures. Bologna spread the consciousness for the importance of QA and for education as a means for reaching economic aims, particularly regarding labor market issues and employability. The EU’s orientational framework in the context of Bologna is primarily economic (Ciccone/de la Fuente 2002) and conceptualizes education as ‘wealth of nations’ or ‘human capital’. Education is regarded as a means for furthering the labor market and labor mobility. The Swiss principles did not completely match this framework as explored earlier. Informal veto players were the student associations that feared a potential higher impact of employer associations, while professors regard the aim of employability positively. However, Swiss principles finally were made compatible by the EU via the instrument of discursive dissemination to enable the spreading of their aims. This paved the path for the integration of Bologna aims into the Swiss tradition, and led to far-reaching reforms.

Via Bologna, the Commission participates in setting standards that establish a definite set of aims for higher education based on which the Swiss system has been trans-

formed, such as the Bachelor/ Master structure, QA standards, mobility enhancement, modularization, ECTS, and mutual recognition of study degrees. For QA, the ‘European Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance’ were adopted and specific European trends were discussed (ENQA 2005). The Bologna ideal of enhancing employability and quality of higher education institutions by accreditation and evaluation reveals a greater focus on the labor market and international competitiveness than on education as a cultural asset. Hence, it does not match the Swiss guiding principle of Humboldt’s ideal of unity of teaching and research, and thus provides potential for change. The new evaluation of teaching may change the role of actors and enhance the power of the ‘customers’, here students (Interview CH04, CH06)

The European Commission as a Bologna member was successful in creating benchmarks. This is a case of the instrument of coordinative activities through executive surveillance, which is particularly significant due to the low Swiss involvement with the EU. The use of the Bologna reports as a means of voluntary and legally non-binding benchmarking increased the importance of the EU in Swiss higher education. In general, the role of the Commission was central, because without its coordination, and also financing, Bologna would not have ‘survived’. However, the importance of the provision of financial means and technical assistance does not particularly apply to Switzerland.

A high number of veto players such as the people and cantons, federalism, direct democracy and consociationalism complicate Switzerland’s cooperation with international actors dealing with Bologna. How can the low resistance of veto players to the strong penetration of Bologna into the domestic education system be explained? First, pressure stems from the broad participation of the surrounding EU countries, in particular because Switzerland is isolated as a non-EU member (Riklin 1995). Thus, veto players regarded a high degree of adaptation to Bologna as necessary to make the Swiss education system compatible with those of other European countries (Interview CH06, CH14). Second, there is a strong need for reforms in universities. Bologna was strategically exploited by domestic actors as a vehicle to implement other reforms that were controversial or overdue such as the reform of teaching, in order to overcome the gridlock of the 1980s and 1990s (Interview CH7). Education political actors used the ‘international argument’ of Bologna (Gonon 1998) as a reference point for legitimizing policy making initiatives (Moravcsik 1999).

4.3 Comparison of Governance Instruments of the OECD and the EU

With the diverse governance instruments used in the context of PISA and Bologna, the OECD and the EU have triggered a wave of reforms in Swiss secondary and higher education in the last decade. Parallels in both educational sectors exist with regard to these instruments: Of all instruments, discursive dissemination by establishing ideas and

knowledge, and educational standard setting influenced Swiss policy making the most. Coordinative activities are also quite important, while the impact of technical assistance and financial means was found to be rather negligible.

PISA and Bologna provide a platform for the international and national discussion and discursive dissemination of educational issues. International best practice models are spread in the participating countries by means of policy learning and transnational communication. In secondary education, PISA is part of a program of indicators which provides OECD countries with periodically comparative data on resources and the performance of their education systems. This implies that internationally comparative studies and identification of best practice may trigger transnational collective learning processes, such as in PISA and HarmoS seminars, and thus may enhance national education steering and provision. In higher education, the creation of educational guidelines through discursive dissemination is reflected mainly in Bologna seminars, which are viewed by interviewees as a central driving force for the Swiss implementation of Bologna. The instrument of standard setting with its dominant function of prescribing behavior such as OECD benchmarks in the case of PISA proved to be highly influential on the Swiss secondary education reform process. In higher education, informal standards by prescribing behavior were set via Bologna and its follow-up conferences by the European Commission, to be achieved until 2010. For instance, in the FH sector, Switzerland adapted completely to the ‘European Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance’ (ENQA 2005). The IO governance instrument of coordinative activities through executive surveillance is a decisive driving factor, for example in the OECD peer reviewing process. The European Commission plays a vital role for Switzerland in coordinating Bologna due to the rather weak contacts of Switzerland with EU countries in educational matters. As Swiss support structures are very sophisticated, the governance instrument of financial means through transfer payments does not play a big role in secondary and higher education. Switzerland itself finances the implementation of PISA-induced reforms, and provides the organization and data collection for the respective PISA Study. In higher education, the governance instrument of financial incentives in form of transfer payments, such as EU project financing, was found to be rather indecisive. However, the financing of Bologna by the EU has been indispensable for the progress of the European Higher Education Area.

In both sectors, the strong impact of these IO governance mechanisms succeeded to prevail over Swiss reform-hindering transformation capacities in two regards. First, domestic veto players expected greater advantages by introducing reforms than by making use of their veto power because the adaptation to Bologna and PISA is highly relevant to the Swiss labor market and yields advantages for the small open economy surrounded by the EU market. Moreover, to overcome the long-standing reform backlog,

veto players used the international initiatives strategically and justified domestic reforms by referring to international requirements. Second, the participation in the international initiatives converted domestic guiding principles towards the orientational frameworks of the IOs, which facilitated the implementation of the initiatives. Because of this special constellation of national and exogenous factors, a multitude of decisive reforms ended the backlog. Today, reforms induced by PISA and Bologna account for the majority of all Swiss education reforms since the late 1990s.

5 CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrated that core reforms in Swiss education policy making were triggered by the emergence of a third, international policy making level in the context of PISA and Bologna that entered the education political arena in the last decade. Despite its reform-obstructing institutional settings and its comparatively low level of involvement with IOs, Switzerland exhibited an extremely high degree of policy change in the last decade. Reforms were heavily inspired by Bologna and PISA, which provoked the use of QA measures and educational standards, and increased the autonomy of educational institutions. The all-Swiss orientation of these international standards even triggered an intra-Swiss harmonization of education policies and structures. The comparatively comprehensive adoption of the two international policy models altered actor constellations and led to both a high degree of international harmonization, particularly in the case of Bologna, and to the domestic unification of the heterogeneous cantonal policies and educational structures, notably in the context of PISA (Bieber 2010).

Internationalization has altered the education policy structure, in particular the relationship between the Federation and cantons, and triggered far-reaching reforms in Swiss education policy making that had been relatively stable for a long time. Hence, the international initiatives have played an unparalleled role in triggering overdue and controversial reforms. The PISA results led to the core reform project called ‘HarmoS’, which reveals that PISA insights are particularly important for a multicultural country like Switzerland. A recent OECD report on economic development in Switzerland underlines the special demographic and socio-cultural situation of Switzerland, whose students are comparatively heterogeneous in terms of language and culture, and are often from migrant families background (OECD 2007). Thus, PISA information on Swiss student performance may help to foster the integration of students at the end of their obligatory schooling time into the labor market. Likewise, the impact of EU instruments used in the context of Bologna was enormous. Bologna and the European Commission together were important forces driving education reforms in Switzerland. IO membership did not turn out to matter: EU influence on Bologna is high as it codetermines – as its main financial contributor – its goals and thus exerts indirect influence on Switzer-

land via Bologna. As demonstrated by the ideal implementation of Bologna aims in Switzerland, the participation in the European Higher Education Area is highly relevant to the country in terms of international mobility, competitiveness, and scientific exchange. Thus, European integration of Swiss education constitutes the basis for its integration in other policy fields, such as economics and labor (Armingeon 1999), as Bologna membership is the ticket to the EU labor market.

The two IOs were successful in furthering their aims in education: The impact of soft IO governance instruments outstripped the conservative effects of national transformation capacities. For two reasons, they did not hinder far-reaching developments in Swiss education policy. First, this was due to the high interrelation of introduced reforms with global labor market exigencies. Despite not being an EU member, Switzerland depends on the compatibility of its education system with those of the EU. Moreover, the cooperation of veto players was due to the long backlog of reforms. They were convinced of the need for change or did not want to be blamed for hindering necessary reforms. Hence, the results did not confirm the assumption of the theoretical framework arguing that veto players lower the possibility of domestic reform. Second, as hypothesized in the theoretical framework, there is a nonlinear relationship between misfit and change: a medium misfit maximizes the chance for change while a total fit or misfit does not promote reforms. Swiss change was furthered by the moderate degree of institutional misfit of the IOs' orientational frameworks and domestic guiding principles (Börzel 2003: 6).

In sum, the results of the empirical study on internationalization processes of Swiss education policy making are mainly inconsistent with the theoretical assumptions of Leuze/Brand et al. (2008). First, it was argued in this paper that the number of veto-players and points might reduce the possibility for reform in a country. However, although there are a high number of veto-players in Switzerland, they did not hinder reform. This result deviant from the original assumption may reveal the high need for reforms after the backlog in the 1980s and 1990s. However, further research should focus on the underlying motives for the passiveness of veto players. Moreover, the results beg for a more detailed examination of guiding principles. Particularly the literature on guiding principles and cultural accounts (Lepsius 1995, 1997) seems to be adequate for the analysis of ideas. I propose preliminarily that this may be seen due to the high need for reforms obvious to all stakeholders in education. Second**,** I found that the compatibility of international and domestic guiding principles in education of plays a multifaceted role in this case study. The OECD has a clear economic vision, while the EU also includes other perspectives next to its economic rationales.

The country case revealed that structural and ideational factors were not completely able to explain the high degree of change. In contrast, Switzerland's small size in combination with transnational communication, normative and competitive pressure proved

to make it very adaptive to the international scene (Katzenstein 1993; Kux 1998). Therefore, further research on the influence of IO governance on national policy change may apply convergence theory (Knill 2005; Starke/Obinger et al. 2008) as well as research on small open economies (Armingeon/Emmenegger 2007).

As the transformation of Swiss educational statehood saw the light of day, political change in other countries is on the cards. However, there does not exist sufficient research yet to embed Switzerland in a bigger context of general reform developments in other countries. Quantitative research comparing many countries might help to assess if countries transform similarly under IO influence and thus converge. This would enhance the understanding concerning a possible convergence of education systems in the world.

6 INTERVIEWEES

Organization	Acronym	Date	Location
Swiss Society for Research in Education	SGBF	09. Apr 08	Neuchâtel
Commission for Science, Education and Culture of the National Council	WBK NR	17. Apr 08	Bern
Department of Higher Education of the Education Directorate of the canton Zurich	HSA Zürich	01. Apr 08	Zurich
Swiss Trade and Crafts Association	SGV	02. Jun 08	Bern
Organ for Accredtitation and Quality Assurance	OAQ	03. Jun 08	Bern
Federal Statistical Office	BFS	10. Apr 08	Neuchâtel
Swiss University Conference	SUK	31. Mrz 08	Bern
Swiss Employers Association	SAV	03. Jun 08	Bern
Association of Swiss Enterprises	ECO	30. Mai 08	Zurich
Service for Education Research	SRED	10. Jul 08	Genf
Education Directorate of the canton Zurich	BD Zürich	04. Apr 08	Zurich
Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology	BBT	03. Apr 08	Bern
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education	EDK	03. Apr 08	Bern
Swiss Rectors' Conference of Universities of Education	COHEP	06. Jun 08	Bern
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education	EDK	03. Apr 08	Bern
Swiss Federation of Trade Unions	SGB	08. Apr 08	Bern
Commission for Science, Education and Culture of the National Council	WBK NR	17. Apr 08	Bern
Umbrella Association of Swiss Teachers	LCH	08. Apr 08	Biel

State Secretariat for Education and Research	SBF	02. Apr 08	Bern
Swiss Science and Technology Council	SWTR	24. Apr 08	Bern
Federal Statistical Office	BFS	10. Apr 08	Neuchatel
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities	CRUS	02. Apr 08	Zurich
Swiss Center of Coordination of Educational Research	SKBF	02. Jun 08	Bern
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences	KFH	14. Apr 08	Lucerne

Organization	**Acronym**	**Date**	**Location**
Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission	EK	17. Nov 08	Brussels
Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission	EK	18. Nov 08	Brussels

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8 ABBREVIATIONS

BBT	Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology
BFS	Federal Statistical Office
BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
CRUS	Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EDI	Federal Department of Home Affairs
EDK	Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education
ETH	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
EU	European Union
EVD	Federal Department of Economic Affairs
FH	University of Applied Sciences
HarmoS	Swiss Reform Project for the Harmonization of Obligatory School
HFKG	Federal Law on the Promotion of Universities and Coordination among Swiss Institutions of Higher Learning
IO	International Organization
KFH	Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences
KMK	Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs
OAQ	Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PH	University of Teacher Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QA	Quality Assurance
SBF	State Secretariat for Education and Research
SGB	Swiss Federation of Trade Unions
SUK	Swiss University Conference

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