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COMPARING GOVERNANCE OF
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
- THE EU, THE OECD
AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

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Comparing Governance of International Organisations - The EU, the OECD and Educational Policy

ABSTRACT

How do international organisations (IOs) influence domestic policymaking? In the field of educational policy, IOs increasingly play an important role in shaping national debates and policies. Comparative studies as conducted by the OECD, for example, reveal strengths and weaknesses of individual educational systems and raise questions of 'best practice'. International initiatives such as the EU's Bologna Process even compel national policy makers to restructure their systems in such a way that students and staff will be able to move with more ease between systems and receive fair recognition of their qualifications in the near future.

The aim of this study is to explore the forms of governance through which international organisations exercise influence on national policymaking. For this purpose, the EU and the OECD serve as case studies since these two organisations have recently been particularly active players in educational policy. Drawing on institutionalist approaches, an analytic grid will be designed in this study for systematically investigating the forms of governance as exercised by international organisations. The findings show that IOs have the most capacities to form and guide national policymaking through their distinctive ability to co-ordinate initiatives and to shape the ideas in a policy field, such as education.

Keywords: OECD, EU, Educational Policy, International Organisation, Governance

CONTENTS

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- The EU, the OECD and Educational Policy

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

How do international organisations (IOs) shape domestic policymaking? In this paper, we claim that international organisations are able to form and guide national policy-making through their distinctive ability to co-ordinate initiatives and to shape ideas in a policy field. IOs exercise governance through their capacities to manage international processes and to influence their content. Moreover, we show that such capacities are inherent to international organisations independent of whether they are supranational or intergovernmental. In this paper, we explore such forms of governance in the field of educational policy, in which IOs have been particularly active players in recent years. As case studies, the EU and the OECD are examined, analysed and compared in more detail, as these two organisations are the most prominent actors in international educational policy today. By doing so, we seek to explore the extent to which competencies (sovereignty and autonomy) in the field of educational policy have been transferred in a spatial perspective from the national level to the international level.[2]

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first part, an analytic grid is designed for systematically investigating the forms of governance as exercised by international organisations. Drawing on sociological-institutionalist approaches, the major components of governance are extracted and adopted for the study of international organisations. In the second part, the theoretical frame is evaluated by an empirical investigation about governance as exercised by the EU and the OECD. Particular focus is given to their two most leading initiatives, namely the EU's so-called Bologna process to establish a European area of Higher Education and the OECD's programme of educational indicators with which the education systems of its participating countries are assessed. For the empirical part, a major element of the analysis derives from expert interviews with staff

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[1]   Previous versions of this paper have been presented to the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Uppsala, Sweden, April 13-18, 2004 and the American Political Science Association meeting (APSA) in Chicago, USA, September 2-5, 2004. We would like to thank the participants of these conferences for valuable comments.

[2]   See programme of woork of the Collaborative Research Centre 597 "Transformations of the State" at the University of Bremen, http://www.state.uni-bremen.de.

members of and governmental representatives to the EU and the OECD as well as from the analysis of official documents issued by these organisations.[3]

2. GOVERNANCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS – AN INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH

The notion of governance refers to the sum of formal and informal modes of regulating social processes (Héritier 2002: 185). Such conceptualisation also expresses the capacity of international organisations to develop and shape policymaking in an issue area. Drawing on a sociological perspective on institutionalism we emphasise "the social and cognitive features of institutions rather than structural and constraining features" (Finnemore 1996: 326; see also Hall and Taylor 1996, Scott 2001: 51-57). Such a perspective enables us to focus on the institutional qualities with which educational policy is dealt with at the level of international organisations and acknowledges their possible impacts on national policymaking. On the basis of such accounts we distinguish between three dimensions of governance as exercised by international organisations: (1) governance by co-ordination, (2) governance by opinion formation, and (3) governance by instruments.

(1) Governance by co-ordination

Governance by 'co-ordination' refers to the ability of an international organisation to provide the means of organizing and handling procedures which promote certain initiatives in a policy field. Governance by co-ordination marks the special capacity of an international organisation to 'pull the strings together'. It encompasses activities such as the management of conferences and meetings where diverse and significant actors come together. It also includes the infrastructure such as the size of the IO, the number of staff and the professional network the IO sets up.

Through such co-ordinative governance, international organisations can give incentives and initiate proposals for policymaking. IOs are able to influence political processes by managing, directing and speeding up programmes and projects. In particular, individual staff members or groups of members can be very influential through their position in the IO. Moreover, they also have the necessary expertise and experience to actively shape the design and carry out projects (Haas 1992).

(2) Governance by opinion formation

Governance by 'opinion formation' expresses the capacity of an international organisation to initiate and influence national discourses on educational issues. It is thus 'thematic' governance and refers to the manufacture as well as the content of such dis-

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[3]   These interviews were conducted between December 2003 and August 2004. To guarantee the anonymity of interviewees, we applied a coding scheme to hide their identity.

courses. It encompasses the material, facts and information an IO generates, such as internal communications, memos and the like as well as official output, such as books, brochures and other publications. Moreover, it also includes the models and concepts which the international organisation creates and further develops, such as assessment schemes, policy proposals and benchmarking mechanisms.

With governance by opinion formation, the international organisation generates visions and values which shape policymaking of its member states. Within the forum of an international organisation new ideas, concepts and models are raised, analysed and further developed (Cox and Jacobson 1973). These foster processes which lead to the origination of new constitutive norms or generate normative pressures (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891, DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Moreover, by such thematic reflection on issues of current affairs, IOs develop models for action and concepts for assessment. With such activities, international organisations also produce standards for evaluation and mutual scrutiny (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891; Héritier 2002: 187).

(3) Governance by instruments

Governance by 'instruments' is a rather direct and 'technical' form of governance and encompasses the regulations to which states need to adhere due to their membership in the organisation (Majone 1996: 230). Thus, governance by instruments includes the processes by which an international organisation pushes and organises the design of binding decisions for its member states and translates the outcome into policy proposals. It also refers to the resources the organisation is having at its disposal, such as financial means, for advancing its projects.

Governance by instruments encompasses the body of legal acts and other formal acts to which states by membership agree to comply with (Reinalda and Verbeek 1998: 6). Governance by instruments thus refers to the capacity of an IO to draft and prepare legal decisions, international arrangements and agreed principles which influence national policies. With such instruments of governance, an international organisation produces regulative norms which organise and constrain the behaviour of states (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). It is a strong form of governance, since such regulations have strict binding character and can be directly applied to member states. Often, however, such regulations need to be translated into national decision-making first, before affecting state behaviour.

3. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION – COMPARING THE EU AND THE OECD

In recent years, international organisations have become highly active in the field of education and play an important role in shaping national policy-making. The processes and programmes they initiate, design and implement lead to national debates and re-

forms and therefore increasingly influence domestic educational policy. To address this issue, we will concentrate on two international organisations, namely the EU and the OECD. Both these international organisations have a strong history of involvement with educational policy; for each of them one of their leading activities will be analysed in detail.

According to the original objective on economic cooperation, the focus of the European Union (former European Economic Community) in the field of education always laid on vocational education and training in order to enhance free movement of labour. Later, its arena of competences was extended to higher education, as well. However, all activities until the 1990s focused on the mutual recognition of degrees between member states and the exchange of students across borders. In recent years, instead, the EU became more strongly involved in educational policy and extended its activities to advance the goal of establishing a common European educational space.

The OECD, too, has an enduring history of activity in educational policy. Although not particularly mentioned in its statutes, educational policy has always had its stake in the organisation and, over the years, increasingly received a broader position in the OECD's range of activities. Especially since the establishment of the Centre for Research and Innovation (CERI) in 1968, education became acknowledged as a field of valuable research in the OECD. However, particularly during the course of the 1990s, the activities of the organisation in the field of educational policy attracted far more attention than before. Its educational statistics and its review analyses are increasingly referred to by national policy makers as points of reference for national reform processes.

To analyse the forms of governance by the EU in the field of educational policy, the Bologna-process serves as example. This process envisions the creation of a European higher education area, in which students can move with ease and have fair recognition of their qualifications. Initiated in 1999, ministers of education from participating countries agreed to reform the structure of their higher education systems in such a way that it will enable students to conduct university studies and doctoral programmes across borders by the year 2010. In fact, "Bologna has become a new European higher education brand, today easily recognized in governmental policies, academic activities, international organisations, networks and media" (Zgaga 2003: 7).

The Bologna process has triggered the most intense reform of higher education in Europe. As a consequence of their agreement to the declaration, many countries need to reform their higher education policy in order to fulfil the agreed principles. Most significantly, a lot of participants are on their way to introduce a two-cycle-structure with Bachelor's and Master's degrees. As a further consequence of Bologna, the development of convergence in European higher education systems is declared as another

goal. In fact, such initiative to erect an overarching framework for European education by the years 2010 is the most ambitious goal of the European Commission at the moment.[4]

In the case of the OECD, its activities on educational indicators reveal the IO's modes of governance with particular intensity. The indicator programme has long been on the agenda of the organisation. However, only with its more elaborated modes of operating, in recent years, it has increasingly served as a reference point for academics, politicians and practitioners alike. In particular, the discussions about the results deriving from the OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) showed how such international comparative studies can influence and shape domestic debates and initiatives. Conducted with 265,000 pupils of the age of 15, PISA proves international information on student outcomes, which gives countries benchmarks and regular updates on how their students perform.

Particularly in the German context, this study has triggered enormous discussions about the quality of the educational system. Most importantly, PISA showed the deficits of the German system in comparison to other participating countries. For example, German pupils have scored significantly below average in elementary skills, such as reading, writing and problem solving. In particular, the problems of the German system in wiping out difference of class background and its insufficiencies in integrating children with a migration background became exposed. Due to such poor results, PISA introduced a wide-ranging discussion about reforming the German educational system. New concepts of teaching capacities, organisation of schools and the content of the syllabus were, for example, on the agenda of the German Ministry of Education and Research.

The EU, Educational Policy and the Bologna Process

Already in 1963 "general principles for vocational training" were adopted by the council of the European Economic Community (EEC). To pursue the agreed principles of free movement of labour, as envisaged by the six initial member states, the recognition of qualifications and vocational certificates represented an important and integral part (see Treaty of Rome 1957, Art. 128). However, a first meeting of the ministers of education in the council was only arranged in 1974 and educational policy received an institutional frame. Ensuing this meeting, a set of action lines were finalised which provided the basis for work until Maastricht 1992 (Blanke 1994: 23; Müller-Solger 1990: 807).

In the 1980s, several first projects in the field of vocational training (PETRA, FORCE, Commett etc.) were introduced and implemented by the European Commis-

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[4] When referring to the European Commission in this context, we talk about the Direction General "education and culture" if not stated differently.

sion. With the beginning of higher education programmes, such as Erasmus in 1986, however, disputes on the Commission's competence emerged, and member states feared they would lose their prerogative in educational policy. As a consequence, the concept of a common educational policy as set up in the Treaty of Rome was reconsidered and Art. 127 of the Treaty of Maastricht accentuated instead the principles of subsidiarity. Moreover, it even banned harmonisation in order to circumvent interference of the European Commission in national educational systems.

In the late 1990s, however, the developments in the field of educational policy in the EU accelerated. In several policy fields, matters of education climbed up in the agenda of the European Union. Most importantly, the conclusions of the European Council in Lisbon 2000 demonstrate the culmination of the rise of educational policy. On the way to becoming the most competitive economy in the world by 2010, education now is meant to play a major role in the knowledge-based society. In particular, the progress made in the Bologna-process reflects the vision of establishing a European education area.

Governance by co-ordination: from organising to road mapping

In 1999, 29 European countries signed a declaration in Bologna, committing themselves to establishing a common European higher education area until the year 2010. This route is now publicly known as the Bologna Process and associated with the European Commission. The initiation of this process, however, can be traced back to single a minister's initiative who deliberately started it without the EU's incorporation. It was the French minister for education, Claude Allègre, who was searching for solutions to reform the French higher education system and invited the Italian, German and English education ministers, facing similar problems, to come up with a European solution to their problems in a voluntary multilateral agreement (Interview EU2). At the occasion on the 800th anniversary of the University of Paris, the ministers signed a declaration in Sorbonne.

This Sorbonne Declaration endeavours to create a European area of higher education by "harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system" (Sorbonne Declaration 1998). A university structure with a system of two cycles and the use of credits were the two main ideas for the creation of such European higher education space. With the Sorbonne Declaration, other European countries were appealed to join these four countries in their objectives. In spring 1999, the general directors for higher education of the EU member states and the European Rectors Conference (now European University Association) prepared a draft for a declaration to establish the proceedings on a wider European level. In June 1999, education ministers of all EU member states and 15 other European states signed this declaration during a meeting in Bologna (Bologna Declaration 1999).

In Bologna, it was also agreed to meet in a biennial modus to analyse progress, possibly redefine the goals and decide on further steps. The first of such follow-up meetings took place in Prague in May 2001 and the second one in Berlin in September 2003 where more participants joined the process. In Prague, for example, the Council of Europe, the EUA (European University Association), EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and ESIB (National Unions of Students in Europe) were invited as consultants and observers, and Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey as new members. In Berlin 2003, the list of members was expanded to 40 states by the acceptance of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

It was only in Prague, that the European Commission was invited to become a full member of the process (Prague Declaration 2001). During the preceding meetings, the European Commission was explicitly meant to stay excluded from the process. In fact, it even was the goal of the initiator of the process to find a European solution to tackle domestic problems, not to bring educational policy on the European agenda as a policy field (Interview EU2). In Prague, instead, the decision to allow the Commission to join the process was very much pushed by the Swedish presidency and only accepted because of the necessity of having a coordinating organ. It was also acknowledged that the activities which the Commission was involved in during earlier years were very much concordant with the goals of the Bologna process (Interview EU2 & EU3).

Moreover, during the Prague meeting, the need for more structured follow-up work was explicitly articulated. Since the European Commission had the most competencies for such a task, it was given a leading role. With its support, a follow-up group as well as a preparatory group were set up. Whereas the follow-up group is in charge of organising seminars on the main targets of the Bologna process, the preparatory group has to work out the drafts which are to be presented at the ministerial meetings. Through these new bodies, the Commission gained much stronger options to actively shape the Bologna process. Since it is sitting in both of those organs, it can play a vital role not only in shaping the outlines of the roadmap but also in coordinating and enforcing the activities envisioned in the Bologna process.[5]

During the Berlin meeting in 2003, the road map for reaching the set targets was spelt out even clearer. To give the process further momentum, it was decided to concen-

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[5] The follow-up group comprises representatives of all signatory countries, new participants and the European Commission, and is chaired by the EU-Presidency. The preparatory group is composed of the representatives of the countries having hosted the previous ministerial meetings, the host of the following ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states (elected by the follow-up group), the European Commission and the present EU-Presidency.

trate on three of the set targets, namely the effort to put up quality assurance systems, to introduce systems of two cycles and to recognize degrees and periods of studies. Moreover, it was also agreed that by 2005, a quality assurance system at institutional, national and European level must have been built up, the implementation of the cycle system must have been started with, and a diploma supplement has to be given to all graduating students from 2005 onwards.

Moreover, as a result of the Berlin meeting, the follow-up structure of Bologna was altered in order to better push the process of implementing it. Again, the European Commission is powerfully involved in all new bodies established at the Berlin meeting. It is part of the newly created Board and Secretariat, and also keeps its seat in the – now expanded – preparatory group.[6] In addition, the follow-up group was given the task of organising a stocktaking report – a surprising development in EU-educational history which demonstrates the new quality of the process: until that point member states had always hindered comparisons of their educational systems.

Governance by opinion formation: from restraint to thematic impetus

The European Commission not only redefines and adds new targets to the ongoing reform process, rather it actively formed the future of European education in the preceding period leading to the Bologna declaration. In other words, "[a]lthough the Bologna process was initiated mainly as an intergovernmental process, there is an evident and growing convergence with EU processes aimed at strengthening European co-operation in higher education" (Zgaga 2003: 7). The original declaration of Bologna identified various goals. Most importantly, signatory countries need to adopt a system of easy readable and comparable degrees. As a precondition to that, a structure of two-cycle studies needs to be put into practice and, a system of credits (such as the ECTS) has to be established.

None of these goals of Bologna (except the explicit system of two cycles), however, are new or (have) had not been addressed by the European Commission in previous years. Rather, Bologna can even be understood as very important in mainstreaming many of the activities which the Commission has been trying to do for the last 15 years (Interview EU3). It was argued in one of the interviews that the Bologna process would not have taken place without the activities of the Commission in putting them on the agenda again and again and that the pristine reason for working together came from the European Union itself (Interview EU4).

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[6] The Board is chaired by the EU Presidency and composed of three participating countries elected by the follow-up group, the European Commission, the next host country, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies as well as the Council of Europe, the EUA, ERASHE and ESIB as consultative members. The Secretariat also supports the overall follow-up work.

For example, the goal of establishing "a genuine European area of […] skills and training by increasing the transparency, and improving the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills; to promote European level mobility among teachers, students and other people" (European Commission 1993: 122) was already mentioned in 1993 in the White book on "Growth, Competitiveness, Employment". Similarly, questions of student mobility have also been addressed by the European Commission since the late 1980's within the Erasmus and Socrates programmes. Moreover, mutual recognition was seen as having been developed "by the generation of the system of 'credit' transfers" (European Commission 1995: 55), accompanied by pre-operating studies for the introduction of ECTS in the European Commission.

Since the Commission's full membership in the process after Prague, however, it has been directly influencing the targets and goals of the undertaking. In particular, it is using its mandate to take the floor for a great amount of time during conferences in order to spread ideas about how to proceed with activities and what to do next (Interview EU3). Moreover, with its seats in the preparatory group responsible for the draft outline to be discussed at the conferences, the European Commission is having greater options of influencing the content of the Bologna process. As a result, the European Commission is able to shape the Bologna goals according to its own recent activities.

For example, in 2000, when the European Council met in Lisbon, the heads of states agreed on the strategic goal of making the European Union "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater cohesion" (Lisbon European Council 2000: 2). They called upon the member states to reach their self-set targets in the area of education. Moreover, they emphasised the need for a European Framework defining the skills for lifelong learning and the importance of establishing a European Area of Research and Innovation (Lisbon European Council 2000: 7)

Over the subsequent years, the targets as set in Lisbon became increasingly incorporated in the follow-up of Bologna. During the Prague meeting in 2001, for example, ministers agreed to add another three goals to the process, namely lifelong learning, the enhancement of competitiveness to other parts of the world and the involvement of higher education institutions and students. Moreover, with the expansion of the catalogue of targets by including a common research area in the Berlin communiqué of 2003 (Berlin Declaration 2003), another step was taken towards giving the Commission a more important role in the Bologna process – prior to this meeting, a European research area had been a pure EU-context subject only (Interview EU3; European Commission 2000).

Diverse communications by the Commission in the last years underlined that the thematic interest of the Commission has been included in the later Bologna process. For

example, the communication "The role of the University in a Europe of Knowledge" (2003) was highly acknowledged by all participants of the Bologna process. In addition, in July 2003, the Commission also published a communication on "Researchers in the European Research area, one profession, multiple careers" which received similar acknowledgment. Also the communication on "Making lifelong learning a reality" (2001) is closely linked to the discussion around Bologna.

Governance by instruments: strength by financial capacities

The European Commission has only soft instruments at hand. Parallel to the Bologna process, the European Council fostered educational matters in the EU. During its meeting in Lisbon in 2000, it not only set the thematic impetus, but also introduced the Open Method of Coordination into the field of educational policy, based on purely voluntary commitment by the member states. As a result, new tools are now given at hand to the Commission for dealing with educational policy in the EU area. Most importantly, specific timetables for achieving the goals were set, indicators and benchmarks became defined, and specific targets were established, as well as periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review processes became introduced.

Moreover, since the European Council Spring meeting in Barcelona in 2002, the calling for activities in the Bologna process has explicitly been mentioned. In its conclusions, the European Council appeals "to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer cooperation with regard to university degrees in the context of the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague process prior to the Berlin meeting in 2003" (Barcelona European Council 2002: 19). As a result, the non-binding character of the Bologna process has – at least for EU member states – changed to a somewhat more obligatory status, since legislative competence is now given to the EU (Interview EU3).

Financial instruments, instead, were more important means to push the Bologna process forward. In fact, the Commission supported it from the beginning by funding a lot of the early activities. Although not an official member of the Bologna Process until Prague, the Commission contributed financially to research projects and seminars. As mentioned in interviews, without the financial support of the European Commission, there would, indeed, not have been any follow-up after the Sorbonne declaration and preparations for the Bologna meeting could not have been made (Interview EU2 & EU3).

However, financial support by the European Commission has by now reached a new stage. That is to say, in recent times, the Commission has distributed money differently than in the past. Most importantly, over the last years, quality measures have become a more important issue for funding by the European Commission. For example, universities were formerly supported for simply introducing the ECTS schemes in their institu-

tion; by now, however, the Commission's financial contribution is bound to the quality of the introduction of those schemes (Interview EU3).

The OECD's work on Indicators in Education

The OECD's project on international indicators today is a highly significant part of its work on educational policy. In fact, it is one of the areas for which the organisation is now most known and respected for. In particular, its publications on educational indicators since the early 1990s have become a focal point for politicians, the media and the general public alike. However, the OECD has undertaken work on educational indicators already for a long time. In fact, compiling statistical information on educational issues is one of the oldest projects the organisation has been active in, since such kinds of projects were initiated shortly after its own establishment.

Already in the 1960s, when interest in the use of statistical information for educational planning grew, the OECD began to conceptualise indicators for systemic statistical comparison of educational performances. It was realised that for better and more efficient educational planning, a basis for the gathering and comparison of statistics in this policy field was necessary in order to provide national policy makers with the wide-ranging information needed. In 1964, at a conference of the European Ministers of Education in London, it was recommended that the OECD should generate a model handbook for the various factors which are significant for effective educational investment planning (Papadopoulos 1994: 50). The OECD's efforts to compile such a model handbook resulted in the so-called 'Green Book' which continued to be widely used as guidance for gathering educational statistics in the OECD context throughout the 1970s.

In the mid-1980s, however, new dynamics pushed and promoted the indicator project once again within the OECD context. With the establishment of the *International Indicators of Educational Systems* (INES) project and annual publications on educational indicators, the OECD developed to be the most important organisation working with and on educational statistics. Moreover, it took over to revise and further developed the *International Standard Classification of Education* (ISCED) manual, originally initiated by UNESCO. Lately, with the PISA project, the OECD has developed the most sophisticated techniques so far for generating educational indicators. Through such projects, the OECD enforced its reputation in educational research and became the leading international organisation in this field.

Governance by co-ordination: from opposing to shaping educational policy

From the mid-1980s onwards, a couple of countries – the US, France, Austria and Switzerland, in particular – put pressure on the OECD to conduct more statistical work on educational indicators. Most strongly, the US repeatedly called for further development of the project on educational statistics. In 1984, at a meeting in Paris, the US delegate

urged the OECD "in very direct language" to engage in a project of collecting and analyzing statistical input and outcome information (Henry et al 2001: 87). In fact, at one stage the US was even threatening to withdraw its support from the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation if its demands were not met.

Through a series of conferences, a new phase of work on educational statistics was gradually initiated. In November 1987, the US government hosted the first meeting in Washington, which gave the incentive for more work on educational indicators within the OECD context. New and feasible approaches to developing comparative statistics were discussed in order to agree on a small set of indicators which could be collected in the participating countries. In March 1988, the French government hosted the follow-up meeting in Poitiers (Interview OECD1). During this second meeting, participants put the emphasis on how to design indicators for educational evaluation (Alexander 1994: 14).

As a result, the OECD's work on educational indicators became more organised and institutionalised from the late 1980s onwards. On the basis of these conferences and the issues they raised, the new research project was approved by the Governing Board of CERI in May 1988 and the project of International Indicators of Education Systems became established. With INES, the OECD began to take a pivotal role for improving the quality of educational statistics at the international level (Bottani 1996: 280). Its primary purpose was to conduct explorative work in the field of educational indicators and construct such indicators based on existing sources and accessible data.

Such initial efforts were reviewed a year and a half later at the first General Assembly of project participation hosted in Semmering by the Austrian authorities (Alexander 1994: 14). Participants of this meeting were satisfied with the first attempts undertaken by the OECD, and their assessment of the work led to the second phase of the INES project. Assisted by the secretariat of the OECD, some countries took the leadership of Working Groups or Networks to prepare aspects which should gain further attention (Interview OECD8). At the second meeting held in Lugano-Cadro, Switzerland in September 1991, the resulting first draft of *Education at a Glance* was presented. Most significantly, the content and the number of indicators were more precisely defined during the Lugano meeting (Bottani 1996: 280).

OECD staff members, however, were first sceptical about the possibility of conducting such a project on outcome indicators. In fact, "[w]ithin CERI, a culture of distrust towards performance indicators had grown up over the years" (Henry et al 2001: 87). As mentioned in an interview, "we purposefully avoided anything which amounted countries to compare themselves – we avoided comparisons, explicit comparisons" (Interview OECD2). However, CERI could not ignore the pressure for a new initiative

from governmental side to develop such outcome indicators and had no choice than to concede (Interview OECD8).

The exploratory work ended in December 1989 with consensus and enthusiasm for the project, and demonstrated "that it was possible to overcome the initial resistance" in relation to the project (OECD Doc. 1995: 1). Also against CERI's expectations, the indicators received a splendid political reception and the project became accepted within the OECD as well (Interview OECD7). In fact, "[t]he CERI Governing Board now stood solidly behind the Indicators project. It instructed the various Networks, technical groups, and the secretariat, to draw up a handbook in order to provide a clearer account of the conceptual and organisational framework for data collection and management, and led to a set of refined international education indicators. It also stressed the need to disseminate information about indicators, which created a climate of support among policy makers and analysts across member countries and even beyond" (Henry et al 2001: 88).

Today, OECD staff members manage the educational programme from the headquarters in Paris where they bring together the information. They co-ordinate the gathering of educational statistics, develop meaningful indicators and organise the presentation of educational statistics. Despite such voluminous work, in the OECD secretariat itself, however, only a small number of people are actively involved with the indicators programme. For example, only four people run the PISA programme; instead, a major part of work is conducted outside the OECD (Interview OECD3). That is to say, the majority of the work, namely the collection of statistics is done by statisticians in the national centres and OECD staff members manage the collection and generation of indicators (Interview OECD4).

Most importantly, however, OECD staff members develop the schemes for collecting and gathering the statistics needed. In fact, most of the initiatives concerning the work with educational indicators today come from the inside of the OECD, as staff members make suggestions and proposals for revisions and developments, often in co-operation and exchange with experts, practitioners and politicians.

Governance by opinion formation: from negligible to sophisticated techniques

Before the 1990s, the OECD's publications on educational statistics had been rare and irregular. The organisation had only occasionally produced volumes with educational statistics. Using the 'Green Book', it published volumes on International Educational Indicators in 1974 and 1975, and again in 1981 (Papadopoulos 1994: 190). With the new interest and the resulting institutional set-up with INES, the OECD began to systematically gather educational statistics and to generate significant indicators. As a consequence, the OECD's publication on educational statistics became more regular and rigorous. Since 1992, it has annually published *Education at a Glance*.

Over the years, *Education at a Glance* developed to become an important source of education data. With 36 indicators, *Education at a Glance* provides comparative data about the functioning of education systems in member countries. Moreover, it is conceptually further developed every year where new refinements are added. Most key indicators stay the same over the years and therefore facilitate comparison over time and across countries, however, occasionally, some new indicators are added, whereas others are reported from time to time. "In Education at a Glance we have 36 indicators presented each year. We have to find a good balance between new indicators, innovation and also some indicators that people want to see updated each year" (Interview OECD4).

Most importantly, with the establishment of INES, the OECD's work on educational statistics also went through significant shifts as regards the content of its work. Until the mid-1980s, the OECD had mainly recorded 'input measures', such as private and public spending, staff expenditure, enrolment, and number of staff. The new project, instead, laid a much greater emphasis on recording 'outcome measures'. That is to say, with *Education at a Glance*, a greater emphasis had been laid on the effectiveness of the educational system. The statistics also record aspects now, such as labour force participation, and education and work among the youth population. With the 2003 edition, such outcome measures were, for the first time, even put in the front of the 400-page edition.

The PISA project is the most advanced initiative of INES. Its purpose is to test how prepared pupils are to meet the challenges of today's knowledge societies when approaching the end of compulsory schooling. PISA is the most comprehensive and rigorous international effort today to assess student performance and to collect data on students, family and institutional factors. In 2000, the first PISA survey was conducted in 32 countries, and by 2002, another 13 countries completed it. The survey is repeated every three years, with the primary focus shifting to mathematics in 2003, to science in 2006 and back to reading in 2009.

The PISA project has become particularly successful and resistant against criticism due to its sophisticated methodological approach taken. Most importantly, PISA found broad acknowledgment on the political level as well as on the scientific level (Interview OECD5). The OECD put tremendous work into this project; in fact, it took five years to transform the idea of testing young people's abilities into a project worth of being implemented on a large scale (Interview OECD5). First ideas for PISA were presented to countries already in 1995, however, they were sceptical about the project and asked for further design. As a result, revisions and improvements were made and, by 1997, all states were convinced of the project and recommended its implementation (Interview OECD5).

Initiated and co-ordinated by the OECD, more than 300 scientists from different member states participated in the formulation and actual implementation of the project. With PISA, the OECD created a frame with which educational systems can coherently be measured (Interview OECD5). Moreover, for the first time, it was generally accepted that it is possible to measure performance in an international comparative way (Interview OECD6). Due to the widespread acceptance of the PISA projects, over the last 3 to 4 years, indicators as designed and collected by the OECD had been the 'priority number one' of states when future projects were discussed (Interview OECD5).

Governance by instruments: remain weak

Legal acts do not play a significant role in the OECD context, although the organisation has, in fact, various legal instruments at its disposal. Its agreements, conventions and decisions, for example, are legally binding for those members who vote in favour, whereas the recommendations, declarations, agreements and understandings it issues, have only moral force. *"Since unanimity voting is the rule, OECD legal acts cannot be adopted if there are votes against the act. Abstention, however, is no hindrance for the adoption of an act"* (Marcussen 2004). Compared to other international organisations, however, the OECD has produced only few legal acts. All in all, there are 188 acts in force by now and the amount according to the field varies tremendously. Moreover, 7/8 of all legal acts are non-binding (Marcussen 2004).

In the field of education, the OECD has no legal instrument on its side to push or force decisions on its member countries to implement policies which they had decided on previously. In fact, with only one declaration, signed in 1978, education is one of the issue-areas in which the OECD produced the lowest amount of legal acts. (The environment with 63 legal acts is the highest). In the 'Declaration on Future Educational Policies in the Changing Social and Economic Context', ministers declare that, in the light of the changing economic and social context, they agree that educational policy deserves to be considered as a priority in the signatory countries. However, specific aims remain only vaguely formulated, and include, for example, the intention of promoting the continuous development of educational standards and the need for educational measures which contribute to the achievement of gender equality (OECD Doc. 1978, ED/MIN(78)4/Final).

Moreover, the declaration does not give the organisation any measures at hand which could be applied when member states do not adhere to their self-set principles. It merely "calls for efficient use of the resources made available to the educational sector, for continued improvement in the functioning of educational services, and for maintaining education as one of the most important sectors in public budgets" and it "calls also for closer co-operation between all those involved in education – the authorities, teachers and parents and the students themselves – as well as employers and trade union organi-

sations and other concerned groups in society" (OECD Doc. 1978, ED/MIN(78)4/Final).

Similarly, the OECD cannot influence initiatives by financial means, rather, it is dependent on its member states willing to conduct a programme. That means, sufficient countries have to be interested in a suggested programme to have it conducted within the OECD context. The running costs, instead, for personnel etc. are covered by the annual contributions of the OECD member states, a contribution which is a fraction of their GDP. Most of the projects, however, are financed by additional funds coming from the participating countries or foundations.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the empirical part, two lessons can be learned when comparing the forms of governance of the OECD and the EU in the field of education. First, we have shown that the two organisations are using very similar forms of governance today. For both organisations, working with 'coordination' and also with 'opinion formation' seems to be the strongest forms of exercising influence. Independently of their intergovernmental or supranational nature, both organisations shape educational policy through their ability to foster a common agenda and to moderate the content of policies. To a certain extent, this is surprising, since the EU – as a supranational organisation – would have been expected to have more influence through introducing rather legal instruments.

Governance	EU	OECD
By co-ordination	*From organising to road mapping:* Stricter guidance of projects and actions by clearer coordination activities to foster educational policy	*From opposing to shaping:* Considerable increase of procedures and organisational mechanisms to further educational policy within and through the OECD
By opinion formation	*From restraint to thematic impetus:* The European Commission increasingly provides thematic impetus to questions of education by memoranda and publications	*From negligible to sophisticated techniques:* Significant growth in publication output and in the development of methodological tools for the evaluation of educational policies
By instruments	*Strength by financial capacities:* Increase in soft instruments in the field of education (open method of coordination). Financial support is continuously strong.	*Only weak instruments remain at hand:* Neither legal instruments at hand nor financial means at its disposal to actively promote educational policy

Second, both organisations incorporated initiatives into their institutional framework for which the original impetus was laid outside of them. Moreover, they successfully developed these initiatives even further. In the case of Bologna, the Commission was not involved in the beginning, although many of the ideas had been formulated earlier by the

organisation. Today, instead, the Commission is even the motor of the process and the Bologna process forms an integral part of its overall programme of work. As far as the OECD's indicator programme is concerned, the organisation had first been sceptical about and ideologically against such an undertaking. Today, instead, educational indicators are amongst the core activities of the OECD and the programmes it conducts in this field are the leading initiatives.

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