Bologna as a Reform Process

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Abstract

In this paper the Bologna process is not treated from the usual perspective of Policy Analysis. Rather than analyzing and evaluating educational reform in its policy dimension, I will first reflect on this approach as one of two general paradigmatic perspectives Political Science can take on the concept of reform: the one based on Policy Analysis, and the other based on Normative Political Theory. Only by combining the two approaches and by applying them to three different levels of reform (reforms at the levels of first-, second- and meta-governance), which are all at stake in the Bologna process, Bologna can be properly analyzed as a reform process. I will elaborate this conceptual framework (section 2) in order to substantiate the claim that the analytical focus of Political Science has shifted towards a technical and output-oriented view on reform at the level of first-order governing and on the basis of normative standards of appropriateness which were imported by Policy Analysis from the neo-liberal discourse of new public management. In my analysis of the Bologna process (section 3) I will attempt to re-focus attention on the second-order- and meta-governance aspects of reform in higher education from the perspective of Normative Political Theory.

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1. Introduction

The Bologna process is too complex and too challenging for Political Science to leave it to policy researchers. There was more at stake in the Europeanization of higher education policy than policy itself. In this paper I will focus on the politics, i.e. the strategies actors chose to overcome opposition to their reform goals and to strengthen their power and competencies at the expense of their opponents. Rather than analyzing and evaluating the reform of higher educational in its policy dimension, I will question the supposed “naturalness” of such an approach by identifying it as one of two general paradigmatic perspectives Political Science can take on the concept of reform: one based on Policy Analysis, the other one based on Normative Political Theory. It is only by applying both approaches to the different levels and goals of reform which are at stake in the Bologna process, that we can properly analyze the reform of higher education in Europe as part of a more comprehensive reform project which is characterized by a fundamental shift from appropriateness criteria of Normative Political Theory to those of Policy Analysis in the political as well as the academic discourse. My conceptual approach (section 2) combines (a) the perspectives of Policy Analysis and Normative Political Theory with (b) first-, second- and meta-governance as three different levels of reform. Embedded in such a framework, my empirical analysis of the Bologna process will then focus on second order- and meta-governance reform from the perspective of Normative Political Theory (section 3) which conceptualizes reform primarily in terms of the (re-)distribution of power, the democratic legitimacy of the reform process itself and of the impact of its results. The reason for choosing this normative perspective is that it has virtually disappeared from the general reform discourse in which the quality and success of reform is solely evaluated by the effectiveness of its contributions to sectoral problem-solving.

2. How to Evaluate a Political Reform Process

Before Bologna can be evaluated as a reform process, appropriate evaluation standards are needed. In Policy Analysis, the search for such standards is usually result-oriented and focuses on the last of the three (“input-throughput-output”) dimensions of the political process. However, if only such output- or effectiveness criteria were applied to evaluating the Bologna process, other important dimensions of this process would disappear from the screen. Among these, as Kerstin Martens and myself have argued elsewhere (see Martens/Wolf
2007), the politics of the Europeanization of educational reform deserve particular attention. National governments did not turn to the European level in a joint effort to search for better programs in education policy. Rather, it was in their strategic interest to use the intergovernmental policy arena to manipulate the existing distribution of legal competence in their domestic political systems in order to outmaneuver domestic opposition to educational policy goals they already had on their list, but for which they did not have domestic support or the necessary legal competence. Evaluation criteria for the Bologna reforms should relate to both dimensions – the programmatic one concerned with reforming the substance of education policy, and the strategic dimension concerned with the power and interests expressed in the politics involved.

For developing a broader conceptual perspective on the meaning of reform I will follow Jan Kooiman’s (2000: 154-161) distinction between first-order, second-order and third-order or “meta” governing. In this typology, reforms of concrete educational problem-solving policies would count as first-order governing; accordingly, second-order reform relates to creating the institutional opportunities for the generation and implementation of new (first-order) policy programs. Third-order or meta-governing deals with the creation of new visions which provide the normative standards by which the appropriateness and legitimacy of concrete educational policy programs and the demands on an enabling institutional setting can be evaluated. Or, to quote Kooiman,

“(f)irst-order governing aims to solve problems directly, at a particular level. Second-order governing attempts to influence the conditions under which first-order problem-solving or opportunity creation takes place; second-order governing applies to the structural conditions of first-order governing. To these two orders a third one is added: meta. Basically, ‘meta’ inquired: who or what – ultimately – governs the governors” (Kooiman 2000: 154).

The analytical potential of this three-level typology cannot be exhausted by merely filling it with the research interests and evaluation criteria of Policy Analysis. Policy Analysis is preoccupied with concrete reform policies at the level of first-order governing, and it may also have something to say about the reform of institutional conditions for the creation of new opportunities (second-order governing). But it is far less interested in and equipped for reflecting upon reform processes at the meta-governing level. Relying on the evaluation criteria of Policy Analysis alone, we would increasingly get lost the higher we climb up the analytical ladder from first-order to meta-governing.
Therefore, in what follows, the categories suggested by Kooiman are integrated into a broader perspective on the basis of a critical self-reflection of the “framing” of the reform concept in Political Science in general. This self-reflection starts out from the impression that the paradigmatic shift in conceptualizing reform within Political Science is indicative of a creeping change in our discipline with regard to the understanding of its core object, i.e. of what is actually the meaning of “the political”. To substantiate this impression I will juxtapose two different theoretical approaches to framing reform in Political Science. The turn towards looking at reform from a *policy*-oriented or *governance* perspective has shifted away research interests from the normative foundations of traditional Political Science as a “science of democracy“ with its own in-house provider of belief systems: Political Theory. The mainstream of Political Science, as we know it today, is not primarily interested any more in matters of participation, self-determination, the distribution of political power or the checks and balances to control it in the public interest, but it has put on a new face as “science of political steering” or, more recently and less actor-centered, as „governance science“. Together with this paradigmatic shift, the normative standards for the evaluation of reform have changed as well, leaving criteria of *input*-legitimacy behind and primarily addressing the *output*-dimension of the political process instead.

### 2.1 Changes in Political Science Reflected in its Approach to Reform

By taking a closer look at the theoretical debates about the reform concept, two approaches can be identified which do not only differ with regard to what they mean by reform, but also in their basic understanding of Political Science, politics, and the normative criteria by which they measure reform. It makes a difference whether, on the one hand, our interest in reform relates to the impact reform measures have on the distribution of power and influence within and among the institutions of a political system and on its democratic legitimacy, or, on the other hand, if we are merely interested in how far they contribute to more effective problem-solving in a certain policy area: “any discussion of the reform concept implies the discussion of the nature of the political“ (Greiffenhagen 1978b: 29; translation KDW).

Within this range, a substantial shift has occurred. The original focus on the implications of a change in political power relations for the democratic quality of the political system, with its normative roots in Political Theory, gave way to a new „technical“ understanding of reform (Glotz/Schultze 2005: 836). From the perspective of Policy Analysis the same changes appear
as a re-arrangement of actor-constellations affecting the problem-solving capability within the political system. This new focus is generally perceived as being far less value-loaded. Reforms are measures for improving the quality of the practical day-to-day results of the political process. This shift of perspective may change little or nothing for the research about causal mechanisms which facilitate or hinder the success of a given reform, but it is of crucial importance for the reflection about normative demands on the appropriateness of how reforms should take place, which goals they should have, and how their success should be measured.

Reform in Terms of Interests and Power Relations

I will now look at this paradigmatic shift in some more detail. Since the 19th century and until the 1970s “reform or revolution” has always been the terminological dichotomy with reference to which the meaning of reform was defined (see Greiffenhagen 1978b: 8; Krockow 1976: 82): to tear down and rebuild the system as a whole, including its ideological foundations; or to change the present shape of the political order within the rules prescribed by this very order, and with the intention to conserve it by re-adjusting the present shape to the original idea - that had always been the question. It is obvious that in this context not just any „change“ could count as „reform“ but only structural changes of existing institutions which in one way or the other, directly or indirectly, implied a redistribution of power (see Krockow 1976: 12). Situated between revolution and reaction, reform was mistrusted from both ends of the scale: from the perspective of reaction as a subversive kind of „stretched revolution“ (Kramm 1978: 26), from the perspective of revolution as a conservative counter-strategy to prevent it. The existing distribution of power can thus be identified as the classical frame of reference for the traditional reform discourse. Within this frame, Michael Greven suggested to conceptualize reform as a „top down“ strategy employed by those who have an interest in the conservation their own predominant power. While the concrete reformist class may change with the historical context, it is always possible to describe its position in general terms by the closeness to those who exercise power in the political system (see Greven 1978: 39f, 47f).

As far as the legitimacy of reform is concerned, all these considerations are, at least implicitly, guided by the normative criteria of democratic theory: relating to the distribution of power, democratic reforms, at least in their most emphatic form, require more than the ex ante or ex post approval by the people as voters, but a comprehensive inclusion of those affected in the decision-making process about these reforms. In other words, the legitimacy of
reform increases with the convergence of the subjects and objects of reform in the political process (see Greiffenhagen 1978b: 20f).

Reform from the Perspective of Policy Analysis

In the approach taken by mainstream Political Science to the reform concept today, neither this traditional coordinate system, nor the criteria of legitimacy derived from democratic theory seem to be of any particular relevance. References to the overall structures of the political system are rare, and - rather than the reform of the whole - reforms of the parts are at stake which relate to demands at the level of first-order governing in the sense of addressing collective action problems in different issue areas. At the same time, the notion of “the political” has shifted to a more technical understanding of politics „not as the use of power in one’s own interest or in the interest of a class, but as acting in the public interest for solving the problems of a society” (Mayntz 2003: 12, translation KDW).\(^1\) Politics is about regulation and political steering, its main objectives are proper solutions to concrete questions regarding concrete subject matters.

Now that, so the silent assumption at least, democracy has been achieved, political power can safely be reframed, the theoretical background of political steering can be uncoupled from questions of democratic theory, and the input-branch of the political process can be neglected in favour of the output-branch (see Mayntz 2006: 12f). Where power comes in again, it has mutated from its original nature as a threat to self-determination which had to be balanced, to a functional necessity for securing effective compliance. The former bottom-up perspective – based on the assumption of certain rights of those governed vis-à-vis those who govern - has given way to the top-down demands of political steering.

Within Political Science, Policy Analysis has established itself as the subdiscipline which takes responsibility for this new perspective on what politics is all about: the effective organization of collectively binding decisions in order to solve sectoral problems efficiently. In this new context the original normative criteria that were rooted in democratic theory and provided by Political Theory were of little use. Therefore, the research on political steering helped itself by borrowing normative standards from a neighbour discipline: Political Science outsourced the normative standards for justifying and evaluating the success of reform(s) to

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\(^1\) The German original reads: „Politik nicht als Herrschaft, als Nutzung von Macht im eigenen oder dem Interesse einer Klasse, sondern als Handeln im öffentlichen Interesse zur Lösung gesellschaftlicher Probleme“ (Mayntz 2003: 12).
Economics. As a result of this normative outsourcing, all sub-units of the political system have gradually become “like” units in that all reform measures have to meet the same neo-economic criteria of effectiveness and efficiency. Reforms of the social systems are measured according to their contribution to the productivity and competitiveness of the national economy on the world market; reforms of the educational systems have to increase the international competitiveness of the knowledge-based European economic area.

So much for the output-bias of the new reform discourse. But what about input demands? When the concept of political steering lost its attractiveness to the governance concept, the inclusion of civic and economic actors into the political process became a major reform target in the context of „good governance“. This move smoothed the way for the introduction of new modes of (self)-governance, but it changed little with regard to the prevalence of output-oriented reasoning. To be sure, neither the governance discourse nor Policy Analysis, although they share the same output-biased focus on the political process, are completely blind towards input-demands for participation. But these demands do not derive their relevance from democratic reasoning at the level of meta-governing, but rather from concrete reform goals at the level of first-order governing. For instance, the normative grounds for public-private-partnerships have little to do with concerns about self-determination or control of political power. Instead, the inclusion of private actors into the decision-making process follows the output-oriented rationale of being instrumental in increasing the quality of political decisions and in facilitating their implementation. Accordingly, the invitation does not address “the people” in general, but aims at co-opting specific groups, such as professional experts who promise to bring in additional problem-solving resources, or potential veto players whose participation might increase their willingness to accept the decisions in which they were involved. When we talk about the new “cooperative state”, the same instrumental logic applies: the inclusion of citizens – a goal in its own right which needed no further justification but self-determination in the reform discourse based on democratic theory – serves as an instrument to overcome state failure by activating citizens. In the somewhat drastic language of new public management the same idea is mirrored in the term „customer integration“ (see Priddat 2000: 153).²

² As pointed out by Renate Mayntz, Policy Analysis originally borrowed the term governance from the sphere of economics where it had already been in use for „corporate governance“ (see Mayntz 2006: 14).
3. Evaluating Bologna as a Reform Process

How can the discussion in the previous section be applied to the evaluation of Bologna as a reform process? Obviously the two discourses – democratic theory on the one hand and Policy Analysis and the debate about governance on the other - suggest very different evaluation criteria, and they also focus their attention on different levels of reform.

Policy Analysis clearly favours criteria of effectiveness and is primarily interested in reforms at the level of first-order governing. This approach can be applied fruitfully to the reform of higher education, even more so when “output” is further differentiated into “output-outcome-impact” for measuring success: output-success in this more specific understanding of the term then refers to the production of political programs, whereas success in the outcome-dimension is about compliance and is measured by the actual behavioral changes resulting from political decisions; finally, the impact dimension deals with the contributions of outputs and outcomes to problem-solving.

Although for the purpose of this paper I do not intend to follow this approach in any elaborated way, a closer look at the reforms initiated by the Bologna process at the level of first-order governing from the point of view of Policy Analysis deserves every effort, in particular with regard to evaluating the impact that concrete reform measures at this level have had on goal attainment so far. According to one of the major protagonists (see Müller-Böling 2007), the major reform measures introduced by the Bologna process at the level of first-order governing were the following: progressive harmonization and structural convergence of national higher education systems, with the Anglo-American Bachelor and Master degree system as a common frame of reference, and commonly agreed mechanisms of quality assurance. The goals to be achieved by these reform measures can be summarized as “more internationalization”, “more competitiveness” and “more academic quality of education”. Internationalization was to be achieved by eliminating obstacles to student mobility. The competitiveness of the European educational system was to be improved by transplanting the institutions of higher education from their original environment - the shadow of hierarchy provided by state regulation - into the light of a competitive market environment. A major indicator for the success of an educational institution in this new environment is the employability of its graduates. More academic quality in research and education was to be achieved by creating opportunities for the introduction of new interdisciplinary Bachelor’s and Master’s programs which should tear down the barriers between the academic disciplines.
that were regarded as being hostile to innovation. In addition, new self-regulatory and market-compatible modes of quality assurance were introduced which put horizontal modes of governance, such as rating and ranking, in the place of command-and-control by the state.

Although at this stage, it is too early for a general assessment of goal attainment, some preliminary observations can be made with regard to mobility and quality: as far as student mobility at the European level is concerned, a survey published by the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) comes to the conclusion that the new Bachelor’s and Master’s programs have not promoted exchange so far, and are very likely to result in shorter stays abroad in the future (Bachelorstudium 2006: 557). At the level of the individual countries, a growing number of new, innovative and often interdisciplinary Bachelor’s and Master’s programs which differ in every conceivable respect has sprouted up. In the absence of public regulation, the common disciplinary denominator which had defined the essential components of a traditional core curriculum got lost. Because of the lack of coordination among the different programs, this new diversity is creating rather than removing obstacles to the mobility of students who want to change university.

In addition, the same market incentives which triggered the emergence of interdisciplinary study programs in the new educational markets, may in the long run have a negative impact on the quality of disciplinary education. Reduced to selective contributions to narrowly specialized or broad interdisciplinary study programs, in many locations individual disciplines could the chairs which do not fit in, or may even disappear completely as institutional units. A fundamental logical flaw lies in underestimating the fact that innovation at the interfaces of different academic disciplines can only be achieved if the individual disciplines still have the background to reproduce themselves according to their own disciplinary standards. However, even political scientists, once their acquire the role of competing individual suppliers in the market, are not safe from contributing to winding up their discipline as a whole. It may suffice as a final remark in this context that the modularization of the new Bachelor’s and Master’s programs may also turn out to have a negative impact on the “indivisibility of teaching and research”: teaching within fixed modules reduces flexibility and will gradually lose its ties with the cutting edge of research.

Rather than going on about the success of the new educational policies associated with the Bologna process in terms of Policy Analysis and at the level of first-order governing, the primary aim of this paper remains to re-assert the original perspective on reform, i.e. the one based on Normative Political Theory, and to apply it to the second- and the meta-level of the
reform of higher education in Europe. Therefore section 3 will focus on the bold parts of figure 1.

Figure 1: Analytical framework for evaluating reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Analysis</th>
<th>Normative Political Theory</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reform of first-order governing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reform of second-order governing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reform of meta-governing</td>
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3.1 The Bologna Process\(^3\)

The Treaty of Rome did not provide for Community competence in higher education, at best for intergovernmental decision-making. Only via links to more general economic issues for which it had direct competence did the Community gradually become involved in education. The Bologna initiative for a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was originally developed outside the EU framework. Its origins go back to the “Sorbonne Declaration” which was the result of a meeting of the education ministers from France, Germany, Italy and the UK in Paris in 1998. Until today, the number of states that have formally acceded to the Bologna Declaration has gradually risen, and the ideas and goals of the declaration have gained an unforeseen momentum in the national higher education discourses of the participating countries. The process led to ministerial follow-up conferences in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) which further developed the policy goals and agenda, sharpened the conceptual guidelines, came up with strategies and instruments for their practical implementation, and evaluated the implementation steps taken so far.

Today, the Bologna process is strongly associated with the EU, although it was initiated outside the institutional frame of the EU, and despite the fact that its 45 signatories go far beyond the European Union. For some of the participating countries it resulted in a complete restructuring of their current education systems and in a general “de-governmentalization” of

\[^3\] With some alterations the following empirical passages are based on Martens/Wolf (2007) where also more detailed references are provided.
higher education policy (Teichler 2004: 21) during which “national regulators transfer(red) a substantial part of their norm-setting power to university institutions which accepted their autonomy and made use of it boldly” (Kohler 2004: 10).

The politics of reforming higher education in Europe show with remarkable clarity how its main protagonists tried to make strategic use of the international level in order to outmaneuver the institutional veto players in their domestic environments. In the Bologna reform process two goals were pursued simultaneously: not only the generation and implementation of a new and „better“ educational policy, but also the re-distribution of institutional competencies. The two driving agents among the four initiating governments, France and Germany, pursued primarily domestically motivated interests. They sought to gain leverage for reforms in their respective countries by going to the European level. In the French case, the government needed support from other states to reform the higher education system. The French minister deliberately linked domestic reform to the European sphere because the only way to make changes in the French system would be to blame it on Europe. In Germany, responsibility for higher education rested at the sub-federal level of the Länder which had proved to be notoriously incapable of reform. Therefore, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research tried to mobilize international pressure for reforms in higher education to overcome the unwillingness of the individual Länder to agree on any substantial reforms. Bologna thus brought together politicians’ substantial short-term and strategic long-term goals: outmaneuvering domestic institutional barriers to specific education reform goals as well as changing the distribution of competence for education in the long run. In both cases, the domestic constitutional checks and balances were regarded as major obstacles to national reform initiatives in the field of education. With one notable exception, other actors were excluded from this political “coup”. This exception consisted of “a particular set of major stakeholders, that is, the groups representing heads and chief administrators of European universities, had been directly involved from the beginning” (Furlong 2005: 54).

From the perspective of Policy Analysis, there is nothing wrong about this European “detour” because it was necessary for opening the way to reform. From the perspective of democratic theory, however, its legitimacy is highly questionable because the constitutional distribution of institutional legal competencies within the democratic political system was ignored and violated, definitely in the German case.

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4 For a more general theoretical explanation of this “new raison d’état” see Wolf (1999).
3.2 Educational reform at the level of meta-governing

New visions – from “the university in the democracy” to “the university in the international market competition”

Educational reform at the level of meta-governance can be summarized as the implantation of economic principles into the system of higher education. Social democratic visions, such as “democratic participation”, “equal opportunities” and “political steering”, which had provided the ideational guidelines for earlier reforms of higher education in the late 1960s, were replaced by those of neo-liberalism with the “competitiveness in the market” as the central idea.

As a result of this fundamental ideological shift, education in Europe is now primarily framed - and legitimised - as an instrument to support the position of Europe as a competitive knowledge-based economic area. Confronted with this economization of normative standards, Political Science is still in the process of defining its stand(s): the alternatives are, either to reformulate the political goals of education policy in accord with the neo-liberal standards that have infiltrated the field of higher education, or to re-establish its own normative criteria for distinguishing between appropriate and less appropriate reform goals and measures. Or, in terms of reform at the level of meta-governance: if educational reform is to create opportunities for a new educational policy, what should then be the normative guidelines for deciding on opportunities for whom and policies for what?

Part of the explanation of this indeed revolutionary paradigm shift which made education an economic issue lies the strategically-motivated inclusion of the Commission by the national governments. In order to employ the EU’s leverage to manipulate domestic policy, higher education had to be reframed as an issue of global competitiveness. According to Huisman and van der Wende (2004: 350), and due to institutional dynamics triggered by the incorporation of the European Commission into the process, “the economic rationale became more important than the political, educational and cultural rationales”. A chronological look at the different declarations issued during the Bologna process reveals this gradual “economic turn”. The original Sorbonne Declaration (1998) still lacks any mention of an economic rationale. In fact, it states in the first paragraph that “Europe is not only that of the Euro, of

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5 Ironically, one original motive behind the Sorbonne Declaration had precisely been the prevention of commodification and the foreseeable sell-out of the education sector during the GATS negotiations within the World Trade Organization.
the banks and the economy”, but emphasizes that “[w]e must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent”. It underlines the necessity of establishing a common frame of reference to facilitate student mobility, mutual recognition of degrees, and continuing education and training throughout life via a European Area of Higher Education. The Bologna Declaration (1999) (now with the Commission as an observer) already shows the first economic considerations, recognizing that a common European system is helpful “in order to promote European citizens’ employability” and “is relevant to the European labor market”. The Prague Declaration (2001) (at which the Commission was a full member of the process) links its objectives directly to economic gains expected from a common education area. It explicitly claims that “building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness” of Europe as an economic area. Having started out as a goal in itself, educational reform became a means to reach economic ends. This instrumental character is brought to light in ministerial statements emphasizing that comparable degrees enable citizens to use their skills and qualifications throughout the common zone (objective 1), that a system based on two main cycles will accommodate the labor market (objective 2), and that a system of credits together with a universally accredited quality assurance system will facilitate students’ access to the European labor market (objective 3). The declaration also states that “lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness” and that study programs need to be developed, “combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability” (Prague Declaration 2001).

The Bologna process and the activities of the EU in the field of education became increasingly intertwined. During the European Council meeting in Lisbon in 2000, education was prioritized as a means for making Europe the world’s leading knowledge-based economy, and education policy became firmly integrated into the EU context. As if there was need for further evidence of the increasingly economized trajectory of education, the 2003 Berlin Declaration even quoted in its preamble the conclusion of the European Council meetings in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) which proclaim the goal of making Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”.

This very condensed description\textsuperscript{6} shows that Bologna facilitated the spread of a normative belief system based on neo-liberal thinking which resulted in an unprecedented reframing of the European discourse about higher education by reducing the value of education to its economic significance. Following the new neo-liberal vision, research and education need to be reformed in order to be better prepared to stand up to the challenges of economic globalization. Therefore, the goals of higher education have to be re-programmed by giving top priority to the goals of employability and competitiveness of the European economy on the world market.

Today this economization of criteria for distinguishing the direction and appropriateness of reform goals and measures can be observed in all areas of reform in higher education throughout Europe. In Germany, this finds expression in such innovations as performance-related salaries for university teachers, or the introduction of tuition fees. The ideological infiltration of the educational by the economic system does not only regard the normative standards but also the economic slang, most remarkably so in the almost satirical re-labelling of the social institution university as a “service industry in the knowledge society which has to establish or defend a position on the market in competition with others” (Friedrich 2004: 4, translation KDW). In order to achieve its new goals as a firm, the university needed to have increased power over its own programs. As declared in the Berlin Declaration (2003), “ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organization and administration”.

It comes as no surprise that this makeover of the discourse about reform in higher education to the demands of the market and its surrender to the slang of business management re-activated those who were among the initiators of at least witnesses of the - in their view – first and only “real” reform process in higher education in the late 1960s. In German universities, may Departments of Sociology are still trying to withstand and have taken over the role as anti-reformist strongholds. However, not only leftist conservatism, but also liberal value conservatives oppose the ideational foundations of “Bologna”. They predict a further “de-qualification” of graduates, or complain that, due to the Bologna process, the ideas of Humboldt are as dead as a doornail (Herrmann 2006: 39). Linking the ideational shift back to the civic foundations of a democracy, it is criticized for educating for market participation, rather than producing politically mature citizens for democracy.

\textsuperscript{6} For more details and references see Martens/Wolf (2007).
3.3 Educational reform at the level of second-order governance

De-governmentalization of higher education and the emergence of new patterns of public-private interaction

While the previous section dealt with the emergence of new normative guidelines for educational reform at the meta-level of governing, I will now turn to aspects of second-order governing and take a closer look at the reforms of the institutional environment which were brought forward by the Bologna process. The increased economic focus of the education discourse is only one of the two institutional dynamics set in motion by governments’ instrumentalization of the European level for education reform. The second one consists of importing new modes of governance, shifting responsibilities to new actors, and limiting the role of governmental actors to coordinating functions. Of course these changes at the level of second-order governance are logically linked with those at the meta-governing level in that they are intended to translate the ideational frame described in the previous section into concrete institutional and procedural reform measures which follow the course of deregulation and employ the tool-kit of new public management. The joint focus of these institutional reforms is to reduce the role of the state and to grant more autonomy to sub- or non-state institutions in higher education, such as universities, rating agencies, and quality assurance organizations. Accordingly, a variety of institutional changes were initiated with the purpose of creating better opportunities for less regulation, more market competition and quality-rising diversification on the supply side of higher education.

However, reforms at the level of second-order governing are not only linked with those at the meta-governing level, but also with those at the level of first-order governing. The national executives strategically manipulated the relationship between institutional veto-players (see Tsebelis 2002; Benz 2003) in the political system. In order to promote policy reforms within their education systems they outmaneuvered the legal competencies of democratically legitimized domestic institutions, such as the “Länderkulturhoheit” in Germany, and contributed to enhancing the status of European institutions.

Thus, a Political Theory point of view can reveal the “dark side“ of institutional reform in higher education: what first may appear as a reform project committed to the creation of institutional opportunities for more competition and self-regulation from the perspective of Policy Analysis, can be re-interpreted as an attempt to manipulate the institutional distribution checks and balances in the domestic political system.
Furthermore, a closer look at the institutional reforms that were brought about by the Bologna process shows that, at the level of the individual universities, instead of less regulation and more autonomy, a new trend to re-regulation is taking place (see also Krücken 2004: 345): non-state agencies have taken over the recognition, accreditation and evaluation functions with regard to the new Bachelor’s and Master’s programs that were previously subject to state regulation, but now embedded in a confusing patchwork of new public-private governance arrangements. Even observers who, like Peter J. Brenner (see Brenner 2007: 86f), are in general sympathy with the Bologna reform goals in their substance, warn that one evil may only have been replaced by another: the relief caused by the removal of the bureaucratic constraints by the state is more than compensated by the new constraints of “self-bureaucratization” within the universities which are caused by the multiplying demands of peer reviewing, accreditation, evaluation and documentation. These demands are formulated by accreditation and evaluation agencies which operate just like consulting firms: they take their professional expertise from those who pay them. Taking all these innovations together, at the level of second-order governing Bologna has created institutional opportunities for the participation of numerous new individual and collective players now actively participating as political actors in the field of higher education, among them education consultants, thematic networks and quality assurance agencies or university councils.

The latter, university councils, refer to institutional reforms of the internal organization of the universities themselves. In order to improve their competitiveness and in accordance with neo-liberal criteria of efficiency, the decision-making architecture within German universities is currently in the process of being fundamentally re-organized. One of the paramount role models is the ETH Zürich whose acting President, Konrad Osterwalder, claims that all over Europe no other public university is known to him in which the competencies of the executive, notably the president, are as strong as at the ETH (Osterwalder 2007: 84). This is by no means an isolated case. As Teichler (2004: 19f) states, most university executives have taken the chance to “establish a managerial system characterized by stronger executive powers of the institutional leadership”.

What are the normative implications of our findings about these competence shifts and about the involvement of new actors in the field of education policy? In the neo-liberal logic, if the choice is between system effectiveness and citizen participation, de-democratization by strengthening the executive branch of the decision-making process can be an acceptable price for breaking reform blockades. In addition, one could even argue that the inclusion of
professional experts will gradually de-politicize educational policy-making which has long enough suffered from being a favorite battlefield for ideological controversies among the political parties?

From the perspective of Political Theory things look quite different indeed. To begin with, the Bologna process was of questionable legitimacy from the very start. For example, one of the four initiators, the German Minister of Education and Research, had no legal competence whatsoever for policy decisions of this kind. The legitimacy gap caused by outmaneuvering institutional competence was not closed by increased stakeholder participation in the manifold accreditation and evaluation processes, as one might argue. In general, the involvement of additional actors does not necessarily improve the democratic legitimacy of the political process; in particular so, if there are no criteria regulating the inclusion or exclusion of new actors. In the case of the German Accreditation Council (Akkreditierungsrat), the supervising body that is responsible for the accreditation of the individual accreditation agencies, which in turn are in charge of the accreditation of Bachelor’s and Master’s programs, a new technocratic elite has attained control over educational reform. The council is composed, among others, of representatives of car companies, trade unions, and similar “practitioners” who are in no way accountable to any public or parliamentary control. Along with the accreditation agencies and neo-liberal think tanks in the field of education, such as the independent Center for Higher Education Development (Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung, CHE), a joint foundation of the Conference of University Rectors (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz) and the private Bertelsmann Foundation, these non-state institutions have not only been entrusted with operative functions, but they also act as norm entrepreneurs who even provide the state with suggestions for legal action to be taken, if necessary (see Krücken 2004: 344).

As a further point in case, the role of the university rectors is remarkable in many respects. As already mentioned, they were the only non-state actors to be involved by the education ministers in the early phase of the Bologna process. Among the different groups of professional stakeholders they are likely to be the ones who will prevail at the university level. They gained more autonomy from the state and at the same time achieved the policy reforms they desired. This is also the answer to the question about the impact of deregulation on the autonomy of the education system from state: more autonomy - yes, but only for the executive branch within universities. But even the autonomy which university rectors gained by the removal of bureaucratic state-interventions is only a conditional one. In many
universities, it is in the hands of the newly established university councils (Hochschulräte), independent bodies representing economic, academic or administrative experts. The decision-making competencies of the university council, for example when it comes to electing the president of a university, can even exceed those formerly owned by the state, and they certainly do exceed those of the different status groups, senates and assemblies within the universities.

The different de-regulation measures that have been taken in accordance with the spirit new public management, need not prematurely be misinterpreted as a permanent loss of state control. By re-establishing its control over the Accreditation Council, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German Länder could still supervise the accreditation system and indirectly control the introduction of new Bachelor’s and Master’s programs. So, the enabling, activating state is still lurking in the background, always capable of re-intervening - not necessarily by digging out the old-fashioned regulation patterns of the past command-and-control era. Via output-oriented contracts with educational institutions the state has developed new tools to reinstate more subtle and indirect instruments for supervising universities.

3. Conclusions

The main argument of this paper has been that it is overdue to re-establish Political Science as the leading discipline for generating the normative foundations of the educational reform discourse, rather than leaving it to economists and their followers within Policy Analysis to define the criteria for the evaluation of reforms. In order to take up this role again, our present preoccupation with reform policies at the level of first-order governing should not make blind to the normative implications of reform politics at the level of second-order and meta-governing. Therefore, the success of educational reforms and quality of the processes by which they are achieved should be evaluated by more comprehensive normative standards than just effectiveness or efficiency alone. In particular, political scientists should remember their original „in-house“ normative categories when they analyze reform.

But is the Political Science of today still the source from which normative visions for educational reform can rise, similar to the famous slogans of the past, such as the “democratic university” or “education is a civil right”? Then, different from today, one could rely without further compromises on the promises of “participation” and “political steering” (see Nitsch et
al. 1965) in the 1960s? But the romantic era of reform with its excessive expectations into the steering capabilities of the state has long been superseded by the experience of state failure. There are good reasons not to fall back into the 1960s again, nor to focus exclusively on either the input or the output side of educational reform. Today, any meaningful normative perspective on reform must be capable of reconciling demands on democratic participation on the one hand with equally legitimate demands on the quality of policy results on the other.

Although the reductionist present attitude of Political Science towards reform is neglecting part of its original competence, it does not appear as an insurmountable task to challenge one-sided visions like “Hochschule im internationalen Wettbewerb”. To cope with the challenge of re-integrating the different demands on reform into a consistent and comprehensive “theory of democratic reform” requires more than just „bringing input back in“ – this has always been done by Policy Analysis in its own specific way, more recently by the use of the concept of “participatory governance”. However, although top-down and compliance-oriented thinking is still prevailing in this concept, where output-criteria determine the appropriateness of claims for inclusion, a somewhat more enlightened usage of the governance paradigm could well provide the ideational basis for a more balanced reform research agenda within Political Science. To materialize this potential, the present preoccupation with concerns about how to solve sectoral problems in the public interest most effectively and efficiently, would have to be expanded to questions of democratic legitimacy. Rather than addressing issues like new actors’ constellations by asking for their impact on problem-solving, they should also become thematic as matters of power redistribution in the normative horizon of self-determination.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this attempt to apply a more comprehensive normative approach to the Bologna process and to the very specific overall reform climate in which it could progress: at the level of meta-governing the Bologna process is embedded in an overall neo-liberal reform discourse about the ideational foundations and normative criteria of appropriateness which should govern the reform of institutional settings and concrete sectoral policies. With the arrival of this new paradigm in the field of education, goals were redefined. The replacement of the concept of self-determination by the concept of autonomy reflects this paradigmatic shift in a nice way. When the Senate of his recently autonomous university had lost the competence to nominate the candidates to run for presidency, one colleague put it this way: “There were times when universities were not autonomous but were still able to choose their presidents themselves.”
References


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