

A Loud but Noisy Signal? Public Opinion and Education Reform in Western Europe (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

Online Appendix

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Appendix for part I of the book: Quantitative evidence

Technical Appendix

Variable operationalization

In the following, we explain the operationalization of the independent variables included in the regression analyses in Chapters 3 and 4. The dependent variables are discussed in detail directly in the respective chapters. The operationalization of the independent variables largely overlaps between the two quantitative chapters. The operationalization differs for a few variables, which allows us to address some peculiarities associated with these independent variables in a more specific way, and to find a balance between a model specification that is applicable across the different dependent variables and one that takes into account the specific research interests in each dependent variable. We highlight the cases where the variable operationalization deviates between the chapters in the following paragraphs. Summary statistics of the independent variables can be found in Table A.I.1.

Income and educational attainment serve as central variables for the individual social class position. The variable HOUSEHOLD NET INCOME is measured in quintiles (with country-specific income bands given to respondents). Chapter 3 uses a continuous operationalization of this variable (because the effects proved largely to be linear), whereas Chapter 4 uses a dummy coding of the five income categories (because there were more non-linear effects), with the middle-income quintile as reference category. EDUCATION measures the highest individual educational attainment and distinguishes five categories: (1) basic education (lower or less than lower secondary education), (2) upper secondary [general], (3) upper secondary [vocational], (4) post-secondary non-higher, and (5) higher education. Chapter 3 uses basic education as the reference category. In Chapter 4, tertiary education serves as the reference category and it is distinguished between general and vocational educational attainment, merging categories (1) and (2), and (3) and (4).

With a number of variables we control for the individual socio-demographic situation. GENDER distinguishes between male and female, with being male as the reference category. AGE is measured in years. Age is divided by 10 in Chapter 4, i.e. a one-unit change implies an

age-difference of ten years, to ease visualization. HAVING SMALLER CHILDREN is a dummy variable, which indicates whether at least one child below the age of 10 is living in the respondent's household. The dummy variable HAVING OLDER CHILDREN takes the value of one if there is at least one child in the household equal or above the age of 10 and no child below the age of 10. The variable RESIDENTIAL SETTING indicates respondents' place of residence. It distinguishes (1) a rural area/village (reference category), (2) a small/middle-sized town, and (3) a large town. Finally, we measure the composition of the respondents' household. Chapter 3 includes a dummy variable indicating whether an individual is a single parent; Chapter 4 distinguishes respondents with more than one adult living in a household from the reference category of one-adult households.

With additional variables we control further for the individual socio-economic position. The variable CURRENT SITUATION distinguishes respondents working full-time (over 30 hours per week) from those in education, unemployment, or retirement. An "other" category includes individuals self-describing as working part-time, doing housework, or being permanently sick or disabled. PUBLIC SECTOR is a dummy indicating whether an individual self-reports as working in the public sector, UNION MEMBER indicates trade union membership. SUBJECTIVE UNEMPLOYMENT RISK is a dummy taking the value of one if an individual considers it as "very likely", "likely", or "not very likely" that s/he will become unemployed. The reference category includes those considering unemployment as "not at all likely".

We measure two-dimensional ideological positions on the ECONOMIC LEFT-RIGHT DIMENSION and the SOCIAL LEFT-RIGHT VALUES DIMENSION. We obtain these two dimensions from a principal component factor analysis of responses to five items. The following items are used to construct the *economic* left-right dimension:

"Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY's] economic problems"; "Public services and major industries ought to be in state ownership"

To construct the *social values dimension*, we use answers to the statements:

"People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days"; „[COUNTRY]'s cultural life is generally enriched by people coming to live here from other countries“; „A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family“

Responses were given on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Principal component factor analyses confirmed that there are two latent factors with variables loading as expected. We use the predicted values of the rotated factor loadings (based on the regression method) for these two dimensions as control variables for respondents’ ideological orientations. Factor scores are recoded for the analysis so that higher values indicate more right-leaning positions.

The final empirical sections in Chapters 3 and 4 examine education preferences by partisan constituencies. We use party families in this step of the analysis (rather than individual parties, which we consider in the country chapters) to allow for an examination of the cross-country pattern. The coding is based on respondents’ answers to a classical vote-intention question (“if there was an election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?”). We included several residual categories for respondents without clear partisan preferences, which applied to roughly 30 percent of respondents (see Table A.I.2). We coded the responses “would not go to vote”, “vote blank”, “cast a spoil vote”, “undecided”, and “no answer” as “no party affiliation” and the option “not eligible to vote” as missing. The party family coding relies on the ParlGov dataset (Döring/Manow 2016), but, following the recommendation by Döring (2016: 539), we double-checked the coding of all parties and corrected some codes in consultation with country experts, adding, for example, a “regionalist” category. Overall, we distinguish ten groups: “Communist/socialist”, “Social democracy”, “Green/ecologist”, “Liberal”, “Christian democracy”, “Conservative”, “Right-wing”, “Special issue”, “Regionalist”, and “No party affiliation”. Table A.I.2 lists the assignment of the political parties in the eight countries to the respective party families.

Estimation methods

Regarding methods, simple techniques are sufficient for the quantitative analysis presented in this book. We dichotomize the dependent variables in order to facilitate interpretation of the coefficient estimates and because we are mainly interested in the determinants of individuals’ explicit support vis-à-vis non-support for education spending and for proposals of different models of education governance. For the spending questions, we distinguish whether respondents support additional public spending (coded “1”) or whether they want to

keep constant or decrease the spending level (coded “0”). Analogously for the question about spending priorities for a specific spending area, respondents receive the value “1” when they chose this specific spending area, and “0” if they prioritized any other policy area. For the items on policy trade-offs and on education governance, we dichotomize responses into those who agree or strongly agree with the statement (coded “1”), and those who disagree, strongly disagree or are undecided (coded “0”). Two residual categories (“Don’t know” and “No answer”) were included for all items, which we coded as missing.

The structure of the dataset is hierarchical with individuals nested within countries. As we are also interested in country-level determinants, we would ideally include macro-level variables in multi-level models, but due to the low number of countries ($N_j=8$), this is unfeasible. As a best-practice solution, we run single-level logistic regression models. We pool the data for all countries, include country fixed-effects to control for country-differences and cluster the standard errors by country to account for the nested structure of the data. To make the empirical analysis more accessible, we rely largely on average marginal effect plots to present the findings (Jann 2013).

In the descriptive statistics, we use a design-weight and a selectivity-weight to correct for selection probabilities. In the multivariate regression analyses, we refrain from applying weights because the independent variables control directly for differences in the dependent variable related to these characteristics and avoid relying on the ‘black box’ of weighting (DuMouchel and Duncan 1983).

We applied listwise deletion of missing values. In general, the number of missing values of the control variables is rather low (see Table A.I.1). The partial exceptions are income and left-right positions where missing values make up around 10 percent of the responses. Because these variables are of major theoretical interest for us, we refrain from imputing missing values and instead listwise delete these observations.

We conducted extensive robustness checks, which included using survey weights, using non-dichotomized dependent variables in ordered logit models, as well as running other model specifications such as probit and multilevel models. These alternative models make us

confident of our chosen model specification and of the results presented in this book.

References

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Table A.I.1: Summary statistics of the independent variables

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Education: lower or below lower secondary	8,856	0.16	0.36	0	1
Education: Upper secondary, general	8,856	0.18	0.38	0	1
Education: Upper secondary, vocational	8,856	0.20	0.40	0	1
Education: Post-secondary, non-higher	8,856	0.07	0.25	0	1
Education: Higher education	8,856	0.40	0.49	0	1
Household income: Q1	7,982	0.27	0.44	0	1
Household income: Q2	7,982	0.25	0.43	0	1
Household income: Q3	7,982	0.20	0.40	0	1
Household income: Q4	7,982	0.15	0.36	0	1
Household income: Q5	7,982	0.13	0.33	0	1
Female	8,904	0.54	0.50	0	1
Smaller child (< 10 years)	8,872	0.14	0.35	0	1
Older child (>= 10 years)	8,867	0.24	0.43	0	1
Age	8,881	54.31	16.72	18	96
Current situation: unemployed	8,894	0.05	0.22	0	1
Current situation: studying	8,894	0.04	0.19	0	1
Current situation: retired	8,894	0.33	0.47	0	1
Current situation: full-time employed	8,894	0.41	0.49	0	1
Current situation: other	8,894	0.16	0.37	0	1
Risk of unemployment	8,832	0.18	0.39	0	1
Cohabit (Ref: one adult household)	8,877	0.70	0.46	0	1
Single parent	8,888	0.05	0.21	0	1
Public sector	8,822	0.19	0.39	0	1
Union member	8,867	0.26	0.44	0	1
Residential setting: Rural area, village	8,887	0.35	0.48	0	1
Residential setting: Small/middle town	8,887	0.39	0.49	0	1
Residential setting: Large town	8,887	0.26	0.44	0	1
Social values (right)	7,964	0.00	1	-2.97	2.93
Economic left-right (right)	7,964	0.00	1	-2.49	2.28

Table A.I.2: Assignment of parties to party families

Party family	Freq.	Percent	Germany	Denmark	UK	Italy	Sweden	Ireland	Spain	France
Communist/Socialist	569	6.64	Linke	ENHEDSLISTEN - DE RØD-GRØNNE		Sinistra Ecologia Libert	Vänsterpartiet	Pirt Sóisialach; Sinn Féin	Izquierda Unida; Podemos	Le Front de gauche
Social democracy	1,728	20.18	SPD	SOCIALDEMOKRATIET	Labour Party; Social Democratic and Labour Party	Partito Democratico	Socialdemokraterna	Páirti Lucht Oibre	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	Le Parti socialiste; Divers gauche; Le Parti radical de gauche
Green/Ecologist	462	5.4	GRÜN	SF - SOCIALISTISK FOLKEPARTI	Green Party		Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Green Party		Europe Écologie Les Verts; Les Verts
Liberal	710	8.29	FDP	RADIKALE VENSTRE; VENSTRE; LIBERAL ALLIANCE	Liberal Democrats; Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Con Monti per l'Italia	Centerpartiet; Folkpartiet liberalerna		Unión, Progreso y Democracia; Ciudadanos	Le nouveau centre; Le parti radical; Le Mouvement démocrate; L'Alliance centriste
Christian democracy Conservative	685 1,033	8 12.06	CDU; CSU	KRISTENDEMOKRATERNE DET KONSERVATIVE FOLKEPARTI	Conservative Party; Democratic Unionist Party	Il Popolo della Libertà	Kristdemokraterna Moderata samlingspartiet	Fine Gael Fianna Fáil	Partido Popular	L'Union pour un mouvement populaire; Divers droite
Right-wing	521	6.08	AFD; NPD	DANSK FOLKEPARTI	United Kingdom Independence Party; British National Party	Lega Nord per l' Indipendenza	Sverigedemokraterna			Le Front National

Special issue	137	1.6	Piraten		Il Megafono - Feministiskt initiativ Lista Crocetta; Grande Sud; MoVimento Cinque Stelle	
Regionalist	91	1.06		Scottish National Party; Sinn Féin; Plaid Cymru	Südtiroler Volkspartei; Partito Autonomista Trentino Tirolese; Unione per il Trentino; Liste Valle d' Aoste; Valdostian Union	La Izquierda Plural; Convergència i Unió; Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya; Partido Nacionalista Vasco; Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
No party	2,627	30.68				
Total	8,563	100				

Appendix for Chapter 4

Robustness checks for correcting for acquiescence bias

Several robustness checks highlight the necessity of controlling for acquiescence bias in the confirmatory factor analysis and the regression analyses conducted in this chapter. First, running a confirmatory factor analysis with the 12 items on governance preferences without a factor controlling for acquiescence bias would yield a substantially lower model fit. The goodness-of-fit indices are CFI=0.782 and RMSEA=0.059 in the model controlling for acquiescence bias and CFI=0.744 and RMSEA=0.082 in the model without the controls. The fact that the model fit of the corrected model is not even higher is due to the control factor on left-right ideology. Dropping the six items on ideology yields a substantially improved model fit (RMSEA=0.05; CFI=0.908). However, the inclusion of these six balanced items is necessary to adequately capture acquiescence bias (Weijters, Schillewaert, and Geuens 2008). Given that we do not have a substantial interest in the ideology control factor, this observation is reassuring when it comes to our finding that there are three latent dimensions of preferences regarding education governance. Second, the predicted acquiescence factor values are highly correlated with a variable counting the number of agreements for a subset of six balanced governance items. These items are Q1, Q2, and Q10 with a pro-market/tracking orientation and Q4, Q5, and Q9 with a pro-state/comprehensive schooling orientation (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 for question wording). The high correlation coefficient of $r=0.65$ suggests that the acquiescence factor correctly captures respondents' tendency to agree to items irrespective of their governance preferences (cf. Welkenhuisen-Gybels, Billiet, and Cambré 2003). Third, a regression model with the standardized predicted values of the acquiescence factor as the dependent variable reveals that respondents with lower educational attainment, lower income, those who are retired, and those with conservative social values and left economic positions are significantly more likely to agree to the items (Table A.4.5). Thus, if we did not control for acquiescence bias, we would yield biased results regarding the role of these variables as determinants of preferences on education governance.

References

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Welkenhuysen-Gybels, Jerry, Jaak Billiet and Bart Cambré. 2003. "Adjustment for Acquiescence in the Assessment of the Construct Equivalence of Likert-Type Score Items." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 34(6):702-22.

Table A.4.1: Distribution of responses for preferences regarding education governance and the role of the state and the market in the economy (N=8905)

Item	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
"Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY]'s economic problems"			
Strongly disagree	564	6.33	6.33
Disagree	1,970	22.12	28.46
Neither agree nor disagree	2,051	23.03	51.49
Agree	3,132	35.17	86.66
Strongly agree	849	9.53	96.19
Don't know/no answer	339	3.81	100
"Public services and major industries ought to be in state ownership"			
Strongly disagree	1,001	11.24	11.24
Disagree	2,801	31.45	42.7
Neither agree nor disagree	1,520	17.07	59.76
Agree	2,345	26.33	86.1
Strongly agree	939	10.54	96.64
Don't know/no answer	299	3.36	100
Q1: Private schools			
Strongly disagree	987	11.08	11.08
Disagree	3,051	34.26	45.35
Neither agree nor disagree	1,619	18.18	63.53
Agree	2,604	29.24	92.77
Strongly agree	474	5.32	98.09
Don't know/no answer	170	1.91	100
Q2: Private universities			
Strongly disagree	860	9.66	9.66
Disagree	2,794	31.38	41.03
Neither agree nor disagree	1,695	19.03	60.07
Agree	2,749	30.87	90.94
Strongly agree	505	5.67	96.61
Don't know/no answer	302	3.39	100
Q3: Public funding for private schools			
Strongly disagree	1,927	21.64	21.64
Disagree	3,970	44.58	66.22
Neither agree nor disagree	928	10.42	76.64
Agree	1,661	18.65	95.29
Strongly agree	309	3.47	98.76
Don't know/no answer	110	1.24	100
Q4: Public ECEC			
Strongly disagree	306	3.44	3.44
Disagree	1,810	20.33	23.76
Neither agree nor disagree	1,337	15.01	38.78
Agree	4,045	45.42	84.2
Strongly agree	1,224	13.75	97.94
Don't know/no answer	183	2.06	100
Q5: Public education			
Strongly disagree	421	4.73	4.73
Disagree	2,272	25.51	30.24
Neither agree nor disagree	1,163	13.06	43.3
Agree	3,632	40.79	84.09
Strongly agree	1,299	14.59	98.67
Don't know/no answer	118	1.33	100
Q6: Free school choice			

Strongly disagree	281	3.16	3.16
Disagree	1,182	13.27	16.43
Neither agree nor disagree	947	10.63	27.06
Agree	4,665	52.39	79.45
Strongly agree	1,665	18.7	98.15
Don't know/no answer	165	1.85	100
<hr/>			
Q7: Decentralize school decision-making			
Strongly disagree	334	3.75	3.75
Disagree	1,415	15.89	19.64
Neither agree nor disagree	1,144	12.85	32.49
Agree	4,344	48.78	81.27
Strongly agree	1,453	16.32	97.59
Don't know/no answer	215	2.41	100
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Q8: School competition			
Strongly disagree	659	7.4	7.4
Disagree	2,164	24.3	31.7
Neither agree nor disagree	1,207	13.55	45.26
Agree	3,841	43.13	88.39
Strongly agree	804	9.03	97.42
Don't know/no answer	230	2.58	100
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Q9: Comprehensive schools			
Strongly disagree	155	1.74	1.74
Disagree	755	8.48	10.22
Neither agree nor disagree	648	7.28	17.5
Agree	4,462	50.11	67.6
Strongly agree	2,804	31.49	99.09
Don't know/no answer	81	0.91	100
<hr/>			
Q10: School tracking			
Strongly disagree	1,991	22.36	22.36
Disagree	3,947	44.32	66.68
Neither agree nor disagree	805	9.04	75.72
Agree	1,656	18.6	94.32
Strongly agree	361	4.05	98.37
Don't know/no answer	145	1.63	100
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Q11: Government should pressure employers to provide VET			
Strongly disagree	146	1.64	1.64
Disagree	784	8.8	10.44
Neither agree nor disagree	767	8.61	19.06
Agree	4,836	54.31	73.36
Strongly agree	2,293	25.75	99.11
Don't know/no answer	79	0.89	100
<hr/>			
Q12: Government should encourage young persons to pursue VET rather than HE			
Strongly disagree	404	4.54	4.54
Disagree	1,576	17.7	22.23
Neither agree nor disagree	1,890	21.22	43.46
Agree	3,480	39.08	82.54
Strongly agree	1,368	15.36	97.9
Don't know/no answer	187	2.1	100

Table A.4.2: Cross-tabulation of items with a pro-state/comprehensive and pro-market/tracking wording

Q1: Private schools	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Q5: Public education			Total	Potential of acquiescence bias Share of respondents who (strongly) agree or (strongly) disagree to both items at the same time
			Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
Strongly disagree	69	106	103	285	418	981	0.32
Disagree	76	795	365	1,441	348	3,025	
Neither agree nor disagree	85	435	422	514	154	1,610	
Agree	112	801	220	1,222	209	2,564	
Strongly agree	76	98	42	107	149	472	
Total	418	2,235	1,152	3,569	1,278	8,652	
Q2: Private universities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Q5: Public education			Total	0.33
			Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
Strongly disagree	73	101	87	234	362	857	
Disagree	59	724	322	1,339	325	2,769	
Neither agree nor disagree	103	462	433	514	168	1,680	
Agree	111	812	243	1,316	239	2,721	
Strongly agree	63	98	52	105	182	500	
Total	409	2,197	1,137	3,508	1,276	8,527	
Q3: Public funding for private schools	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Q5: Public education			Total	0.31
			Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
Strongly disagree	139	369	225	602	579	1,914	
Disagree	101	1,082	474	1,895	371	3,923	
Neither agree nor disagree	54	228	236	288	115	921	
Agree	73	497	185	731	148	1,634	
Strongly agree	48	69	34	76	79	306	
Total	415	2,245	1,154	3,592	1,292	8,698	
Q9: Comprehensive schools	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Q10: School tracking			Total	
			Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		

Strongly disagree	48	23	19	34	28	152	
Disagree	66	315	69	251	33	734	
Neither agree nor disagree	89	205	187	133	23	637	
Agree	544	2,462	360	947	88	4,401	
Strongly agree	1,239	914	164	281	182	2,780	
Total	1,986	3,919	799	1,646	354	8,704	0.22

Table A.4.3: Question wording of the items measuring left and right political orientations.

Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

Q1: Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY]'s economic problems.

Q2: Public services and major industries ought to be in state ownership.

Q3: People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days.

Q4: [COUNTRY]'s cultural life is generally enriched by people coming to live here from other countries.

Q5: Forcing unemployed to accept a job quickly, even if it is not as good as their previous job.

Q6: Giving the unemployed more time and opportunities to improve their qualification before they are required to accept a job.

Table A.4: Results of a confirmatory factor analysis of preferences regarding education governance; controlling for acquiescence bias; full results

Item	Latent factor	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% confidence interval]	
Role of private schools							
	Market	1	(constrained)				
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Role of private universities							
	Market	0.80	0.02	47.46	0.00	0.76	0.83
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Public funding for private schools							
	Market	0.56	0.02	32.53	0.00	0.52	0.59
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Childcare provided by public sector							
	Market	-0.36	0.02	-20.20	0.00	-0.39	-0.32
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
State alone in charge of education							
	Market	-0.35	0.02	-18.54	0.00	-0.38	-0.31
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Free school choice							
	Choice	0.44	0.03	14.13	0.00	0.38	0.50
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
School decentralization							
	Choice	0.31	0.03	9.78	0.00	0.25	0.37
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
School competition							
	Choice	1	(constrained)				
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Comprehensive schooling							
	Tracking	-0.92	0.05	-18.85	0.00	-1.01	-0.82

	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Tracked schooling	Tracking	1	(constrained)				
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Put pressure on employers to provide opportunities for VET	Tracking	-0.25	0.03	-8.75	0.00	-0.31	-0.19
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Government to encourage VET rather than HE	Tracking	0.25	0.03	7.89	0.00	0.19	0.31
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
<hr/>							
Private enterprise is the best way to solve [COUNTRY]'s economic problems	Control	0.94	0.06	16.96	0.00	0.83	1.05
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Public services and major industries ought to be in state ownership	Control	-0.78	0.06	-13.91	0.00	-0.89	-0.67
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days	Control	0.77	0.04	17.80	0.00	0.69	0.86
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
[COUNTRY]'s cultural life is generally enriched by people coming to live here from other countries	Control	-0.72	0.05	-15.88	0.00	-0.81	-0.63
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Forcing unemployed to accept a job quickly, even if it is not as good as their previous job	Control	1	(constrained)				
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07
Giving the unemployed more time and opportunities to improve their qualification before they are required to accept a job	Control	-0.61	0.04	-16.07	0.00	-0.68	-0.54
	Acquiescence	0.54	2.82	0.19	0.85	-4.99	6.07

Notes: N=7266; Goodness-of-fit indices: RMSEA=0.059; CFI=0.782.

Table A.4.5: Predictors of acquiescence bias; OLS regression; dependent variable: Standardized predicted values of acquiescence factor from confirmatory factor analysis

VARIABLES	M1 Acquiescence
No post-secondary education (Ref: Higher Educ.)	0.166*** (0.037)
Vocational education	0.121*** (0.023)
Household income (Q1) (Ref: Middle quintile (Q3))	0.122*** (0.028)
Q2	0.009 (0.028)
Q4	-0.029 (0.060)
Q5	-0.120*** (0.022)
Female	-0.044 (0.032)
Smaller child (< 10 years)	0.005 (0.034)
Older child (>= 10 years)	-0.031 (0.021)
Age	0.033 (0.019)
Unemployed (Ref: Full-time employed)	-0.018 (0.049)
Studying	-0.044 (0.073)

Retired	0.082** (0.024)
Other	0.012 (0.037)
Risk of unemployment	-0.063 (0.036)
Cohabit (Ref: One adult household)	0.056 (0.038)
Public sector	0.008 (0.045)
Union member	0.032 (0.038)
Residential setting: Small/medium- sized town (Ref: Rural area, village)	0.010 (0.029)
Large town	0.005 (0.033)
Social values (right)	0.171*** (0.015)
Economic left-right (right)	-0.136*** (0.023)
Constant	-0.098** (0.030)
Country dummies	Yes
Observations	7,059
R-squared	0.134

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Appendix for part II of the book: Qualitative evidence

List of interview partners

Germany

Federal level

GerFed-1	Interview with an union representative (DGB), 15.6.2017
GerFed-2	Interview with an employer representative (BDA), 16.6.2017
GerFed-3	Interview with an union representative (ver.di), 4.7.2017
GerFed-4	Interview with an employer representative (DIHK), 4.7.2017

Baden-Wurttemberg

GerBaWü-1	Interview with a party politician (SPD), 30.11.2017
GerBaWü-2	Interview with a teacher union representative (GEW), 20.11.2017
GerBaWü-3	Interview with a party politician (CDU), 19.11.2017
GerBaWü-4	Interview with a party politician (FDP), 19.11.2017

NRW

GerNRW-1	Interview with an employer representative (Unternehmer NRW), 27.11.2017
GerNRW-2	Interview with a party politician (FDP), 26.11.2017
GerNRW-3	Interview with a party politician (CDU), 17.10.2017
GerNRW-4	Interview with a party politician (SPD), 7.11.2017
GerNRW-5	Interview with a party politician (Grüne), 18.10.2017
GerNRW-6	Interview with a representative from the education ministry, 18.10.2017

Sweden

SWE-1	Interview with a party politician (SAP), 7.9.2017
SWE-2	Interview with a party politician (SAP), 11.9.2017
SWE -3	Interview with leading member of the Ministry for Upper Secondary Education and Adult Education and Training, 23.10.2017
SWE -4	Interview with a senior policy advisor in the Ministry of Education, 29.8. 2017
SWE -5	Interview with a representative from the Swedish National Agency for Education, 14.09.2017
SWE -6	Interview with an union representatives (LO), 29.08.2017
SWE -7	Interview with an union representatives (TCO), 30.08.2017
SWE -8	Interview with a teacher union representative, 29.08.2017
SWE -9	Interview with a student union representative, 31.08.2017
SWE -10	Interview with an employer representative, 30.08.2017
SWE -11	Interview with a representative of Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 1.09.2017
SWE -12	Interview with a leading journalist, 18.09.2017
SWE -13	Interview with an educational entrepreneur, 5.09.2017

England

ENG-1	Interview with a researcher at University of Cambridge, 5.10.2017
ENG-2	Interview with a former special advisor for the Minister of State for Universities, 10.10.2017
ENG-3	Interview with a representative of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), 16.10.2017
ENG-4	Interview with a representative of Trades Union Congress (TUC), 16.10.2017
ENG-5	Interview with a policy advisor in education policy, 16.10.2017
ENG-6	Interview with a researcher at University of East London, 17.10.2017
ENG-7	Interview with a staff from the House of Commons Education Selects Committee (two interviewees), 18.10.2017
ENG-8	Interview with a representative of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA), 18.10.2017
ENG-9	Interview with a researcher at University College London and former representative of Association of Colleges (AoC), 18.10.2017
ENG-10	Interview with a researcher at University College London, 19.10.2017
ENG-11	Interview with a former Member of Parliament, 20.10.2017
ENG-12	Interview with a journalist of a higher education online journal (wonkhe), 20.10.2017
ENG-13	Interview with a representative of the employer-led skills organisation Semta, 23.10.2017
ENG-14	Interview with a representative of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 13.11.2017

Spain

ES-1	Interview with a representative of the association of publicly funded private schools (CECE), 14.9.2017
ES-2	Interview with an union representative (UGT), 18.09.2017
ES-3	Interview with researchers at University of Alcalá (two interviewees), 19.09.2017
ES-4	Interview with a union representative (CCOO), 19.09.2017
ES-5	Interview with a member of Congress, 19.09.2017
ES-6	Interview with a researcher at Complutense University Madrid, 20.09.2017
ES-7	Interview with a member of Congress, 20.09.2017
ES-8	Interview with representatives of parent association CEAPA (two interviewees), 20.09.2017
ES-9	Interview with a member of Congress, 21.09.2017
ES-10	Interview with a teacher union representative (ANPE), 21.09.2017
ES-11	Interview with an journalist of a national newspaper (El Mundo), 02.10.2017

Appendix for Chapter 8

Table A.8.1: The three most important problems in Spain at the moment (multiresponse, in % mentioned); 2011-2017

2017		2016		2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
El paro	69.84	El paro	75.38	El paro	79.20	El paro	78.24	El paro	79.68	El paro	80.56	El paro	82.30
La corrupción y el fraude	39.65	La corrupción y el fraude	41.86	La corrupción y el fraude	45.71	La corrupción y el fraude	44.16	La corrupción y el fraude	34.54	Los problemas de índole económica	47.89	Los problemas de índole económica	49.64
Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	22.98	Los problemas de índole económica	24.27	Los problemas de índole económica	25.01	Los problemas de índole económica	27.84	Los problemas de índole económica	33.57	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	23.91	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	21.83
Los problemas de índole económica	22.54	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	23.56	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	19.86	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	25.20	Los políticos en general, los partidos políticos y la política	29.23	La corrupción y el fraude	10.92	La inmigración	10.50
La sanidad	10.79	La sanidad	11.35	La sanidad	11.49	La sanidad	10.79	La sanidad	10.74	La sanidad	9.65	La inseguridad ciudadana	7.18
Los problemas de índole social	9.36	La educación	10.55	Los problemas de índole social	10.38	Los problemas de índole social	8.63	La educación	7.74	La educación	7.34	La vivienda	5.35
La educación	8.55	Los problemas de índole social	10.29	La educación	9.05	La educación	8.38	Otras respuestas	5.42	La inmigración	5.54	La educación	5.32

La independencia de Cataluña	8.03	Otras respuestas	5.67	Otras respuestas	5.31	Otras respuestas	4.70	Los problemas de índole social	5.31	Otras respuestas	5.05	La sanidad	5.21
Los problemas relacionados con la calidad del empleo	6.80	Los problemas relacionados con la calidad del empleo	5.10	Los problemas relacionados con la calidad del empleo	3.94	Los recortes	3.87	Los recortes	4.85	La inseguridad ciudadana	4.35	El terrorismo. ETA	5.16
Otras respuestas	6.05	Falta de Gobierno	5.09	La inmigración	3.64	La inmigración	3.32	Los bancos	3.96	Los problemas de índole social	4.25	La corrupción y el fraude	5.05

Notes: Ten most important problems shown; yearly averages of monthly data; own calculations based on CIS (2018; continuous series).

Source: CIS. 2018. "Tres Problemas Principales Que Existen Actualmente En España." Barómetros Mensuales. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Table A.8.2: Public education spending by spending categories, 2007-2015 (in thousand euro)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Spending change (2011-2015)
Total public education spending	47 266 674	51 716 008	53 895 012	53 099 329	50 631 080	46 476 414	44 974 574	44 846 762	46 624 351	
Early childhood and primary education (E. Infantil y E. Primaria / E.G.B.)	13 491 921	14 941 519	15 747 310	15 496 527	14 865 307	13 778 872	13 585 470	13 452 333	14 041 313	
Percentage change		0.11	0.05	-0.02	-0.04	-0.07	-0.01	-0.01	0.04	-0.06
Secondary and vocational education (E. Secundaria, F. Profesional y EE. de Reg. Especial)	14 068 050	14 998 803	15 726 867	15 195 988	14 646 649	13 352 652	13 081 558	13 071 068	13 786 127	
Percentage change		0.07	0.05	-0.03	-0.04	-0.09	-0.02	0	0.05	-0.06
University education	9 310 202	10 374 722	10 541 750	10 628 201	10 105 658	9 206 010	9 173 286	8 889 702	9 142 266	
Percentage change		0.11	0.02	0.01	-0.05	-0.09	0	-0.03	0.03	-0.1
Occupational education	1 549 071	1 740 530	1 675 752	1 602 011	1 205 991	1 122 181	779 438	696 509	633 758	
Percentage change		0.12	-0.04	-0.04	-0.25	-0.07	-0.31	-0.11	-0.09	-0.47
Grants and total support	1 465 721	1 750 525	1 770 540	1 759 591	1 799 499	1 697 328	1 530 115	1 872 381	1 875 087	
Percentage change		0.19	0.01	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	-0.1	0.22	0	0.04
Public spending on Concertados (publicly financed, private schools) and subsidies	4 967 971	5 418 361	5 891 028	5 801 608	5 779 092	5 705 800	5 651 147	5 768 544	5 915 923	
Percentage change		0.09	0.09	-0.02	0	-0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.03	0.02

Source: MECD. 2017. "Recursos Económicos. Gasto Público." Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

Table A.8.3 Enrollment in public schools and *Concertados*, 2007-2017

Number of students	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Change (2011- 2015)
Total	7 241 299	7 443 625	7 608 292	7 782 182	7 923 293	8 019 447	8 075 841	8 101 473	8 113 239	8 127 832	
Public schools	4 871 454	5 008 214	5 142 439	5 278 828	5 394 203	5 464 246	5 506 882	5 512 099	5 501 663	5 490 715	
<i>Concertados</i>	2 369 845	2 435 411	2 465 853	2 503 354	2 529 090	2 555 201	2 568 959	2 589 374	2 611 576	2 637 117	
Percentage changes											
Total		0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0	0	0	0.02
Public schools		0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01	0	0	0	0.02
<i>Concertados</i>		0.03	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03

Source: MECD. 2017. "Recursos Económicos. Gasto Público." Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

Table A.8.4: Public spending on private schools, by region, 2007-2015 (in thousand euro)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Spending change (2011-2015)
Andalucía	616 929	738 408	808 309	805 672	788 119	739 073	751 199	748 088	746 910	-0.05
Aragón	140 091	144 418	149 023	147 876	144 983	141 138	143 961	149 820	152 907	0.05
Asturias (Principado de)	79 578	82 689	85 962	87 751	85 386	85 715	88 068	86 680	90 467	0.06
Balears (Illes)	146 036	152 702	165 697	158 249	157 447	150 551	156 126	159 122	174 370	0.11
Canarias	109 884	120 088	127 630	126 146	122 959	136 507	125 046	125 875	127 982	0.04
Cantabria	65 956	71 801	76 190	81 261	77 163	78 482	80 216	83 814	82 046	0.06
Castilla y León	272 173	291 337	301 886	273 944	298 804	325 268	277 546	298 916	284 118	-0.05
Castilla-La Mancha	132 280	137 507	147 061	150 981	147 540	136 907	142 034	142 790	147 834	0
Cataluña	936 015	1 022 078	1 128 338	1 073 914	1 047 979	1 042 769	986 512	1 029 721	1 121 766	0.07
Comunitat Valenciana	573 633	623 097	674 709	673 901	654 229	628 985	655 259	661 529	673 062	0.03
Extremadura	74 095	81 110	84 798	82 251	83 292	80 495	82 778	82 703	83 071	0
Galicia	229 277	234 173	250 505	249 977	243 043	234 368	231 622	232 131	237 034	-0.02
Madrid (Comunidad de)	712 720	776 510	872 117	874 804	913 678	914 455	942 145	943 022	956 155	0.05
Murcia (Región de)	139 569	158 725	176 252	192 065	195 978	195 458	197 989	200 468	210 158	0.07
Navarra (Comunidad Foral de)	109 305	119 574	124 533	123 686	122 341	119 045	124 759	126 345	126 991	0.04
País Vasco	578 055	607 529	655 164	635 852	636 046	636 531	603 777	634 719	637 668	0
La Rioja	34 226	38 288	41 177	41 453	39 539	41 963	43 468	44 755	47 318	0.2
Sum	4 949 823	5 400 034	5 869 352	5 779 782	5 758 526	5 687 707	5 632 505	5 750 498	5 899 855	0.02

Source: MECD. 2017. "Recursos Económicos. Gasto Público." Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

Table A.8.5 Enrollment in public and private ECEC, 2016-2017

	Year 2016-2017
<i>Total</i>	
First cycle (<3 years)	457 224
Second cycle (>= 3 years)	1 318 040
<i>Public</i>	
First cycle (<3 years)	235 132
Second cycle (>= 3 years)	888 862
<i>Private</i>	
First cycle (<3 years)	222 092
Second cycle (>= 3 years)	429 178

Source: MECD. 2017. "Recursos Económicos. Gasto Público." Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

Comparative case study chapter: Public opinion and education reforms in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy

This chapter represents an overview about public opinion on education policy and actual education reforms in the remaining four countries covered by the INVEDUC survey: Denmark, France, Ireland, and Italy. Compared to the more detailed case studies discussed in the book (Chapters 5-8), we present summary overviews of these shadow country cases here for reasons of space availability. Following our logic of selecting “diverse” and “most different cases” (Seawright and Gerring 2008), the goal of this summary overview is to assess whether the theorized relationship between public opinion, party and interest group politics also holds in these cases. In short, we aim at further testing our hypothesis that public opinion plays an important role in education reform, but that its influence relative to party politics and interest groups depends on the salience of a particular issue and on the coherence of attitudes related to that issue. As each of the four country cases here stems from a similar institutional and historical background as one of the primary cases, we regard these additional case studies as “shadow cases” to a certain degree and refer to the matching primary cases (based on their membership in the same worlds of welfare capitalism) when fitting.

Analogous to the more detailed country chapters presented above, we first present some descriptive statistics on selected findings from the INEVEDUC survey before we discuss actual education policy reforms in these countries in the past years. Different from the individual country chapters in the book, however, we only include average values for the respective countries and not averages across the different partisan constituencies in order to keep the figures readable.

PUBLIC OPINION ON EDUCATION POLICY IN DENMARK, FRANCE, IRELAND, AND ITALY

Figure 1 displays citizens’ preferences regarding the relative importance of education in terms of spending. The upper panel presents data that gauges citizens’ support for spending on different areas of government activity without forcing respondents to choose between these fields (‘unconditional support’). In the lower panel, citizens were asked to name just one field of activity, in which additional government spending should be concentrated (‘prioritization scenario’). Hence, in the upper panel, the value on the x-axis indicates the share of the

population supporting “more” or “much more” spending in that particular area, whereas the lower panel gives the population share supporting the prioritization of that particular area.

Figure 1: Support for education spending in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy relative to other fields of government activity.

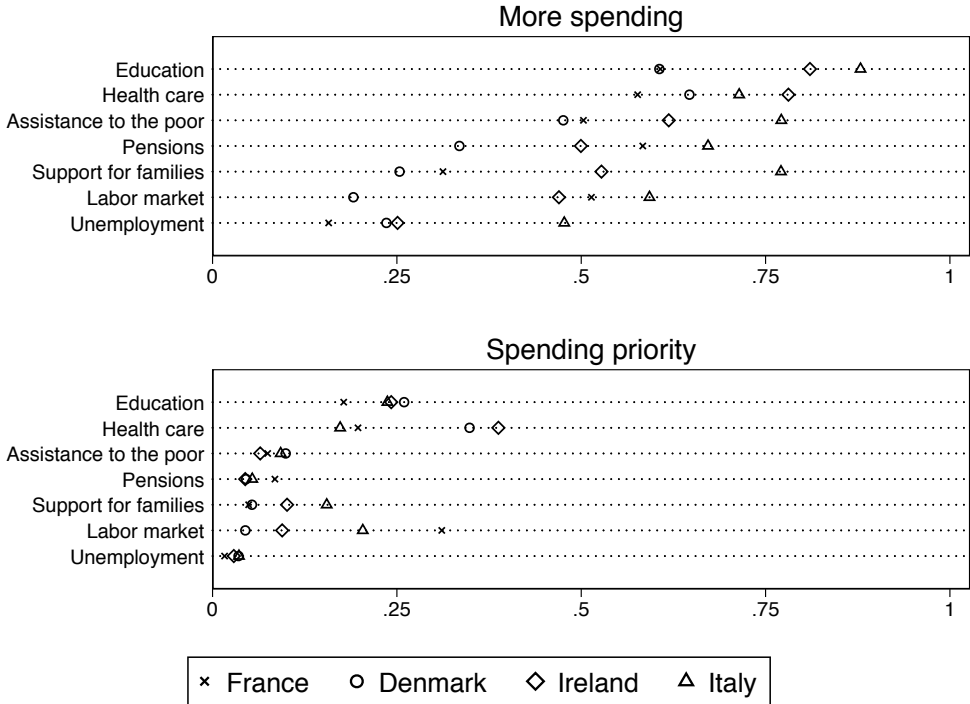


Figure 1 shows that citizens in Ireland and Italy are particularly supportive of increasing spending on education, but more so in the unconstrained scenario. When forced to prioritize, the differences between countries regarding education are somewhat reduced. Furthermore, education competes with health care and labor market policies for the top spot in terms of prioritization: In Denmark and Ireland, the population share prioritizing investments in health care is larger than the share selecting education. France, in turn, is characterized by a particularly strong support among the citizenry for prioritizing spending on labor market policies. However, given the fact that in all countries support for prioritizing spending on unemployment is uniformly low, the high support for labor market spending in France could also be interpreted as support for education-related policies such as active labor market policies and further training. In the unconstrained scenario (upper panel), Danish citizens express the lowest support for spending increases across a large range of social spending areas, whereas Italians are most supportive of increasing spending. This is indicative of a kind

of “thermostatic” feedback effect, according to which support for additional spending is lowest in high-spending countries and highest in low-spending countries. The high levels of support for labor market spending in France, but also in Italy, is most likely related to the persistent high levels of unemployment in these countries.

Figure 2: Public support for distributing funding across different education sectors in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.



The INVEDUC data also reveal significant variation of preferences regarding the distribution of funding across the different sectors of the education system: preschool and early childhood education, general schools (primary and secondary education), vocational education and training (VET), and academic higher education. Figure 2 plots this data. Again, the upper panel presents data on spending support in an unconstrained scenario, in which respondents could express support for spending increases across different sectors of the education system. The panel of the bottom repeats the same exercise, but forces respondents to prioritize between the different sectors of the education system. Thus, the meaning of values on the x-axis in these cases is the same as in Figure 1. The panel in the middle of Figure 2 captures respondents’ willingness to accept additional taxes for additional spending in the different sectors of the education system. Hence, values on the x-axis indicate the share of the

population that claims to be willing to pay additional taxes (leaving open which kinds of taxes would be used).

In the unconstrained scenario, respondents in Italy express the highest degree of support for additional education spending across all educational sectors, but this is combined with a below-average willingness to finance additional spending with increased taxes. In Citrin's (1979) terms, Italians seem to want "something for nothing" the most. In contrast, citizens in France are less enthusiastic about increasing spending on education – except in the case of VET – and are also less willing to pay additional taxes for education spending. Irish respondents are more in favor of prioritizing spending on the earlier stages of the education career, i.e. ECEC and general schools. They are also generally willing to support additional spending in these sectors with commensurate tax increases. Compared to the other education sectors, general schools and VET receive the highest level of support when citizens are forced to prioritize.

Danish and French citizens are most enthusiastic of prioritizing VET, whereas Italians are less supportive and would prefer a concentration of investments on the higher education sector instead. This example shows that the simple notion of "thermostatic" feedback does not always work: Denmark already has a well-developed VET system and still, citizens are keen on increasing investments in that sector. Vice versa, given the high levels of youth unemployment in Italy, it could have been expected that support for expanding VET should be higher in this country. Answering these apparent contradictions requires a deeper look into the country-specific reform dynamics and discourse (see below). In Denmark, for instance, in spite of the fact that the Danish VET system is internationally renowned, the national discourse is that the system is in crisis and in need of attention (Juul and Jorgensen 2011; cf. discussion below). Thus, our survey data indeed reveal a particular kind of "thermostatic" feedback as citizens demand additional spending on a sector of the education system, which is *perceived* to suffer from a lack of attention¹. In Italy, citizens might be skeptical whether it is possible to build up a comprehensive VET system in the short term in order to fight youth unemployment and therefore prefer investments in higher education. Given the fact that the VET sector in France

¹ In a different, but related context, Chung and Meuleman (2017) describe this as "improvement reaction" of citizens to perceived deficits in the policy status quo.

is somewhat more developed institutionally compared to Italy, French citizens might be more optimistic that a further expansion of this sector is both realistic and desirable – hence the higher degree of support for VET in this country.

Figure 3: Support for university tuition and childcare fees in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.

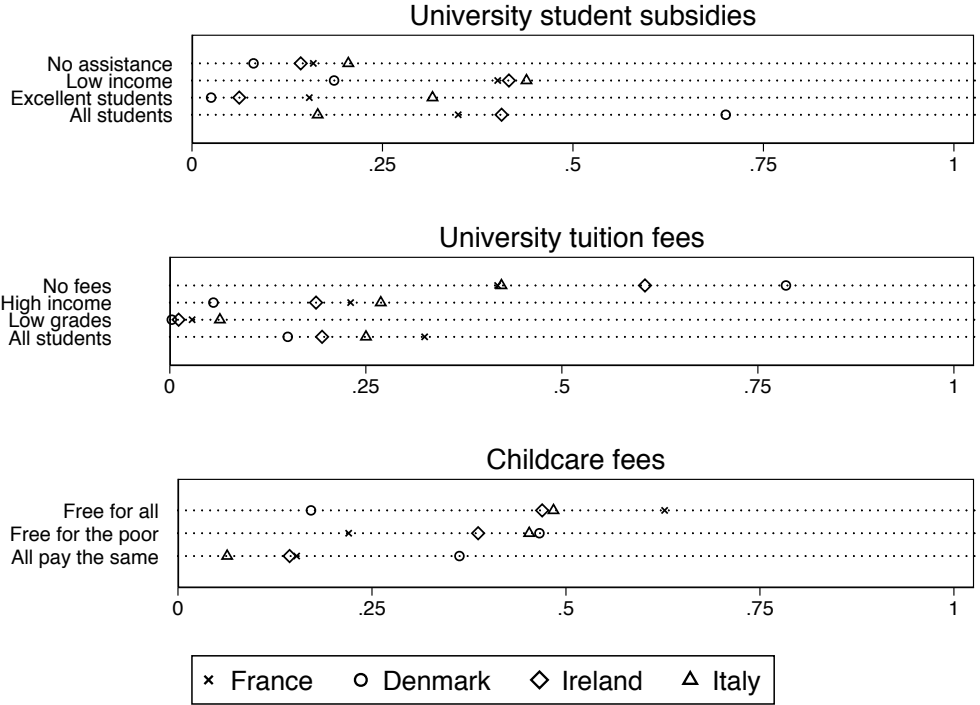
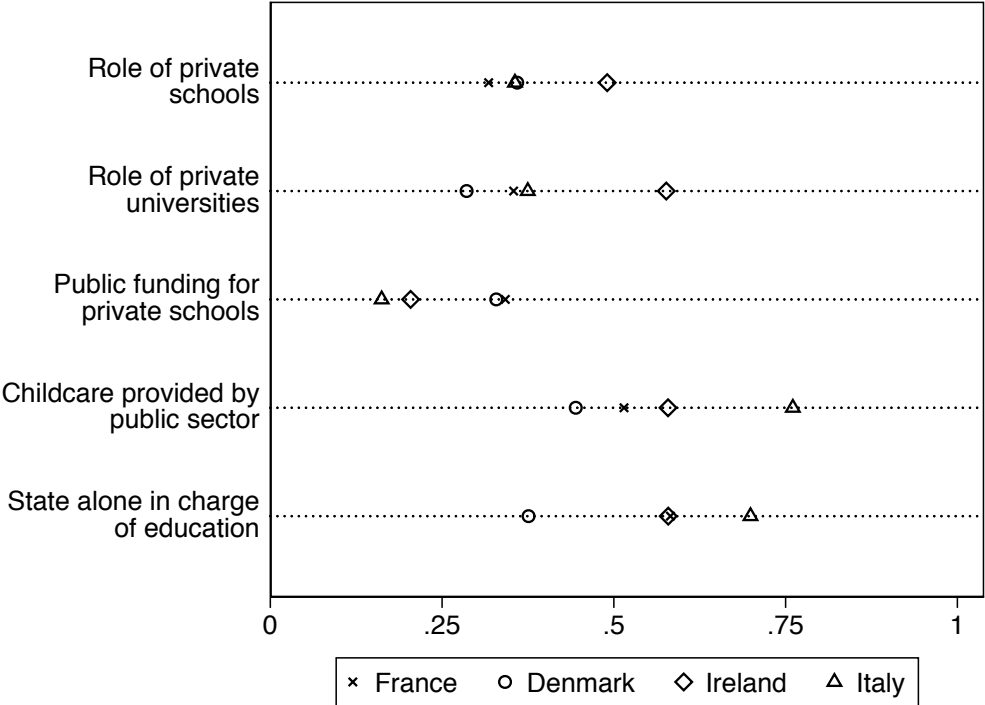


Figure 3 shows data on additional questions regarding the financing of education via university tuition fees or childcare fees as well as regarding financial student aid. Somewhat different from above, this figure reveals some evidence for self-reinforcing feedback, confirming Garritzmann’s (2015, 2016) analysis of higher education finance based on ISSP data. For instance, citizens in Denmark, where university education is generously subsidized for students (cf. Garritzmann (2016), especially Chapter 2 for details), are much more likely to support student subsidies for all students (this is supported by about 70 percent of citizens). In Italy, in contrast, support for this kind of universal student subsidies is below 20 percent and Italians rather are more supportive of student subsidies that are tied to academic merit (about 30 percent support this form of student subsidies). Respondents in France, Italy and Ireland are also more supportive of student subsidies focused on low-income students compared to Danish citizens. Regarding tuition fees, we find majorities against tuition fees in

Ireland and Italy, but only a relative minority rejects any form of tuition fees in France and Italy. The French are more likely to support tuition fees that are similar for everyone whereas Italians prefer a fee structure that is dependent on income. Regarding childcare fees, a significant majority of citizens in France supports the notion that childcare should be “free for all”, but, surprisingly, only a minority of Danish citizens (less than 20 percent) support this statement. Danish citizens rather support a fee structure that imposes the same fees on everybody, whereas respondents in the other countries are more in favor of exempting the poor from having to pay childcare fees.

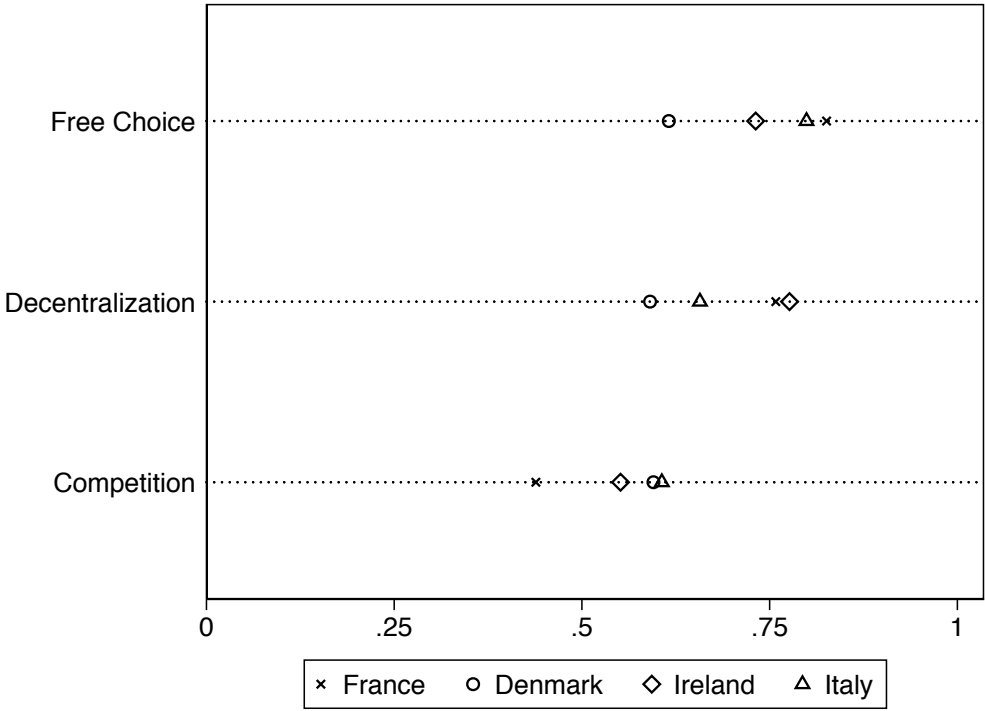
Figure 4: Public attitudes on the division of labor between public and private providers of education in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.



In Figure 4, we present survey data on public attitudes and preferences regarding the division of labor between public and private providers of education. Respondents in Ireland exhibit the strongest support for strengthening the role of private schools and private universities in the education system. This is not surprising given the strong legacy of private education in religious schools, especially in primary education. The high support for private universities might be related to the liberal character of the Irish skill formation system (Vossiek 2018). However, it could have been expected that Irish citizens are more supportive of providing

public funding to these private institutions (which is, in fact, the current status quo). Interestingly, support for increasing public funding to private educational institutions is significantly higher in Denmark and France, although these countries have a relatively state-centered education system, in which public providers in education are clearly dominant and private provision closely controlled and regulated by public authorities. Danish citizens are also much less likely compared to respondents in the other countries to support the notion that childcare and other types of education should be solely in the hands of the state – expressing a genuine support for a mixed public-private approach in the provision of education –, whereas Italian citizens are the most in favor of a state-centered approach in education provision.

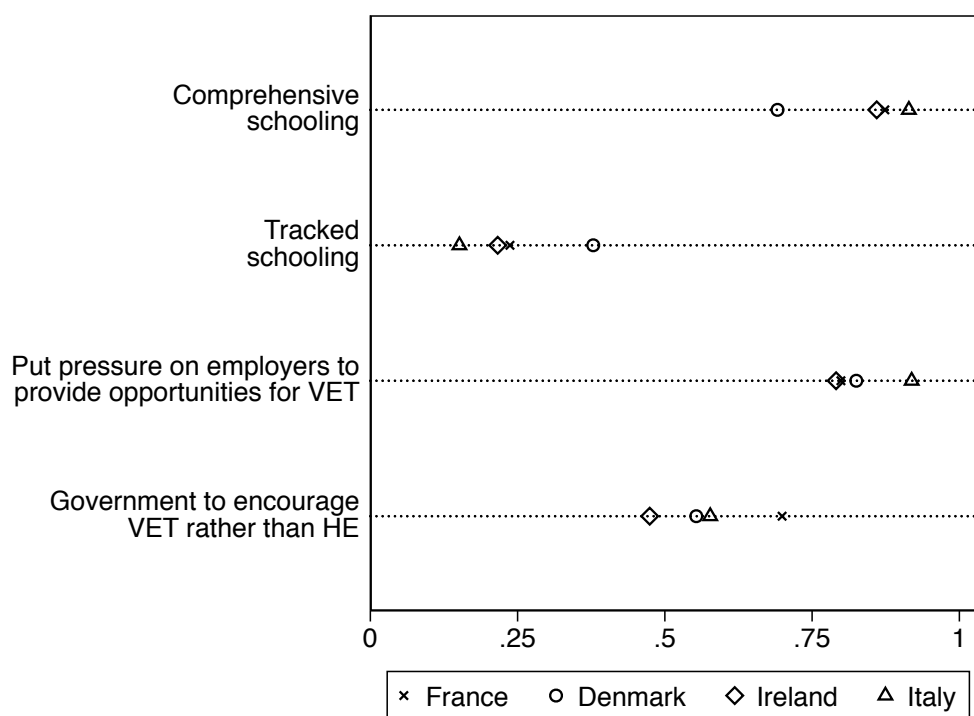
Figure 5: Public attitudes on school choice, decentralization and school competition in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.



Regarding the politically contentious issues of promoting free school choice, decentralization and competition between schools, the survey data reveal significant differences across countries (Figure 5). French citizens are least likely to support the promotion of competition between schools, but the most likely to support the notion of free school choice (supported by almost 80 percent). Danes are less likely to support free school choice and further

decentralization of education. The Danish education system is already very decentralized compared to the French system (Kleider, Röth, and Garritzmann 2017), where support for decentralization is very strong (similar in Ireland). Again, this is indicative of a self-undermining “thermostatic” feedback effect. What is also remarkable is that support for the three issues (school choice, decentralization, and competition) is almost always above the 50 percent mark (except in the case of French support for competition, which is somewhat below that level). This shows that across these countries, significant majorities are supportive of a more decentralized and flexible approach in the provision of educational services, which reflects diverse education needs.

Figure 6: Public attitudes towards school structures, tracking and the relationship between VET and higher education in Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy.



Finally, Figure 6 deals with questions related to the structure of secondary education, i.e. whether the institutional set-up of secondary education systems should reflect the more egalitarian model of comprehensive education or whether it should enforce a stricter separation between academic and vocational education. Similar to the other countries in the sample (see Chapter 4 in the book), support for the notion of comprehensive education is very high (around 80 percent) in Ireland, Italy, and France. Vice versa, school systems with an

extensive degree of tracking are widely unpopular. The notable exception is Denmark. In this country, citizens are less likely to support comprehensive education (although this is still supported by a large majority of more than 70 percent) and more likely to support tracking in secondary education, potentially relating again to the perceived decline of VET, which we address again in our case study below. Across all countries, large majorities support the statement that the government should put more pressure on employers to provide opportunities in VET, in particular in Italy. Opinions are more diverse when it comes to the question of whether the government should actively encourage young persons to pursue VET rather than higher education. Support for this statement is highest in France (72 percent), confirming the high level of support that VET (currently) enjoys in this country. In Ireland, in contrast, support for this statement is less than 50 percent, indicating that academic drift towards higher tertiary education is particularly pronounced in this liberal skill formation regime.

To sum up, the INVEDUC survey data suggest a number of different priorities for education reform across these countries. In Italy, citizens prioritize additional investments in higher education, but also to some extent in VET. The fiscal leeway of policy-makers is constrained by the fact that Italians' willingness to pay for these additional investments is rather low, while at the same time, citizens are skeptical of expanding the role of private schools and universities. In Denmark, in contrast, citizens care mostly about safeguarding the VET system by focusing public investments in this sector of the education system. By and large, citizens continue to be supportive of the basic pillars of the Danish education system, i.e. generous student subsidies and comprehensive education, but they also express an above average willingness to expand the role of private providers in education. The expansion of VET as well as increased spending on labor market policies are top priorities for the French citizens. Compared to citizens in other countries, French respondents are less keen on expanding ECEC (because this sector is already well developed in France; cf. Morgan 2002), but supportive of a more decentralized provision of education, which signals a desire to turn away from the current status quo – which is a highly centralized system. Finally, the Irish are significantly more supportive of focusing public educational investments on the early stages of educational careers: ECEC and general schools. They are also much more supportive of private educational providers playing a strong role in education, which is congruent with the liberal character of

Ireland's skill formation regime. Irish citizens are also more likely to back up their demands for additional education spending with an increased willingness to pay for additional via higher taxes, which is somewhat surprising given the recent period of high public indebtedness and fiscal austerity in this country.

In the following sections, we will briefly outline the contours of reform discourses and policy trajectories in Denmark, France, Ireland, and Italy, paying particular attention to what extent the priorities of policy-makers align with public opinion and to what extent different instances of reform fit the categories of "loud", "loud, but noisy" and "quiet" politics as defined in our theoretical framework. In contrast to the detailed case studies in Chapters 5-8 in the book, though, we cannot – for reasons of space availability – provide an encompassing overview on all education reforms over the recent years in these four shadow case studies. The logic of case selection here is driven by our desire to have a "diverse" set of cases, representing the different combinations of salience and coherence, in order to be able to illustrate how these issue characteristics match with the hypothesized role of public opinion relative to party politics and interest groups.

DENMARK

Background

No OECD country spends as much on education as Denmark: In 2014, total public education spending amounted to 6.3 percent of GDP, compared to UK's 4.8, Sweden's 5.2, Ireland's 4.4, France's 4.8, Italy's 3.6, Germany's 3.7, and Spain's 3.5 percent, respectively.² From this perspective, Denmark can be regarded as the country that – relatively speaking – has placed the highest emphasis on education in our comparative sample. The political, economic, and social stakeholders of the education system are well aware – and largely proud – of these high spending levels and understand the high societal standing of education as a defining element of Danish identity.³

² <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/public-spending-on-education.htm#indicator-chart> (accessed May 30, 2018).

³ We conducted several expert interviews in Denmark as well, but for reasons of limited space cannot analyze this case in as much detail as the "primary cases" analyzed in Chapters 5-8.

In a nutshell, Denmark's education system can be roughly characterized as a mixture of Sweden's school system and Germany's post-secondary education system: To start with, Denmark – like Sweden – has an extensive public early childhood education and care system. Almost all children (98 percent⁴) between the ages of one and six attend ECEC facilities (crèches, nurseries, and kindergartens). As these are largely publicly financed, private contributions are comparatively low. Most of the staff in Danish ECEC facilities has received pedagogical training and the staff-to-children ratio is very low. Therefore, the quality of the facilities can be regarded to be high (cf. also Morgan 2018).

Primary and lower-secondary schools in Denmark are integrated into one school, the *folkeskole*. Education is compulsory until the age of 16 and the schools are comprehensive and inclusive. While some students (about 16 percent) attend private schools, all schools are usually free-of-charge and funded as well as closely regulated by the government using a taximeter system, i.e. the money follows the children. In contrast to Sweden, however, school choice plays a much smaller role in Denmark, as *de facto* only a small minority of parents makes use of this right (cf. Wiborg and Larsen 2017 for an exploration of some of the reasons). Upper-secondary education is structured in five programs, differentiating – like the Swedish school system – between academic and vocational tracks.

While the Danish *school* system thus resembles the Swedish one quite closely, Denmark's *post-secondary* education system is much more similar to Germany because – in contrast to the other Nordic countries, but similar to the German-speaking countries – dual apprenticeship vocational education and training plays a considerable role in the Danish education system (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012). Students pursuing VET usually enter programs, which last for 3.5 to 4 years and combine school-based and firm-based training. As dual apprenticeship training systems usually lead to smoother school-to-work transition compared to other post-secondary education systems (Breen 2005), Denmark shows comparatively low levels of youth unemployment (11.1 percent in 2017, compared to for example 17.9% in Sweden, 19.8% in Finland, 34.8% in Italy, and 38.7% in Spain⁵) as well as a lower number of NEETS, i.e. young people neither in employment nor in education or

⁴ For this and the following see: <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756810/obo-9780199756810-0093.xml> (accessed May 30, 2018).

⁵ <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/youth-unemployment-rate.htm> (accessed May 30, 2018).

training⁶. The main alternative to vocational training in Denmark is academic higher education, which is equally generously publicly funded so that students study free of charge and receive considerable financial student aid. In fact, Denmark has one of the world's most generous student support systems (Garritzmann 2016, Chapter 2).

In Denmark, education does not end with a tertiary education degree but continues throughout (the working) life. Being committed to the principle of life-long learning, the Danish government generously funds several adult and further education programs. About one in three people in the working-age population participate in these measures each year.⁷ Education policy in this respect is also closely related to labor market policy, as Denmark's "flexicurity" model combines an inclusive social investment model with flexible labor market protection and generous compensatory social policies in order to bring and keep as many people as possible in paid employment.

Looking at the last ten years – the period of analysis of this book –, Denmark was first (between October 2011 and June 2015) governed by a left-liberal government (consisting of the Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, and for some time also the Socialist People's Party) under Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Afterwards, a liberal-conservative government entered office under Lars Løkke Rasmussen (consisting of the Liberal Party, and later also the Liberal Alliance and the Conservatives). As is common in Denmark, all of these governments were minority governments. While – given space limitations – we cannot provide a full overview on all education reforms and reform attempts under these governments, we test and illustrate the applicability of our theoretical model with a brief analysis of the three most important education reforms: The left-liberal government of Thorning-Schmidt enacted two major reforms, one concerning *folkeskole*, a second one – building on this – addressing vocational education. We analyze these in turn before turning towards the most important reform of the liberal-conservative government: cuts in the education budget.

⁶ <https://data.oecd.org/youthinac/youth-not-in-employment-education-or-training-neet.htm> (accessed May 30, 2018).

⁷ [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Denmark:Adult Education and Training](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Denmark:Adult_Education_and_Training) (accessed May 30, 2018).

From Loud to Noisy and back to Loud Politics: Folkeskolereformen 2014

Of all the eight countries analyzed in this book, Denmark has – in the last years – shown the best results in comparative student assessments like PISA.⁸ Yet, one issue where Denmark fares worse is persistent educational inequality. Christine Antorini, the (social-democratic) education minister in the left-liberal government of Thorning-Schmidt, sought to address this problem and simultaneously aimed at improving the overall school quality. The main elements of her reform proposal (“*folkeskolereformen 2014*”) were to have more school hours, to have language courses earlier and with more intensity in school, to have some sports courses every day to enhance pupils’ movements and ‘engagement with their bodies and hands’ (also to prepare the ground for the subsequent VET reform), and to have more time and support for pupils to do their homework already at school. The reform thus aimed at improving the overall school quality while simultaneously reducing the impact of students’ socio-economic background on their study success.

Initially, many parliamentary parties shared these goals and supported these proposals. Accordingly, in June 2013 parliament passed an agreement supported not only by the governing parties (*Socialdemokraterne, Radikale Venstre, Socialistisk Folkeparti*) but also by the largest opposition parties (*Venstre, Dansk Folkeparti, and Konservative Folkeparti*).⁹ In fact, a leading government member told us that they had spent almost a year finding the right political framing for the bill to make support as broad as possible. The proposal did, however, receive massive criticism from the teacher unions, especially from *Danmarks Lærereforening*, the Danish Union of Teachers (DLF), which – with its 67,000 members – is a powerful actor in Danish education politics (Wiborg 2017; Wiborg and Larsen 2017). The teacher unions criticized that the reform would imply longer school hours and therefore more time for teachers in the classroom and less time to prepare lessons (arguing that this would decrease quality). A second major criticism was that the reform supposedly shifted the focus away from the humanistic *Bildung*-ideal towards employability, following some previous reforms that headed already in this direction (Imsen, Blossing, and Moos 2017). The student unions joined

⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/idepisa/> (accessed May 30, 2018).

⁹ http://www.kl.dk/ImageVaultFiles/id_62379/cf_202/Klik_her_for_at_l-se_fakta_om_folkeskolereformen.PDF (accessed June 4, 2018).

this criticism, launching a large campaign called “En stor mellemfinger till den nya skolereformen – A big middle finger to the new school reform”.¹⁰

Following up with political mobilization and action, the teacher unions went on strike and were supported by some famous musicians (*Gaffa*, 20 March 2013¹¹). In line with the (decentralized) Danish corporatist model, the DLF negotiated with *Kommunernes Landsforening* (KL), the organization of the municipalities, which are largely responsible for teachers’ working conditions. KL, in turn, ran several public opinion campaigns arguing that the teachers unlawfully did not let the school leaders manage their schools. After four weeks of unsuccessful negotiations and strikes, the government together with KL responded with a drastic response, breaking with the Danish corporatist model to a certain degree: They simply locked out teachers from the collective wage bargaining negotiations and decided that KL alone could set the working conditions, so that the dispute came to an end.

While most parliamentary parties supported this motion, the Liberal Alliance opposed it and a new party (*Forende Demokrater*) formed over this issue as a split-off from several left-wing parties in solidarity with DLF. Yet, the majority of governing and opposition parties still supported the bill. A look at public opinion data can explain this support: At the beginning of the lockout about 50 percent of respondents agreed that the government should not interfere with the conflict and let KL and DLF negotiate (*Politiken*, 15 April 2013).¹² Yet, over the four weeks of the lockout public opinion became more and more coherent as the share of people who agreed that the government should intervene rose constantly (*ibid.*). From this view, it is little surprising why the parliamentary parties dared to take this rather radical step – as they received a strong backing from public opinion.

More generally, the case of the *folkeskolereformen* demonstrates the applicability of our framework. Initially, there was little conflict over the issue (“loud politics”) as everyone agreed on the goals of improving school quality and decreasing educational inequality. Yet, during the course of the reform when it became clearer that the reform might imply a higher (or

¹⁰ See, for example, their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MellemfingerTilReformen/> (accessed June 4, 2018).

¹¹ <http://gaffa.dk/nyhed/70602> (accessed June 4, 2018).

¹² <https://politiken.dk/indland/art5441228/Danskerne-hælder-nu-til-et-indgreb-i-lærerkonflikten> (accessed June 4, 2018).

different) workload for the teachers, the teacher unions became strongly opposed to the reform. Public opinion was also more split, moving the issue more towards a “loud, but noisy politics” logic. Yet, over time – arguably due to KL’s public opinion campaign – public opinion again shifted towards coherent support of the bill so that most parliamentary parties took joint action and supported the reform. This can explain why – despite opposition from a powerful interest group (the DLF) – the parties showed a rather high degree of coherence (with the exception of the Liberal Alliance and the new *Forende Demokrater*) and did not split into different camps over this issue. The Liberal Alliance, however, remained strongly opposed to the reform and in fact after the next election made a (partial) reversal of the reform a precondition for entering a coalition with the conservative *Venstre*. The case of the *folkeskolereformen* can thus be regarded as moving from “loud politics” to “loud, but noisy politics” and back to “loud politics”.

Loud Politics: VET reform (“Faglært til fremtiden – Trained for the Future”)

As outlined above, Denmark historically has had a very strong and successful vocational education and training (VET) system that is the envy of many other countries. Yet, over time – as in other countries – the VET system has become less and less successful in attracting students as an increasing share of pupils chose academic over vocational education. While enrollment numbers in upper secondary education used to be about evenly split between the academic and the vocational track, the academic track has become more popular over time and more recently only about 20% chose the vocational tracks (Undervisningsministeriet 2013, 8).¹³ Moreover, the number of dropouts from VET has increased (ibid.).

The social partners observed this trend Argus-eyed: Both the unions (especially the blue-collar association LO) and the employers (*Dansk Industri*) were very concerned about this decline arguing that this would not only increase youth unemployment and worsen students’ employability, but also pose a major threat to the Danish welfare capitalism more generally as a decline in the number of high-skilled people who know ‘how to work with their hands’ would undermine Denmark’s industrial capacity – in line with arguments by Hall and Soskice (2001) and others about comparative institutional advantages of different varieties of

¹³http://www.stm.dk/multimedia/Fagl_r_til_fremtiden_Bedre_og_mere_attraktive_erhvervsuddannelser.pdf (accessed May 31, 2018).

capitalism. Moreover, the decline was not only noted and criticized by the social partners and the vocational schools, but increasingly also by politicians and society at large. Most important here, our public opinion data (discussed above) shows that a majority of Danish citizens seems to worry about this trend as well, demanding to prioritize public spending on VET (Figure 2).

Christine Antorini, the (social-democratic) education minister in the left-liberal government of Thorning-Schmidt, shared these concerns and sought to make vocational tracks in upper-secondary education as well as vocational post-secondary education more attractive again, to decrease dropout rates and to increase the quality of vocational education. More specifically, her proposal (“Faglært til fremtiden: Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddanneleser – Trained for the Future: Better and more attractive vocational training”; cf. Undervisningsministeriet 2013)¹⁴ contained three important elements:¹⁵ First, the structure of the vocational programs should be simplified by rearranging the existing 12 programs into four broader areas (“care, health, and pedagogics”; “office clerks, trade, and business”; “food, agriculture, and experiences”; and “technology, construction, and transport”). Each of these tracks would receive clearer programmatic goals, defining measurable standards that students had to meet. Second, the requirements to get into VET should be raised in order to enhance the quality and attractiveness of VET – a point that LO had pushed for. For students not meeting these standards but aiming for VET, a 10th high school year would be introduced that prepares them for later vocational training. Finally, there should be better opportunities to continue with other (academic or vocational) education after graduation from VET. To achieve this, the amount of teaching in VET would be increased and the first year turned into a more general program so that students only specialize in one of the four tracks as of their second year. Interestingly, the reform thus – at least to some degree – also resembles the similar reforms in Sweden (cf. Chapter 6 in the book), where more school differentiation was introduced and where entrance into the vocational track was made more difficult.

¹⁴http://www.stm.dk/multimedia/Fagl_rt_til_fremtiden_Bedre_og_mere_attraktive_erhvervsuddannelser.pdf (accessed May 31, 2018).

¹⁵https://www.altinget.dk/misc/130607_Endelig%20aftaletekst.pdf (accessed May 31, 2018); for an briefer overview see: <https://www.altinget.dk/misc/Fagl%C3%A6rt%20til%20fremtiden%20faktaark.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2018).

This proposal was met with a lot of sympathy not only among the social partners (who also actively co-designed the proposal),¹⁶ but also among almost all other parliamentary parties. Leading government members told us in expert interview that – in contrast to the *folkeskolereformen* – they did not perceive any kind of vocal opposition to the proposal. Accordingly, in February 2014, parliament passed an agreement on vocational education, supported not only by the governing parties (*Socialdemokraterne* and *Radikale Venstre*), but also by the large opposition parties (*Venstre*, *Dansk Folkeparti*, *Socialistisk Folkeparti*, *Konservative Folkeparti*, and Liberal Alliance).¹⁷

We thus find that the case of the VET reform follows the logic of “loud politics” very closely: The issue was very salient on the political agenda – due to a perceived threat not only to the education system but also to the ‘Danish model’ more generally – and public opinion was very coherent on the issue in the sense that Danes were very concerned about the decline in VET and very sympathetic to policy proposals to counter this trend. In line with this, no party opposed the government’s proposal and the bill received wide parliamentary support. The only aspect of the policy-making process that is not predicted by (but also not strictly contradictory to) our theoretical model is that the social partners also had a strong influence on the design of the bill, despite the high salience of the topic. In fact, the social partners had tried to raise awareness for this issue already for some time and thus – taking a long durée perspective – might at least partially be responsible for the high political salience and the coherent attitudes on the topic. But exploring this further lies beyond the scope of this brief analysis here.

Loud, But Noisy Politics: retrenching the education budget

The 2015 election brought a change in government: *Venstre*, a liberal-conservative party, formed a minority government under prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, supported in parliament by the *Dansk Folkeparti*, the Liberal Alliance, and the *Konservative Folkeparti* (the latter two joined the government coalition in 2016). Some of their core promises were to offer tax cuts, to increase the public sector’s efficiency (i.e. to cut back expenditure which they

¹⁶ For a concise overview on the positions of several interest groups see Den Offentlige, 25 February 2014 (<https://denoffentlige.dk/det-mener-de-om-reformen-af-erhvervsuddannelser>, accessed May 31, 2018).

¹⁷ <https://www.uvm.dk/erhvervsuddannelser/skoleudvikling/-/media/C6A07757C4B440F39440E23BE77D86ED.ashx> (accessed May 31, 2018).

found excessive and inefficiently spent), but also to increase spending on health care and elderly care (Regeringen: “Sammen for fremtiden – Together for the future”, June 2015).¹⁸ The government followed through with these proposals immediately after the election – in line with Machiavelli’s advice to when in power do every ‘necessary evil’ as early as possible – and cut back public spending in several areas. Still, it was surprising to many that these cuts also hit education, as education had been exempted from similar earlier cuts (*CPH Post Online*, 7 September 2015).¹⁹ Yet, now it was decided that the budget for education should be cut by two percent during each of the next four years, i.e. in total 8.7 billion Danish crowns. Ulla Tørnæs, the minister for higher education and science, argued that the government “pursues efficiency in all parts of the public sector”, wants to ensure that “we get the best value for the taxpayers’ money”, and that the cuts were necessary to provide “more funding to other departments, such as health care and care for the elderly” (all: *Times Higher Education*, 15 September 2016).²⁰ The cuts had immediate consequences: The University of Copenhagen, for example, announced to cut its staff by seven percent, which amounted to 500 jobs (*ibid.*).

The governments’ cuts were – predictably – strongly opposed by the educational institutions. For instance, the President of the University of Copenhagen called them a “blow to the solar plexus” (cf. *University of Copenhagen’s University Post*, 31 August 2015).²¹ But the cuts were also fiercely criticized by many political actors, especially left-leaning political parties and unions, but also by the employers’ associations (as documented by several expert interviews). While we do not have direct public opinion data on support for this specific reform, our INVEDUC data at least for the year 2014 (shortly before the cuts) shows that while a majority of voters demands increased rather than reduced education spending (Figures 9.1 and 9.2), health care spending is even more prioritized in Denmark, offering at least some intuition for this policy change. Yet, looking at a question in our survey that confronted respondents with a trade-off where additional education spending is only possible at the expense of higher taxes (cf. Chapter 3 for details) – which allows studying public opinion on *opposition* to this specific reform to some extent – shows that preferences differ along partisan lines: While 3 in 4 voters

¹⁸ http://stm.dk/multimedia/Sammen_for_fremtiden_-_Regeringsgrundlag.pdf (accessed May 31, 2018).

¹⁹ <http://cphpost.dk/news/danish-government-to-cut-billions-from-education.html> (accessed May 31, 2018).

²⁰ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/is-nordic-higher-education-in-decline#survey-answer> (accessed May 31, 2018).

²¹ <https://uniavisen.dk/en/danish-government-billions-to-be-cut-from-university-budgets/> (accessed May 31, 2018).

of the opposition parties *Socialdemokratiet* and the *Socialistisk Folkepartiet* would be happy to accept higher taxes to increase education funding, only half of the voters of the governing *Venstre* as well as of the supporting *Dansk Folkepartiet* would accept higher taxes. Put differently, the public seems – at least to a certain degree – to be split along partisan lines on the question whether tax increases are more favorable than education cuts. Furthermore, a look at Danish citizens’ preferences towards the public vs. private provision of education reveals surprisingly high level of support for a stronger role of private education, which could be interpreted as lowered support for the public system, which might have facilitated these budgetary cuts.

Put differently, the case of budget cuts follows the logic of “loud, but noisy politics”: The issue was very salient on the political agenda: The government talked about enhancing the efficiency of the public system, and many opponents voiced vocal criticism to this proposal. Citizens’ attitudes were – at least to a certain degree – split as especially voters of the governing parties were more in favor of cutting taxes and more supportive of more private (and less public) educational services. Thus, in line with our theoretical model, neither public opinion nor interest groups played an important role in the policy-making process, which largely followed a dynamic of partisan conflict and party politics. The liberal-conservative coalition at this time controlled office and managed to enact their preferred policy.

In sum, this brief analysis of the three recent education reforms in Denmark shows that our argument travels well as to this case. The dynamic of the policy-making processes can be explained by the two factors that our theory points at: the salience of a particular issue as well as the coherence of citizens’ preferences on that issue.

FRANCE

Background

Compared to other countries, the French education system is highly centralized and state-centered.²² The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, and Research (*Ministère de l’Éducation nationale, de l’Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche*) as the central

²² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/france_en (accessed May 3, 2018)

administrative body is largely in charge of the governance and financing of all levels of education, although some competencies have been devolved to local and regional governments in a cautious process of decentralization, which is, however, much less far-reaching compared to other European countries (Kleider, Röth, and Garritzmann 2017; Mons 2004). Teacher unions are powerful actors in French education policy and deeply entrenched in the processes and structures of the National Education Ministry and therefore tend to be opposed to further delegation of responsibilities to lower levels of government (Dobbins 2014).

Compared to other OECD countries, the French system for early childhood education and care is well-developed and generously funded (Morgan 2012). According to the most recent OECD figures (for the year 2013), France spends 1.3 percent of its GDP on childcare and pre-primary education – only Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark spend more.²³ Germany, in spite of the recent expansion of ECEC discussed in Chapter 5, only spends half of this amount (0.6 percent of GDP). In line with this, the INVEDUC data above document a “thermostatic” feedback in the sense that French citizens do not seem to be particularly keen on increasing public spending in this sector and certainly do not prioritize it (Figure 2). Given the low salience of ECEC, it is to be expected that public opinion plays a relatively minor role in related reform discourses.

School structures at the secondary level are much more unified, integrated, and comprehensive, in particular compared to neighboring Germany. All students are taught in comprehensive secondary schools (*collèges*) until grade 9. Specialization into vocational (*education professionnelle*) and academic tracks occurs at the level of upper secondary education, leading up to variety of school degrees from vocational (the *Certificat d’aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) and the *Brevet d’Études Professionnelle* (BEP)) to academic (the *Baccalauréat* to be obtained at *Lycées*).²⁴ Institutional stratification continues on the level of higher education between the prestigious and elitist *grandes écoles*, the regular universities, and university institutes for technology and professional education.

²³ <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>, Indicator PF3.1 (accessed May 4, 2018)

²⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-14_en (accessed May 3, 2018)

The VET system consists of a school-based track in vocational *lycées* and an apprenticeship track, in which apprentices spent about 60 to 75 percent of their time in the training firm and the remainder in apprentice training centers (*Centres de Formation d'Apprentis (CFA)*) for theoretical education.²⁵ In terms of relative size, the apprenticeship track is significantly smaller in size compared to Germany: According to OECD figures, 41 percent of students in upper secondary education are enrolled in vocational programs, which combine school- and work-based elements, compared to merely 11 percent in France (OECD 2016, 294).

Loud Politics: VET reforms

In what follows, we discuss one example for each of the scenarios identified in our theoretical framework. A good example for “loud politics” is the case of VET reforms. The INVEDUC survey data briefly analyzed above provides strong indications that French citizens strongly care about expanding the VET sector. Before the start of our time period of analysis, the conservative Sarkozy government (in power between 2007 and 2012) had passed a reform in 2009, which set up a fund to support training opportunities for job seekers, and followed with an additional reform in 2011 that promoted training according to the *alternance* model (i.e. combining work-based training with school-based education). A report by the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council (CESE) issued in 2011 (Urieta 2011) evaluated the 2009 reform and documented some positive developments, but urged the government to amplify its efforts, in particular by improving the efficiency and quality of training and the linkages between training and the world of work.

Focusing on the latter aspect, the socialist Hollande government that came into power in 2012 started out with setting the ambitious target of increasing the total number of apprentices to 500,000 by the end of its term in 2017, which implied about 60,000 additional apprentices based on the 2012 level. The government started a range of activities in 2014 and the following years: First, it replaced an existing scheme providing training subsidies for medium-sized firms (up to 250 employees) with one that focused subsidies on small firms with less than 10 employees. Next, it commissioned expert reports on identifying non-financial obstacles to the expansion of apprenticeship training, in particular related to complex

²⁵ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-vocational-upper-secondary-education-16_en (accessed May 3, 2018)

governance of the system, which led to the passage of yet another law on VET reform.²⁶ The government also simplified the financing mechanisms of VET by changing the regulations regarding the training levy (firms pay 0.68 percent of their wage bill into a fund for “professional training”, which mostly refers to further training and not initial VET). The deeper motivation for these reforms was to better integrate the apprenticeship track into the school system and to improve the image of apprenticeship training among young students and parents as well as to boost the incentives for employers to get involved in apprenticeship training.

The government also passed new legislation in the area of further education (*formation professionnelle*), which is in France strongly connected to initial VET (Ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi, de la Formation Professionnelle et du Dialogue Social 2014). These measures included the establishment of a ‘personal training account’, in which individuals can accumulate yearly allotments of training hours (up to 24 hours per year), for which they receive subsidies in order to pursue further training. The account is tied to a particular person, not employers, and is therefore transferable. The government made available funds of more than one billion Euro per year in order to finance the personal training account. This initiative is also geared at promoting apprenticeship schemes (ibid., 5) and the cooperation between the social partners (employers’ associations and unions).

These examples show that the socialist Hollande government has indeed been quite active in an area, which our survey data reveals to be of high priority for French citizens as well. Before, the Sarkozy administration had already started reforms to promote VET, but these were less ambitious compared to the socialist reform agenda. Furthermore, the efforts of the Hollande government have been accompanied by a consultative process with the major social partners and other stakeholders in the form of a number of ‘great social conferences’ (*grandes conférences sociales*), which – among other things – led to an encompassing collective agreement on vocational training in late 2013.²⁷ Thus, the various efforts of the French government to expand access to and the quality of VET can be regarded as a good example of “loud politics”, as policy-makers responded to a clear and coherent signal from public opinion.

²⁶ <http://www.vie-publique.fr/actualite/alaune/apprentissage-parvenir-objectif-500-000-contrats-2017.html> (accessed May 3, 2018)

²⁷ <https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/la-formation-professionnelle> (accessed May 3, 2018)

This is further supported by the fact that Hollande’s early promise of increasing the number of apprentices to 500,000 by 2017 is highly visible.

Unfortunately, in the end, the Hollande government’s efforts were not crowned with success: The total number of apprentices actually declined from 438,143 in 2012/13 to 405,205 in 2015/16 (Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale 2017, 137). The case of VET reforms in France under Hollande therefore also shows that policy-makers understanding and actually responding to a loud and clear signal from public opinion is not yet sufficient to generate successful policy reforms. Of course, the success of policy-making still depends on a number of conditioning factors, which are often beyond the immediate control of policy-makers. In this concrete case, one reason for the failure of the reforms might be that the fiscal resources made available by the Hollande government were simply not sufficient to trigger lasting changes in the incentive structures of young persons and employers. Furthermore, the policy and institutional legacies of the statist skill formation regime might be too strong in the short term and the strong (and increasing) focus on academic higher education might undermine demand for and the societal standing of vocational education.

The plans of and initial actions by the newly elected Macron government indicate that the signal from public opinion to expand opportunities in VET continues to be loud and clear. In the 2017 election campaign, EnMarche! – the movement-cum-party founded and led by the later president Emmanuel Macron – proposed to significantly strengthen and improve apprenticeship training and to put the *alternance* model of training at the core of vocational education.²⁸ After being elected into office, the new government unveiled a large-scale investment plan in September 2017, which will make available 57 billion Euro for investments in various priority areas. One of these areas is *formation professionnelle*, in which the government plans to invest an additional 15 Bio. Euros.²⁹ Even though it is early days for the Macron government, its continued commitment to the promotion and expansion of VET suggests that this is indeed an impressive case of “loud politics”, where public opinion matters. Even though the 2017 French elections were dominated by other short-term issues such as terrorism and high levels of unemployment, the landslide electoral success of the Macron

²⁸ <https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron/le-programme/alternance-apprentissage> (accessed May 3, 2018)

²⁹ <https://www.gouvernement.fr/grand-plan-d-investissement-57-milliards-d-euros-d-investissement-public-sur-le-quinquennat> (accessed May 3, 2018)

movement and the downfall of the socialist government indicates that voters were not satisfied with the previous government's failure to respond effectively to public demands (presumably across a range of issues including education).

Loud, but Noisy Politics: School reform

As in Germany (Chapter 5), Sweden (Chapter 6), England (Chapter 7), and Spain (Chapter 8), school politics were largely “loud, but noisy” politics in France. However, the issues discussed in France were quite different from the ones debated in neighboring Germany. As mentioned above, school structures in secondary education are much more unitary and comprehensive in France, and there has been little debate about changing the basic set-up of the education system. Rather, the main focus of attention has been on education financing, teacher employment and training, the curriculum, as well as school hours. Before Hollande was elected to the French presidency, the Sarkozy government had engaged in a series of reforms of the governance and financing of the education system. In particular, the conservative government implemented major budget cuts with the goal of cutting back public employment (*Les Echos*, July 10 2008, 3). It also abolished an in-school teacher training program, replacing it with voluntary internships and cautiously gave schools more autonomy in defining learning content. Further reforms regarding the curricular structure of secondary education met large-scale protests from student unions, and the government eventually refrained from implementing them in late 2008.³⁰

Against this background of cutbacks and fiscal consolidation, the Hollande government passed a comprehensive reform bill in 2013 (*Projet de Loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République*) with significant repercussions for the governance and financing of primary and secondary education. The usage of the term *refondation* (“re-establishment”) in the title of this law already indicates that one of its primary purposes was to reverse the budgetary cuts implemented under the previous government, and this was to be done from the ‘bottom up’ by focusing on primary education. More specifically, the law envisaged the creation of 54,000 additional full-time teaching positions across the different sectors of the education system, including 26,000 positions for the reinstated teacher-training

³⁰ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/3796099/Nicolas-Sarkozy-u-turns-on-key-reform-pledge.html> (accessed May 3, 2018)

program. By and large, the government was successful in achieving its quantitative goal, but because of demographic changes and other issues the significant uptick in the number of teacher positions did not resolve the staffing crisis (*Le Monde*, September 28, 2017). The reform of education financing also included some measures to channel additional funding to areas with above average numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

A much more controversial aspect of the 2013 reform was the plan to change school hours (the *rythmes scolaires*), which was actually passed as a governmental decree in January 2013. The goal of this reform was to change the organization of the school week in pre-primary and primary education: This was to be done with shortening the length of average school days, while increasing the number of school days at the same time. After the Sarkozy government had abolished school teaching on Saturdays, the French school week consisted of four days only with Wednesdays off. The reform required schools to reduce teaching time on the four days and increase teaching time on the fifth (Wednesday) to a total of nine ‘half-days’ (*demi-journées*) per week. Schools should also get more actively involved in the organization of extra-curricular activities in the teaching-free period.

The reform met fierce public opposition and was heavily criticized, mostly with regard to the process of how it was implemented and introduced. Immediately after the governmental decree was published, the teacher union of primary school teachers in Paris (SNUipp-FSU Paris) organized a strike in late January 2013, criticizing the government for its failure to consult with teacher unions (*Le Monde*, January 21, 2013). In implementing the reform, the government pursued a tight schedule, requiring local governments to decide just a few weeks after the publication of the decree, whether they would already apply the new schedule in the coming academic year (2013/14) or not. Fewer local governments than expected decided in favor of early implementation of the reform, which then led to confusion about a potential reform of the reform in the fall of 2013 and further uncertainties. In October 2013, more than 400 Parisian school principals signed a public declaration,³¹ which expressed serious concerns related to the uncertainties and confusion with regard to when and how the reform should actually be implemented. A massive wave of strikes by teacher unions followed in November 2013 (*Le Monde*, November 12, 2013). The strikers voiced opposition against the *rythmes*

³¹ <http://75.snuipp.fr/?L-important-c-est-l-ecole> (accessed May 4, 2018)

scolaires reform as well as against the generally bad employment conditions in schools, which the 2013 reform – in spite of the significant increase in teacher positions – had not ultimately solved.

Even though these protests were largely organized by teacher unions, i.e. interest groups, the government’s education reforms were highly contested in the wider population as well. For instance, the association representing parents of primary school students (*Parents d’Élèves de l’Enseignement Public* (PEEP)) heavily criticized the reform, because it was perceived to impose too many fiscal and organizational limitations on parents and students.³² In contrast, another parental association – the *Fédération des conseils de parents d’élèves* (FCPE) – was divided regarding its position towards the governmental reforms (*Le Monde*, May 18, 2013), indicating a high degree of contestation.

To some extent, the Macron presidential campaign and government reacted to the public dissatisfaction with the 2013 education reform. Upon entering office, the government announced that it would allow local governments more flexibility to set school hours,³³ in effect partly reversing the *rythmes scolaires* reform. The new education minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer, expected in 2017 that about a third of schools would return to the four-day school week (*Le Monde*, July 20, 2017). It remains to be seen whether this partial reversal of the *rythme scolaire* reform will develop a dynamic of its own, similar to the G8/G9 reform in the case of Germany with the result of the large majority of schools switching back to the old system. Thus, the policy shift of the Macron government could indicate that the *rythme scolaire* reform has moved from the realm of “loud, but noisy” to “loud politics”.

Quiet Politics: Early childhood education and care

Quite similar to Germany, the ECEC sector in France is divided into two sub-sectors: First, childcare for children below the age of two provided in formal institutions (*crèches*) or on an individual basis via child-minders and nursery assistants; second, pre-primary education in the *écoles maternelles*, which though voluntary are attended de facto by all children between the

³² <http://www.lavoixdesparents.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Courrier-Peep-maires.pdf> (accessed May 4, 2018)

³³ <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid119317/annee-scolaire-2017-2018-pour-l-ecole-de-la-confiance.html> (accessed May 4, 2018)

ages of three and six. Enrolment levels in childcare (i.e. for children below the age 2) are above average (51.9 percent compared to an OECD average of 34.4 percent).³⁴ Local governments or non-profit associations are responsible for the financing and organization of the *crèches*, whereas the *écoles maternelles* fall into the domain of the Ministry of National Education.

Even though the French ECEC sector is much more developed and generously funded compared to other European countries, in particular Germany, there has been a persistent gap between demand for childcare places and its limited supply. A report commissioned by the government in 2008 concluded that an additional 200,000 to 400,000 places would be needed to fill this gap (Tabarot 2008, 6). As a consequence, François Hollande promised the creation of 500,000 new childcare places in the presidential election campaign in 2012. At first sight, this is reminiscent of the world of “loud politics” in the expansion of ECEC in Germany, but after being elected to government, this initial promise was significantly scaled back to an announcement in June 2012 to create 275,000 additional childcare places for children below the age of three until 2017 (*Le Monde*, June 16, 2017), to be distributed across the different sectors of ECEC: 100,000 in *crèches*, 100,000 for additional child-minders (*assistantes maternelles*), and 75,000 in pre-school institutions for two-year old children. As far as can be seen, this significant scaling back did not trigger a public backlash or a larger debate.

In order to implement its announcement, the Hollande government made available additional funds to finance the additional places. In doing so, it had to interact and negotiate with the local governments and the national social insurance institution (the *Caisse nationale des allocations familiales* (Cnaf) and the more than 100 local *Caisses d’allocations familiales* (Caf)). Even though the long-term financial plan in the field of social security (*Conventions d’objectifs et de gestion* (COG) 2013-2017) included provisions to increase funding for childcare, the actual increase in childcare places was very slow, making it unlikely that the government would be able to meet its target. Thus, the Cnaf did not manage to spend all the funds that were allocated in order to promote the expansion of childcare places, because local governments were worried about their ability to ensure the long-term sustainability of the newly created places.³⁵ Over time, it became clear that the government’s effort would fall

³⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>, Indicator PF3.2 (accessed May 3, 2018)

³⁵ <https://www.la-croix.com/Journal/Cnaf-narrive-pas-depenser-budget-creches-2017-07-12-1100862281> (accessed May 4, 2018)

significantly short of the initial plans. By the end of 2016, only 46,588 additional childcare places had been created instead of the promised 275,000 (*Le Monde*, June 16, 2017). This amounted to a sum of 500 million Euro out of total annual budget of 5,9 billion Euro in 2016, which had been utilized.³⁶ But again, this did not create a large-scale public backlash.

The take-away of this example for our purposes is this: The INVEDUC data discussed above (Figure 2) indicated that French citizens are not particularly keen on expanding or even prioritizing ECEC, most probably because they already enjoy a generously funded system. Thus, the calls for additional childcare places mentioned above need to be put into perspective. In any case, compared to VET, the urgency seems to have been less pronounced. Admittedly, different from “quiet politics” in other sectors of the education system, the involvement of interest groups in policy formation and implementation was limited. Negotiations and deliberations primarily took place between the national government, the local governments and the independent social insurance institutions in charge of paying out the funds. In the end, the government fell short of implementing its initial promise and, to boot, this failure was not attributable to a lack of funding, but to the administrative inability of the government to spend the allocated funds. What is quite astonishing then is that this ‘double failure’ did not lead to large-scale protests, strikes or other mobilization efforts, which is a striking difference to the case of school reforms discussed above. This is, however, less surprising in the light of our public opinion data, which shows that French citizens were simply not that interested in further expanding ECEC.

IRELAND

Background

As a liberal skill formation regime (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012), the Irish education system shares many characteristics with the British system, but also differs in important ways from it. A first trademark characteristic of the Irish system is a large share of private educational institutions in primary and secondary education, which are, however, strongly supported with public funds. In primary education, almost all schools are formally run by churches, in particular the Catholic church, but teachers’ salaries are paid by the state and

³⁶ <https://blog.francetvinfo.fr/oeil-20h/2017/09/13/creches-500-millions-deuros-non-utilises.html> (accessed May 4, 2018)

schools are inspected by the authorities of the national Department of Education and Skills.³⁷ In secondary education, there is a greater variety in terms of institutions:³⁸ Voluntary secondary schools (or simply: secondary schools) are privately owned and managed, either by church-affiliated authorities or other private actors. They make up the bulk (more than half) of all secondary schools in Ireland.³⁹ In contrast, vocational schools (almost 30 percent of secondary schools) are run by the state itself and managed by Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Community and comprehensive schools make up the remainder of secondary schools and are run by Boards of Management of different composition.

Similar to primary education, all types of secondary schools receive their funding primarily from public sources. Aggregated across primary, secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary education, 95 percent of education funding stems from public sources (in 2013, OECD 2016: 218); the share of public funding in these sectors is significantly lower in the UK (84 percent). What is also important to point out is that the organizational variety of secondary schools does *not* imply the existence of different tracks in secondary education similar to the highly differentiated German system. All secondary schools follow the same curriculum, defined on the national level for the *Junior Cycle* (lower secondary education) and the *Senior Cycle* (upper secondary education). School attendance is compulsory until the age of 16, but the share of students completing an upper secondary degree is above the OECD-average in Ireland.⁴⁰ Upon successful completion of secondary education, students receive either a general *Leaving Certificate* (LV), a more vocationally oriented *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme* (LCVP), or an individualized *Leaving Certificate Applied Programme* (LCAP).

In line with the above-OECD average completion rates of secondary education, enrolment in tertiary education is also strongly above the OECD-average in Ireland. According to the most recent figures, 53.5 percent of 30-34 year-olds have attained tertiary education, compared with an EU-average of 39.9 percent.⁴¹ Still and in spite of recent significant increases in tertiary

³⁷ <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Primary/> (accessed May 9, 2018)

³⁸ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/secondary-and-post-secondary-non-tertiary-education-24_en (accessed May 9, 2018)

³⁹ <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE/natrap/Ireland.pdf> (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴⁰ 85 percent of 25-34 year-olds have attained upper secondary education, compared with an OECD average of 82 percent (OECD 2013: 5).

⁴¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-your->

enrolment, public spending on higher education in Ireland is merely average (1.1 percent of GDP in 2013, OECD 2016, 207), and – given the marginal role of private spending in higher education – total spending is significantly below the EU and OECD averages. The lack of public investment in education is much further pronounced in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. In terms of spending for early childhood and pre-primary education, Ireland spends less than *any other OECD country* (0.1 percent of GDP in 2013, OECD 2016, 304). As a consequence, enrolment levels of pre-primary education are significantly below the OECD average as well: In Ireland, 46 percent of children at the age of three were enrolled in ECEC in 2014, compared to 84 percent in the UK, 94 percent in Germany and 100 percent in France (OECD 2016, 308). These data indicate that the male-breadwinner model is still more prevalent in Ireland compared to neighboring UK.

In terms of party politics, the case of Ireland is somewhat special. Recent government coalitions of past years have always consisted of either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael on the one hand, which are center-right parties with a quite similar ideological profile, and a left-wing party (the Green or the Labour Party) and – between 2007 and 2011 – the liberal Progressive Democrats on the other. Hence, compared to other European countries, government coalitions in Ireland are more oriented towards the political center. As a consequence, partisan differences between governments should be less pronounced.

Loud Politics: Early childhood education and care

Our INVEDUC data – briefly reviewed above – shows a strong desire of Irish citizens to increase public investments in the ECEC sector as well as in primary education. In fact, before the field period of our survey, the Irish government had already implemented significant policy changes in this field, but the expansionary trend has significantly increased in recent years as government reforms tried to satisfy increasing demands for childcare places and pre-primary education. Again, reflecting the strong role of private providers in education, the ECEC sector in Ireland encompasses a “diverse range of private, community and voluntary interests”⁴² providing different kinds of early childhood care and pre-primary education. The provision of

[country/ireland/europe-2020-targets-statistics-and-indicators-ireland_en#tertiary-education-attainment](#) (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴² <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/> (accessed May 9, 2018)

ECEC in formal institutional settings is complemented by individualized provision of care from child-minders, who work in a largely unregulated manner alongside formal institutions.

A first significant reform implemented by a coalition between the center-right Fianna Fáil and the Green party was the establishment of the *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme* in 2010, administered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). This program aims at providing “free” pre-primary education for children between the ages of three and six. Initially, this commitment entailed provision for about two years, but in 2016, the government expanded the program by one additional year, so that children enrolled at the age of three can participate until the start of regular primary school. In the case of ECCE, the somewhat misleading term of “free” provision of ECEC actually amounts to a part-time provision of childcare and pre-primary education for three hours per day, five days per week over 38 weeks per year.⁴³ Hence, “free” provision in the Irish case is still rather miserly compared to the more generous all-day childcare schemes in other Northern European countries. In spite of this, the scheme has been very popular: More than 100,000 children – or about 95 percent of eligible children – were enrolled in the academic year 2015/16.⁴⁴ The ECCE scheme also aimed at improving the quality of childcare provision by requiring providers supported with funding from the program to register with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, established in 2014.⁴⁵ In 2015/16, about 4,200 providers (about 75 percent public) registered with Tusla to provide care services via the ECCE program.⁴⁶ The registration requirement has left out the bulk of the 20,000 independent and largely unregulated child-minders, which – according to critics – has deprived many eligible parents from using the ECCE program to subsidize childcare (*The Irish Times*, July 11, 2017, 9).

A second important ECEC reform was the introduction of the *Affordable Childcare Scheme* (ACS) announced in the context of the 2017 fiscal budget, enacted by a government led by

⁴³ <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FECCE-Scheme%2Fintro.htm&mn=chio&nID=2&mn=chif&nID=2> (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-education-and-care-37_en (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴⁵

<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FChidFamilySupportAgency%2FOverview2014.htm&mn=tusa5f&nID=1> (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴⁶ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-education-and-care-37_en (accessed May 9, 2018)

Fine Gael this time.⁴⁷ This scheme makes available subsidies for childcare for children below the age of three as well as children from low-income families. The subsidy scheme includes a “universal” element, which is paid to parents independent of their level of income, but can only reach a maximum of 20 Euros per week for full-time care. The scheme also includes strong elements of targeting and means-testing as the level of additional subsidies are strongly influenced by the number and age of children (young children receive more subsidies) as well as parental income. A recent report on the level of childcare fees across Ireland revealed a high degree of variation across localities and providers: Across all providers, the average level of childcare fees was 167.03 Euro per week (*Irish Independent*, December 8, 2016, 29), and therefore considerable higher than in other European countries, reflecting the private approach to education and care provision (*The Irish Times*, November 21, 2017, p. 19). The government’s estimates regarding the relative contribution of subsidies via the Affordable Childcare scheme to the costs of provision indicate that for middle-class families, about half of the costs would be covered by the new subsidy.⁴⁸ Hence, the increase in support and public investment in ECEC is quite significant, but it is too early for a final assessment of the relative generosity of the scheme as many providers might increase fees in response to the government subsidies (*The Irish Times*, July 11, 2017, p. 9).

All in all, the recent expansive reforms in ECEC signal that policy-makers have heard and understood the loud and clear signal of public opinion, demanding more public investments (in the form of subsidies to private providers) in this sector. In preparing its recent expansion reforms, the DCYA launched a comprehensive consultation process in 2015, which included members from other governmental departments and organized stakeholders in the policy field as well as, most importantly, an online consultation with parents, to which more than 1,000 parents contributed. Throughout the report, it is very clear that the government paid close attention to the reform priorities of “parents and the wider public” (DCYA 2015, 8). The “need to invest directly into improving quality of services and their resources” (ibid., 35) was one of the common priorities identified by participants in the consultation process. Furthermore, there was no significant disagreement between the major parties (Fine Gael,

⁴⁷<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fearlyyears%2F20170412EarlyYearsFAQs.html&mn=chit5o&nID=2> (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁴⁸<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20170130QandAonAffordableChildcareScheme.pdf> (accessed May 9, 2018)

Labour and Fianna Fáil) regarding the general need to expand ECEC. Criticism from the oppositional Sinn Féin was mostly directed at the fact that the government's policies were not sufficiently generous.⁴⁹

Similar to other cases of education reform, the Irish government's recent reforms faced some significant problems – and therefore increasing criticism on that aspect – during the implementation stage. First of all, there have been continuing problems with the IT infrastructure set up to support the pay-out of the childcare subsidies under the ACS. Current estimates are that the system, which was initially planned to be operational in September 2017, will be up and running in 2019 only.⁵⁰ Faced with a strong increase of parental demand for childcare due to the generous subsidies, childcare providers are increasingly struggling to find qualified personnel and are forced to cut back the intake of children, making parents turn to “unqualified, unregulated childcare options” instead (*The Irish Times*, March 27, 2018, p. 3). Providers also complained about the fact that they were not sufficiently consulted before the introduction of the ACS and that they lack the capacities to deal with the upsurge in parental demand for care (*The Irish Times*, October 11, 2017, p. 6). As one provider described the situation in a recent interview: “Parents are desperate for places for their children but the infrastructure is just not there.” (*Irish Independent*, September 2, 2017, p. 4-5).

In sum, therefore, the case of recent expansion in the provision of ECEC in Ireland can clearly be regarded as an example of “loud politics” with policy-makers responding to a clear signal from public opinion. In fact, the eagerness of policy-makers to respond (further fueled by the opposition's criticism of a lack of responsiveness) was so strong as to neglect potential administrative and organizational problems in the implementation phase. The strong demand for an expansion of childcare in Ireland is also a good example for self-undermining feedback effects in the sense that the attitudes and preferences of Irish citizens in this domain are clearly *not* congruent with the prevailing status quo of miserly childcare provision. Instead, Irish citizens express a strong demand for policy change, resulting in significant expansion of this policy field. In spite of this expansion, relatively speaking, Ireland continues to lag behind other Northern European countries in terms of spending and enrolment levels in ECEC.

⁴⁹ <http://www.sinnfein.ie/childcare> (accessed May 9, 2018)

⁵⁰ <http://www.thejournal.ie/affordable-childcare-scheme-it-delay-3845721-Feb2018/> (accessed May 9, 2018)

Loud, but Noisy Politics: School reforms

Again, as in most of the other country case studies, the field of school politics was characterized by “loud and noisy” debates about the direction of education reform, although in the case of Ireland, organized interests (teacher unions) were more important in this conflict than in other cases we have studied so far. To first provide some background: There are two teacher unions representing secondary teachers in Ireland, which have both about the same number of members.⁵¹ The Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) represents primarily teachers at the various types of secondary schools mentioned above. The Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) has a broader coverage in terms of membership as it represents teachers in secondary as well as higher and further education. TUI is affiliated with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), whereas ASTI is not. Membership in both unions varies across schools.

Traditionally, the completion of lower secondary education (the *Junior Cycle*) is certified and assessed in the form of the *Junior Certificate*, designed and administered centrally by the State Examinations Commission, which is also in charge of the general *Leaving Certificate* awarded at the end of upper secondary education. In October 2012, the government proposed a wide-ranging reform of the Junior Cycle (Department of Education and Skills 2013). The core idea of the reform was to abolish the final central examination at the end and to replace it with school-based assessments of students’ progress throughout the entire period of lower secondary education. The reasoning behind the reform, as explained in the 2012 *Framework for the Junior Cycle*, was to avoid that students “disengage from their learning” in the first two years of lower secondary education, and then spend large parts of the third year to prepare for the Junior Certificate examination “where the emphasis is on rote learning and on rehearsing questions for the examination” (ibid., 1). The new framework introduced a set of 24 “statements of learning”, which describe the learning outcomes to be achieved. The reform

⁵¹ There are no detailed figures regarding the organizational density of teacher unions in Ireland, but it can be presumed to be high: According to recent government statistics, there are about 28,000 secondary teachers in Ireland (<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Key-Statistics/Key-Statistics-2016-2017.pdf>, accessed May 10, 2018). ASTI claims a membership of 16,500 teachers in secondary schools (<https://www.asti.ie/about-asti/overview/>, accessed May 10, 2018), whereas TUI’s membership is “over 16,000 members at second and third level in education services” (<https://www.tui.ie/about-tui.86.html>, accessed May 10, 2018). Dual membership in both unions is possible.

also granted individual schools a significant degree of flexibility regarding the design of learning content in the form of school-based “short courses” (ibid., 2), which would complement learning in basic subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Irish.

The 2012 proposal to completely abolish the Junior Certificate and to replace it with school-based assessments instead met fierce criticism from teacher unions (*The Irish Times*, February 22, 2016). Teachers were worried about the complexity of the new system and opposed being in charge of designing and administering school-based assessments as this had been fully in the hands of the central State Examinations Committee before. Initially, parents and students sided with teachers in their opposition to the Junior Cycle reform: A newspaper opinion poll showed that students and parents were skeptical about giving teachers the authority of grading their own students, fearing a decline of standards (*Irish Independent*, May 19, 2014).

Reacting to criticism from the unions as well as opposing headwind from public opinion on the 2012 proposal, the Department of Education and Skills presented a new version of the Framework for the Junior Cycle in 2015 (Department of Education and Skills 2015). Instead of abolishing the central Junior Leaving Certificate completely, the new framework proposes a “[d]ual approach to assessment” (ibid., 7). The dual approach maintains the externally assessed examination at the end of the third year, but reduces its weight by introducing a number of intermediate school-based assessments in the previous years. The results from the intermediate assessments as well as the final state examination are compiled into a comprehensive *Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement* (JCPA) awarded to students at the end of lower secondary education. The new framework also provides details on the gradual phasing in of the reformed Junior Cycle, starting with the subject of English in 2017 and then progressively covering more subjects over the following years. The basic outlines of the new framework were in line with a “Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation” of the Junior Cycle, which the DES had published jointly with ASTI and TUI in May 2015 (TUI, ASTI and DES 2015).

Still, the reactions of the 2015 framework were mixed and did not end the conflictual debate about school reform. The members of TUI, following a recommendation by its leadership, accepted the government’s reform proposal (*The Irish Times*, February 22, 2016). In contrast,

despite the involvement of the ASTI leadership in the “Joint Statement”, ASTI members rejected this statement (and therefore the reform proposal) in a membership ballot in September 2015 by 55 percent to 45 percent.⁵² Members also supported “industrial action” in relation to the implementation of the reform. As a consequence, the ASTI leadership issued a directive that “prohibited ASTI members from engaging with aspects of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle”.⁵³ As mentioned above, the gradual phasing in of the reform meant that the new assessment system would first be applied only in English (the school subject). But because of the resistance of ASTI, the new assessment scheme and curriculum was fully implemented only in about a third of all secondary schools (*The Irish Times*, December 5, 2016). In the remaining schools (mostly voluntary schools), the implementation was disputed due to the resistance of ASTI. Because classroom-based assessments had not been administered in these schools and teachers were not trained in the new curriculum, up to two thirds of students were at risk of “losing” 10 percent in their English exam (*The Irish Times*, October 10, 2016) (the loss of 10 percent is due to the fact that students could not fulfill all assessment requirements). The Minister of Education, Richard Bruton, called on ASTI to suspend its industrial action in October 2016 and invited union representatives for another set of talks to solve the conflict. The “Outcome of Talks” (ASTI 2017) was put to a vote in February 2017, and, following the negative recommendation of the ASTI leadership, rejected again.

In the coming months, however, opposition to the hardline approach grew within ASTI. Within two years, ASTI had lost about 10 percent of its membership (*Irish Examiner*, April 6, 2018) and was facing a further loss in membership before its convention in the spring of 2017 (*Irish Independent*, June 12, 2017, p. 18). Internal criticism was not only related to the Junior Cycle reform, but also to issues concerning the handling of collective wage bargaining issues by the union leadership. Still, the Junior Cycle reform remained a major point of contention during a special convention in June 2017, which the union leadership was forced to hold due to mobilizing efforts from the membership base. At this convention, ASTI membership voted in favor of suspending industrial action related to the Junior Cycle reform. This means that the previously mentioned directive is currently suspended (but not entirely abolished) so that ASTI

⁵² <https://www.asti.ie/news/campaigns/junior-cycle-campaign/> (accessed May 10, 2018)

⁵³ <https://www.asti.ie/news/campaigns/junior-cycle-campaign/> (accessed May 10, 2018)

members are now required to fully comply with the implementation of the Junior Cycle reform.

To sum up, the Junior Cycle reform is an interesting example about the interaction between public opinion and organized interests. In the initial phase (between 2012 and 2014/15), the skepticism of parents and students regarding the new assessment system bolstered opposition from teachers against the reform. In turn, the government reacted to this criticism by watering down its initial proposal: Instead of completely abolishing the state-administered final examination, its importance should be reduced in order to give more weight to school-based assessments. After TUI members had accepted the new version of the framework, the continued opposition of ASTI to its implementation became increasingly obstinate. Suffering from a significant loss in membership and faced with a partly revolting membership base, ASTI finally caved in and grudgingly accepted (or rather: tolerated) the reform. Even though we lack specific survey data on this issue, it is likely that parents' and students' concerns about potential losses in the English exams (and the perspective of even further losses when the Junior Cycle would be rolled out for other subjects) contributed to the positional shift of ASTI. Thus, this reform can be regarded as a good example of how public opinion can both influence governmental policies as well as the position of interest groups: Even though interest groups may for some time and under certain conditions be able to mobilize public opinion to further their agenda, public opinion can turn against organized interests when a particular issue becomes highly salient and attitudes more coherent.

Quiet Politics: VET reform

Compared to the UK, the governance of vocational education and training (VET) and apprenticeship training in particular has always been more "collective" in Ireland with a stronger involvement of both employers and unions in the system (Busemeyer and Vossiek 2016; Vossiek 2018; Ryan 2000). Before the onset of the economic and financial crisis in 2008, dual apprenticeship training had been well-established, although the size of the apprenticeship system was still rather small as training was mostly confined to the traditional manual trades, in particular construction. During the crisis, the number of apprentices declined significantly, largely related to the contraction of the construction sector, from about 29,000 in 2007 to only 5,711 in 2013 (*The Irish Times*, January 26, 2018, p. 15). However, in

the wake of the crisis, the Fine Gael-Labour government engaged in a number of reform activities to resuscitate the apprenticeship system.

First, in 2013, i.e. shortly before the field period of the INVEDUC survey, it streamlined the governance structure of the system. Before, the VET system was administered by the FÁS (Training and Employment Authority) and local Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The 2013 Education and Training Boards Act established 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to replace the 33 VECs and take over responsibilities in training from FÁS.⁵⁴ In the same year, SOLAS was established as the new national agency in charge of regulating further education and training, which also covers apprenticeship training. One of the first tasks of SOLAS was to develop a comprehensive strategy for the future development of the further education sector, which was published soon after (DES and SOLAS 2014).

In May 2013, the Department of Education and Skills also started a major review of apprenticeship training in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills 2013). This review included a major consultation process with stakeholders involved in the governance of the apprenticeship system. Representatives from the different stakeholders were involved in the “Review Group” in charge of writing the report. In total, 69 organizations in apprenticeship training contributed submissions to the review. One major recommendation of the review was to establish an Apprenticeship Council, hosted by SOLAS (ibid., 8-9). This Council should be in charge of further developing the apprenticeship system, in particular by expanding the system to service sector occupations and higher education. The Council should include representatives from different governmental bodies, but also from employers, trade unions as well as the further and higher education sector. The government followed the recommendations of the review and established the Apprenticeship Council in late 2014.

A further recommendation from the review was to significantly expand the scope of the apprenticeship system, both with regard to the numbers of apprentices as well as with regard to the occupations covered by the system. Whereas apprenticeship training had previously been restricted to a limited number of occupations in the traditional manual crafts, the review envisaged the expansion of apprenticeship training into a “wide range of business sectors such

⁵⁴ <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Further-Education-Training/> (accessed May 10, 2018)

as ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sports and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors” (ibid., 11). In this regard, the review’s recommendations followed the example of Germany, where apprenticeship training in service sector occupations is well established. The Apprenticeship Council plays an important role in the expansion of the apprenticeship training system as it is in charge of developing and examining proposals to expand the apprenticeship system into areas that are not yet covered.⁵⁵ Another innovation in recent changes to the Irish system was to strengthen the connection between apprenticeship training and higher education by establishing programs that allow apprentices to pursue both a vocational training program as well as academic studies in tertiary education (*Irish Independent*, August 23, 2016, p. 12).

The government’s effort to expand apprenticeship training indicates a significant policy change (the *Irish Times* stated that it “could be among the most significant [changes] to the Irish education system in decades”, *The Irish Times*, January 26, 2016, p. 15). Recent figures indicate that these efforts have been largely successful. The number of apprentices is growing rapidly with a recent surge in the number of apprentices by 25 percent between 2016 and 2017; the total number of apprentices in 2017 was 12,849 (*The Irish Times*, March 21, 2016), i.e. more than double the number of apprentices in 2013. The number of apprenticeships has been expanded significantly to currently 36 programs, covering new sectors such as Finance and IT. A further 46 programs are currently in development.⁵⁶ These are impressive indications of the revival of the collective approach to apprenticeship training in Ireland.

Regarding the relevance of this case for the argument of the book, we argue that it can be regarded as a case of “Quiet Politics” in the sense that deliberations for the reform and revival of apprenticeship training have mainly taken place between state actors and organized labor market interest groups without stirring significant reactions from the mass public. Even in spite of the strong recent increase in the number of apprentices, these numbers are still quite small compared to about 180,000 students enrolled in tertiary education.⁵⁷ Hence, debates

⁵⁵ <http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/about/Pages/About.aspx> (accessed May 10, 2018)

⁵⁶ <http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/apprentice/Shared%20Documents/List%20of%20Apprenticeships%20in%20Ireland.pdf> (accessed May 11, 2018)

⁵⁷ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Key-Statistics/Key-Statistics-2016-2017.pdf> (accessed May 11, 2018)

about reforming apprenticeship training affected a much smaller share of the population compared to the school and ECEC reforms discussed above, and therefore, the role of public opinion in VET reform was very limited. Furthermore, policy-makers actively sought the involvement of both employers and trade unions in debates about VET reform, whereas in the UK, recent governments (of different partisan stripe) were eager to involve employers, but not necessarily trade unions (Busemeyer and Vossiek 2016; Vossiek 2018). The broad involvement of stakeholders in VET reform likely further contributed to blunting incentives for interest groups to stir up public opinion. In sum, therefore, the case of VET reform in Ireland is a good example of the limited role of public opinion, but the strong involvement of interest groups in policy-making in the realm of “quiet politics”.

ITALY

Background

With a population of 60 million and a GDP of 2,181 billion US-\$, Italy is the EU’s 4th biggest economy. Several (education-related) factors also make it the EU’s biggest problem child: Italy’s unemployment rate is one of the highest in Europe (11.1 percent compared to the EU average of 7.3 percent)⁵⁸; its youth unemployment rate stands at 31.7 percent (compared to the EU average of 15.6 percent)⁵⁹ and is very high even among the high-skilled. Although Italy has a very low tertiary education enrollment rate (in fact the lowest of all OECD countries for the 25-34 year old group) and comparatively low higher education funding, ‘over-education’, ‘under-employment’, and ‘skill-mismatches’ remain common as Italy’s labor market struggles to create demand for high-skilled workers (Kazepov and Ranci 2017). Consequently, Italy faces a ‘brain-drain’ problem: Increasingly, high-skilled workers seek better fortunes abroad. Italy’s labor market is highly dualized between well-protected (male) labor market insiders, on the one hand, and outsiders on the other hand, who struggle to enter the labor market, at least partly related to Italy’s strict employment protection legislation. Relatedly, Italy has below-OECD average levels in female labor force participation and still relies to a large extent on a male-breadwinner female-care model (Ferrera 1996), resulting in comparatively high gender

⁵⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/> (accessed June 6, 2018).

⁵⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/> (accessed June 6, 2018).

inequality and hampered growth. Its welfare state remains heavily focused on social compensation, especially pensions, and remains a social investment laggard (Bouget et al. 2015; Kazepov and Ranci 2017). Adding to the complexity, strong regional differences between the economically stronger North and the economically weaker South continue to exist on almost every economic and social outcome.

The education-welfare-labor market nexus is thus particularly relevant for the Italian case. Against this background, we analyze recent education reforms with a specific focus on the role of public opinion and its interaction with other political forces. As in the other brief case studies, we start with a sketch of the education system from early childhood education to higher education. A general characteristic is that Italy's investment in education is one of the lowest in the OECD (see above). The general structure of Italy's education system was established in 1948 and has not changed much since then (Grimaldi and Serpieri 2012; Perfar 2018).⁶⁰

Regarding early childhood education and care, public provision hardly exists for children below the age of three so that childcare remains the responsibility of families, particularly of women (León and Pavolini 2014). Italy remains committed to a familialistic care model and a male-breadwinner female-care model. In contrast, however, almost all of the children between three and six years of age (96 percent) attend (mainly public) pre-primary schools (*scuola dell'infanzia*) (OECD 2017).

School education is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 and is structured in three periods: Primary education (*scuola primaria/scuola elementare*) is comprehensive and lasts for five years. Education is provided by municipalities, but teaching contents are highly standardized under the direction of the National Ministry of Education (Kleider, Röth, and Garritzmann 2017). At age 11, pupils progress to lower-secondary schools (*scuola media*) for three years, which also are comprehensive and standardized. At age 14, students continue in upper-secondary education (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) and opt for one of three tracks

⁶⁰ <https://www.perfar.eu/policy/education/italy> (accessed June 6, 2018).

(Cedefop 2014): (1) five-year upper secondary education in *licei* preparing for academic higher education, in technical schools (*istituti tecnici*), or in vocational schools (*istituti professionali*); (2) vocational education and training programs organized by the regions (*IeFP*); or (3) apprenticeship-type training. Nowadays, slightly more than half of the students graduate from vocational tracks (55 percent), while 38 percent graduate from academic tracks (OECD 2017, 21) – yet, as elsewhere in Europe, vocational training is on the decline (cf. Cedefop 2014; Eurostat 2017).⁶¹ All pupils in public schools study free of charge, only a very minor fee applies for non-compulsory upper-secondary education; private schools charge some fees.

Post-secondary education in Italy largely concentrates on academic tertiary education, and vocational options are under-developed. Academic higher education largely takes place in public universities, organized by the national Ministry of Education. While Italy's universities are among the world's oldest, they nowadays are underfunded, and Italy still exhibits the lowest share of tertiary education degree holders of all OECD countries. In vocational post-secondary education, there are two options: (1) one-year, mainly school-based higher technical education and training programs (*istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*) and (2) two-year, school- and firm-based programs at higher technical institutes (*istituti tecnici superiori*) (Cedefop 2014, 30). Both are organized – and accordingly vary – on the regional level. Yet, the system heavily tilts towards academic skills and vocational options are much less common – contributing to the considerably high level of (youth) unemployment.

Over the last ten years – the period of analysis of this book –, Italy has had five different governments: From 2008 until November 2011, Silvio Berlusconi served his fourth term in office with a right-wing coalition of *Forza Italia* and the *Lega Nord*. In November 2011, Berlusconi lost a vote of confidence – due to rising discontent with his failure to meet several election promises, but also over several corruption-, fraud-, and sex scandals. A technocrat government under Mario Monti's lead took over. After the subsequent election a coalition formed under Enrico Letta, led by the center-left *Partito Democratico* (PD), but comprising

⁶¹ [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Number_of_secondary_education_students,_2015_\(thousands\)_YB17.png#file](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Number_of_secondary_education_students,_2015_(thousands)_YB17.png#file) (accessed June 6, 2018).

also the former *Forza Italia* now renamed *Il Popolo della Libertà* and three other parties as well as three independent MPs. The coalition remained in office for less than a year before an internal dispute between Prime Minister Enrico Letta and PD party secretary Matteo Renzi led to a change in government bringing Matteo Renzi with an ambitious reform agenda into office. Renzi governed from February 2014 until December 2016, when he resigned because a centerpiece of his reform agenda (a proposed constitutional reform of the Senate) was rejected in a public referendum. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paolo Gentiloni, took over the office of Prime Minister and governed until the most recent election (in March 2018), which – at the time of writing – seems to have brought a new government of the populist *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S) and the right-wing *Lega Nord* into office. Arguably at least partly as a consequence of these frequent government changes, Italy has witnessed only very few (important) education reforms during the last decade, which in itself is already an interesting finding. In the following, we focus on the two reforms: Renzi's *buona scuola* reform and his *Jobs Act*, both examples of “loud, but noisy politics”.

Loud, but Noisy Politics: The ‘buona scuola’ reform

The biggest education reform in Italy over the last ten years was Renzi's *La buona scuola* ('The Good School'; Law 107/2015) reform, passed in parliament in July 2015. The reform had several goals (<https://labuonascuola.gov.it>; Durusoy and Beyhan 2015; Capano and Priotini 2016; OECD 2017), which can be summarized along four important themes: First of all, the reform strengthened several market-enhancing and privatizing measures: School autonomy was increased and school principals received more freedom in managing organizational and financial resources. External evaluations of every school should take place every three years to hold schools accountable, and private schools were encouraged.

Second, and relatedly, several measures were undertaken to improve teaching quality. A competitive system of teacher recruitments was introduced so that only teachers who passed open competitions will be accepted. Some merit-based bonuses for the best-performing teachers were introduced (for a total of 200 million Euro annually), which, however, might have only a limited impact since the career system was left untouched. Moreover, on-the-job training was made compulsory, and additional funds (500 € annually) were provided for each

teacher to continue professional development. About 100,000 teachers on fixed-term contracts should receive tenured positions.

Third, school curricula should be improved and modernized, receiving a clearer labor-market orientation. Most importantly – and building on a previous pilot program –, the *buona scuola* reform introduced mandatory traineeships/internships (*alternanza scuola-lavoro*) for all students in the last three years of upper secondary education (200 hours in the academic tracks and 400 hours in the vocational tracks), so that in 2015/16 more than 650,000 students already participated in *alternanza scuola-lavoro*. The government supports these measures with 100 million Euros annually. Moreover, as part of the reform, a three-year plan (*pieano nazionale scuola digitale*) aimed at strengthening teachers' and students' digital competencies.

Finally, the *buona scuola* reform also enables the government to develop this reform agenda further with governmental decrees, which they – as well as the subsequent government by Paolo Gentiloni – did, for example, with several decrees passed in April 2017. These decrees created an integrated early childhood education and care system (for children aged 0-6), altered some teaching contents in primary education and changed the VET system by integrating the dual-apprenticeship system into the regional VET system and by expanding VET opportunities for adults.

Politically, the bill as well as the subsequent decrees were highly contested. The reform process started in September 2014 with an initial proposal by the Ministry of Education called “La buona scuola: facciamo crescere il Paese – The Good School: let’s raise our country”. Simultaneously, the government launched a new website, www.labuenascuola.gov.it, to publicize the proposal and started a broad public consultation period both online and offline between 13 September 2014 and 15 November 2014, mirroring similar public consultation processes in other countries (Ceron and Negri 2016).⁶² According to the government, 1.8 million citizens participated in these consultations, and discussions happened at more than 2,000 schools, making them “the largest ever in Europe” (ibid., 141). Prime Minister Renzi, his Minister of Education, Stefania Giannini, as well as other ministers used many occasions to

⁶² Cf. also http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2014/focus151214_all1.pdf (accessed June 7, 2018).

publicly talk about the bill, highlighting its significance. Renzi, for example, referred to it as a milestone reform: “La Buona Scuola non è soltanto una riforma, ma è un approccio completamente nuovo al mondo dell’istruzione. - The Good School is not just a reform, but a completely new approach to the world of education.”⁶³ Afterwards, in the spring of 2015, the bill was presented and discussed in parliament and – after some amendments – approved by the House and the Senate in July 2015.

In the terms of this book, the *buona scuola* reform thus was highly salient. At the same time it – as well as the subsequent decrees expanding the agenda (cf. *La tecnica della scuola*, 7 April 2017)⁶⁴ – was also highly contested (Ceron and Negri 2016). First of all, several parliamentary parties voiced fierce criticism: *Forza Italia*’s House-leader Renato Brunetta, a former minister under Berlusconi, for example, called the bill “una mescolanza di clientelismo de sinistra, cigiellino, e di velleitarismo liberal, il tutto male assortito – a mix of leftwing clientelism, cigiellino [i.e. referring to the labor union CGIL], and liberal wishful thinking – all badly assorted” (Tuttoscuola, 9 July 2015).⁶⁵ *Forza Italia* argued, firstly, that the reform does not do enough to solve the teacher deficit; second, that the unions were not included sufficiently; and third, that the provided funding was not sufficient to address the existing problems. More generally, the party criticized the government’s engagement in the sector of care for children below the age of three, which in the view of *Forza Italia* should remain the family’s responsibility. Still, four *Forza Italia* members of parliament voted in favor of the bill, arguing that it was necessary to change teacher selection and to introduce evaluations. The *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S), the then largest opposition party, also criticized several core aspects of the bill, for example an insufficient attention to specialized VET, the support of private schools, the bonus-payments to teachers, the lack of sufficient funding for the reform, and the fact that the reforms would not address inequalities between the North and the South (*Money.it*, 27 February 2018;⁶⁶ *OrrizonteScuola.it*, 9 May 2017⁶⁷). M5S also cooperated with two regions to start a case at the constitutional court with the charge that the reform inflicts

⁶³ <http://www.matteorenzi.it/la-buona-scuola/> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁶⁴ <http://www.tecnicaldellascuola.it/politici-e-sindacati-le-reazioni-all-approvazione-degli-8-decreti-attuativi> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁶⁵ <https://www.tuttoscuola.com/dl-scuola-da-forza-italia-valutazioni-molto-differenti/> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁶⁶ <https://www.money.it/programma-M5S-scuola> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁶⁷ <https://www.orizontescuola.it/infanzia-gallo-m5s-decreto-0-6-serve-poco-troppe-ambiguita/> (accessed June 7, 2018).

regional freedoms; yet, the court only ruled in favor of the regions in one case: the government cannot set standards for nursery schools.⁶⁸

Moreover, while many government members voiced enthusiastic praise about the reform,⁶⁹ the proposal was contested even within Renzi's own party: Three members of Renzi's *Partito Democratico* (PD), including one former junior minister and one leader of the minority faction, even left the party over the issue (cf. Ceron and Negri 2016, 137). Moreover, several interest groups, especially the teacher unions *federazione lavoratori della conoscenza* (FLC CGIL) and UIL Scuola, as well as their parent associations (*confederazione generale italiana del lavoro*, CGIL, and *unione italiana del lavoro*, UIL), protested and organized several strikes. While welcoming the new fixed contracts of more teachers, they complained that they and their interests – despite the public consultations – had not been sufficiently integrated into the policy-making process and criticized the bill for its promotion of marketization and privatization mechanisms as well as for the unclear evaluation standards, pointing at potential negative effects on inequality (Capano and Priotini 2016; Durusoy and Beyhan 2015). Several student organizations joined this choir and spoke of a 'dictatorship of the majority'.

The *buona scuola* reform thus clearly falls into the realm of "loud, but noisy politics". And this makes sense when we look at public opinion data: As explained above, our INVEDUC survey data for the Italian case showed that respondents demand higher spending (especially on higher education, but also vocational education), but at the same time, Italian citizens show only a very low willingness to pay for additional spending, sending a 'mixed' or 'noisy' signal to politicians and bringing governments in a tough situation caught between a rock (to fulfill spending demands) and a hard place (not to raise taxes). This can be seen even more clearly in more specific public opinion data, as analyzed, for example, by Ceron and Negri (2016) and by Stranisci et al. (2015), who compare public opinion surveys with detailed sentiment analyses of tweets related to the hashtag *#labuonascuola*. Ceron and Negri (2016) find that whereas some aspects of the bill were highly popular (e.g. additional teacher hiring), others were – partly because of teacher unions' political mobilization – strongly criticized (e.g. the

⁶⁸ Cf. <https://francescomacri.wordpress.com/2016/12/27/la-legge-la-buona-scuola-al-vaglio-della-corte-constituzionale/> (accessed June 7, 2018)

⁶⁹ For example <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/scuola/scuola-approvati-otto-decreti-attuativigilioni-completiamo-lavoro-avviato-la-buona-scuola/> (accessed June 7, 2018).

school principals' new steering capacities). On other aspects the public was split between support and opposition. While public opinion tends to see the bill negatively (ibid.), the picture overall is not that clear as the public sends a rather 'noisy' signal to politicians (Stranisci et al. 2015), rendering – in line with our model – party politics the decisive political factor.

In sum, Renzi's *buona scuola* reform is a straightforward example of "loud, but noisy politics". The issue was one of the most salient issues on the political agenda and the government placed a lot of emphasis on it in public discussions. Yet, as opinions (both in the general public as well as among political and economic actors) were highly split on the reform proposal, the bill was also highly controversial. In line with our theoretical framework we would therefore expect a pattern of "loud, but noisy politics" with political parties playing the crucial role in policy reforms. And this was clearly the case: Renzi's government established its preferred policy and showed little willingness to compromise with other interests. Yet, shortly after the implementation of the bill, Renzi lost office – first to an ideologically close government, but with the recent election to a new government with a very different political program (of *Lega Nord* ad M5S). It thus remains to be seen to what degree Renzi's reforms will remain sustainable in the middle- to long-term.

Loud, but Noisy Politics: The Jobs Act

A second highly important reform was Renzi's "Jobs Act", an important education/active labor market policy addressing the education-labor market nexus. Here, we can tell its story rather briefly because in terms of politics it resembles the *buona scuola* reform quite closely. Similar to the *buona scuola* reform, the Jobs Act was highly salient in the public and political arena. And just like the school reform, the Jobs Act was highly controversial.

Renzi's Jobs Act aimed at addressing youth unemployment, improving the situation of youths in NEET (not in education and training) as well as the structural labor market dualization between well-protected labor market insiders and outsiders in precarious employment or unemployed. It did so by improving the linkages between passive and active labor market policies and education policies (*EurWork*, 13 January 2016).⁷⁰ The Jobs Act in fact consisted of

⁷⁰ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/labour-market/italy-active-labour-market-policy-reform-gets-underway> (accessed June 7, 2018).

two policies, approved by the Council of Ministers on 12 March 2014: decree 34 (named as “Poletti’s decree” after Minister of Employment Giuliano Poletti) and the enabling bill 1428 (cf. Ceron and Negri 2016, 138). “Poletti’s decree” facilitates the hiring of new employees under both fixed-term and apprenticeship contracts (ibid.), i.e. it addresses and circumvents Italy’s strict employment protection legislation that has been identified as a core reason for Italy’s high youth unemployment and labor market dualization. The decree was discussed in parliament between March and May 2014 and finally was adopted as law 79/2014 in May 2014. Bill 1428 combines passive and active labor market policies by facilitating access to unemployment benefits, reorganizing active labor market policies, improving the efficiency of employment and training services, simplifying procedures for businesses, expanding maternity allowances and reconciliation policies, and preparing the ground for additional decrees (Ceron and Negri 2016, 138; *ilposti.it*, 6 October 2014).⁷¹ Parliamentary consultation started in April and the bill – after much discussion and hundreds of proposed amendments⁷² (outlined below) – passed parliament in December 2014.

A social media sentiment analysis (Ceron and Negri 2016) reveals that public opinion (at least as expressed via Twitter) was split on the issue (Figure 1 in Ceron and Negri 2016 provides a concise overview): About half of all tweets speak positively about the reform, pointing at its expansion of workers’ rights and its (potentially) positive effects on employment, while the other half expresses concerns about decreased workers’ rights and skepticism of the reform as ‘not doing enough’ or even as ‘being useless’. These shares are surprisingly stable during the entire policy-making process, only responding slightly to some amendments of the bill during the process (ibid.). Put differently, as the issue was highly salient and attitudes quite diverse, we would expect the policy-process to follow a “loud, but noisy politics” logic, rendering party politics the most important factor and leaving at best minor roles to both public opinion and interest groups. This is exactly what we can observe when studying the policy-making process, as we show next.

With its several policy measures, the Jobs Act contains some social investment aspects and some flexicurity aspects, which – according to experts’ evaluations (cf., e.g., OECD 2017) – has

⁷¹ <https://www.ilpost.it/2014/10/06/jobs-act/> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷² Cf. http://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/testi/44250_testi.htm (accessed June 8, 2018).

been successful in increasing employment rates. Accordingly, the World Bank (*ilSole24oreItaly.it*, 27 October 2015)⁷³, the ECB (*Avvenire.it*, 23 September 2016)⁷⁴, and the OECD (OECD 2017) have highly welcomed and praised the reform. Yet, the reform process of the Jobs Act has been highly contested politically: Similar to the *buona scuola* reform, a majority of the governing *Partito Democratico* MPs praised the bill as a crucial step to create more and better jobs in order to improve Italy's economic and social situation,⁷⁵ but a minority in the party became increasingly critical so that 40 out of their 307 members of parliament abstained on the vote of the bill (*IlFattoQuotidiano.it*, 25 November 2014).⁷⁶

Forza Italia's position on the bill was somewhat mixed: While criticizing the bill, several *Forza Italia* MPs initially were willing to work with Renzi on the bill (*ForzaItalia.it*;⁷⁷ *IlGiornale.it*, 23 September 2014⁷⁸). But several *Forza Italia* MPs continued to voice criticism, arguing that the law was ill-equipped and underfunded to provide the safety-net function that it promised⁷⁹ and that its incentives would be useless in reducing unemployment (*IlFattoQuotidiano*, 25 November 2014).⁸⁰ M5S voiced even more forceful and fundamental criticism and promised to try to take back several core elements of the bill, arguing that it harms workers, small companies, and the economy and society at large (*ilblogdellestelle.it*, 11 October 2014⁸¹), calling the reform "una delle peggiori pagine della storia dei lavoratori – one of the worst pages in the history of workers" (*movimento5stelle.it*, 31 December 2014).⁸²

⁷³ http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2015-10-27/rapporto-doing-business-l-italia-sale-11-posizioni-graduatoria-competitivita-200258.shtml?uid=ACMQqSOB&refresh_ce=1 (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷⁴ <https://www.avvenire.it/economia/pagine/la-bce-elogia-il-jobs-act> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷⁵ <http://www.partitodemocratico.it/economia-e-lavoro/biennio-2015-16968mila-rapporti-lavoro-piu/> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁷⁶ <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/11/25/jobs-act-camera-approva-testo-opposizioni-non-partecipano-voto/1232369/> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷⁷ <http://www.forza-italia.it/notizie/11491/gelmini-pronti-al-si-sul-jobs-act-e-il-nostro-programma> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷⁸ <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/jobs-act-governo-accelera-forza-italia-noi-ci-stiamo-1053898.html> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁷⁹ <http://www.forzaItalia.it/notizie/11652/brunetta-jobs-act-e-imbroglio-gattopardesco-di-renzi> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁸⁰ <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/11/25/jobs-act-camera-approva-testo-opposizioni-non-partecipano-voto/1232369/> (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁸¹ http://www.ilblogdellestelle.it/2014/10/jobs_act_le_proposte_del_m5s.html (accessed June 8, 2018).

⁸² <http://www.movimento5stelle.it/parlamento/2014/12/jobs-act-cosa-si-nasconde-davvero-dietro-la-riforma.html> (accessed June 8, 2018).

Additional criticism came from the unions, who in general agreed on the need to strengthen the role of active labor market policies in Italy, but were skeptical that the reform would achieve its goals, criticizing its insufficient funding and demanding better-trained staff in the responsible public employment service (*EurWork*, 13 January 2016;⁸³ *Firenze.Repubblica.it*, 11 December 2014⁸⁴). Moreover, the unions feared that weakening employment protection would put the employers in a stronger position and would lead to workers being fired. Thus, in October 2014 the main Italian trade union (CGIL) promoted a strike on the bill (Ceron and Negri 2016, 140).

In sum, the analysis of Renzi's Jobs Act shows that the reform process followed a "loud, but noisy politics" pattern. The issue was – not least due to Italy's economic situation – one of the most salient topics both in the general public as well as among political elites. At the same time, public opinion was ambiguous on the proposed bill: As social media sentiment analyses show, citizens were split on the bill, supporting some aspects of it but opposing others. Public opinion thus sent a "loud, but noisy signal" to policy-makers, so that – according to our framework – party politics should dominate. The analysis of the political reform process confirmed this, showing that the Renzi government used its majority to enact its preferred policies while largely disregarding the concerns of both the unions as well as of the opposition parties.

CONCLUSIONS

The four, necessarily briefer country case studies in this chapter complement the four more detailed country case studies in Chapters 5-8 in the book. The main purpose of the analysis presented here was to illustrate and further test the applicability of our theoretical framework to other country contexts, i.e. whether our model, pointing at the salience of as well as the coherence of public opinion on an issue, equally applies to the policy-making processes in other country contexts. By and large, these additional case studies lent a lot of support to our framework and broadly confirmed its wide applicability. Our analysis of important education

⁸³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/labour-market/italy-active-labour-market-policy-reform-gets-underway> (accessed June 7, 2018).

⁸⁴ http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/12/11/news/domani_lo_sciopero_generale_contro_il_jobs_act-102605993/?refresh_ce (accessed June 8, 2018).

policy reforms in Denmark, Ireland, France, and Italy as ‘shadow cases’ complements the more detailed analysis of the cases of Germany, Sweden, England, and Spain in the main body of the book.

In the Danish case we analyzed three crucial education reforms: two cases (the left’s *Folkeskolereformen* in 2014 and the right’s cuts of the education budget) followed the logic of “loud, but noisy politics”: Both issues were highly salient on the public and on the political agenda and public opinion was split between support and opposition towards the reforms, i.e. attitudes were conflicting. In line with our expectation for this constellation, the governing parties were the most important political actors shaping the reform outputs. Interest groups (especially teacher unions) voiced vocal criticism of the bill, but had – because of the high salience, as we argued – hardly any influence on the reform. Public opinion, similarly, was important in the sense that it increased politicians’ attention to the topic, but as attitudes were not coherent, public opinion did not have a direct, distinct effect on policy-makers but rather an indirect effect via political parties, as expected in our framework. As a third case in Denmark we analyzed a recent and important reform of the VET system. The analysis revealed that public opinion was very coherent on this issue as support for safeguarding Denmark’s dual apprenticeship system was univocal and a core priority for many voters. Therefore, there was hardly any political dispute among partisan elites over the issue and the reform was widely accepted, in line with our framework. Unexpected by our model was the fact that the social partners also had a strong influence on the design of bill, despite the high salience of the topic. Our framework suggests – in line with Culpepper (2011) – that interest groups are particularly influential under “quiet politics” and much less so once an issue becomes highly salient. The strong influence of the social partners in this case could be due to the fact that for one, the social partners’ positions were very much in line with those of the (leftwing) government so that there was no tension. Second, it could also be related to the fact that the supposed decline of vocational education in Denmark is perceived by all actors as a threat to the ‘Danish model’ so that in some sense this case might be special.

In France, we found examples for the different scenarios sketched out in our theoretical framework. Similar to Denmark, reforms in the VET sector followed the logic of “loud politics”. Public demand for additional investments in this sector was high, and the government reacted

with a significant expansion of public commitment, also in terms of funding. However, different from Denmark, the institutional preconditions for promoting VET as an alternative to VET were less propitious as the government's reforms were hampered by lack of engagement on the part of employers in providing training and also suffered from the low societal esteem of VET in this country. In contrast, reforms in the ECEC followed a logic of "quiet politics". Even though the incoming Hollande administration first increased the salience of this policy field by proclaiming the creation of several 100,000 new places, it increasingly had to step back and retreat from its initial promises because of difficulties in reform implementation. However, this retreat of the government did *not* lead to wide-spread protest and opposition, indicating that the ECEC sector was low on the list of priorities of French citizens in the first place. This was entirely different in the case of school reforms, which – as in many other countries – follow a logic of "loud, but noisy politics". Public opposition manifested itself over a seemingly minor issue: changes in the number of school hours and the organization of the school week. This example shows that even minor and technical issues in the governance of education can become highly salient and politicized if they are connected to everyday experiences of citizens.

We observed a similar dynamic in Ireland. In this case, a reform of school assessment and examination procedures in lower secondary education (the "Junior Cycle") was heavily debated and politically contested – again because it very much affected everyday experiences of parents and school pupils. In this case, however, the twist in the story is that the reform was primarily contested between different teacher unions representing secondary teachers. Even though public opinion was sympathetic of the unions' opposition at first, it turned towards supporting the reform when one particular union effectively went on strike in implementing the reform, thereby threatening the school grades of pupils. In a mirror picture to France, reforms in ECEC followed a logic of "loud politics". Compared to other countries, this sector is much less developed in Ireland, and citizens therefore demand increased investments. Governments of different partisan composition responded to these demands by a (moderate) expansion of provision. Vice versa, reforms in the field of VET were in line with arguments about the greater role of interest groups in the realm of "quiet politics". In a largely consensual and corporatist process, the center-right government in collaboration with the social partners engaged in a significant reform to stabilize and Ireland's VET system, in

particular the apprenticeship system. Even though this reform will have significant implications for the development of post-secondary education in the long term, it was neither hotly debated in the realm of public opinion, nor contested. Hence, the role of public opinion in this reform was marginal, whereas the influence of interest groups was significant.

In the case of Italy we analyzed the two most important education policies of the last decade: the *buona scuola* reform and the Jobs Act, both enacted under Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Our analysis of the two reforms showed that both were highly salient but also very controversial among political elites as well as among the general public. In line with our expectations, the policy process thus followed the logic of “loud, but noisy politics”, as party politics were important in shaping the reform outputs whereas neither interest groups (despite strong activism) nor public opinion had a strong direct influence on the reform. The Italian case is moreover noteworthy, because it is characterized by frequent government turnovers: During the last decade, six different governments were in office. Arguably at least partially due to these instable government coalitions there were much fewer (important) education reforms and Renzi’s government stands out (at least in the last decade) because of its reform intensity.

The insights of this appendix chapter also inform the concluding chapter of the book (Chapter 9), in which we comparatively discuss insights from our comparative analysis of all eight country case studies and derive more general implications for political science, comparative political economy and welfare state research as well as the study of the politics of education.

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