

A national path to internationalization: educational reforms in Luxembourg, 1945–1970

Anne Rohstock and Thomas Lenz

Education policy has long been regarded as an expressly national function. Legitimized either on a national or regional level, education policy has been deeply influenced by traditional political entities and specific geographic and cultural path dependencies, in a manner analogous to social policy. However, at least since the end of the Second World War, education policy has been determined far more fundamentally by international developments, supranational influences, and by the demands of global progress than is suggested when we examine how political rhetoric and public discourse have embedded education policy in national and regional contexts in terms specific to a particular country. Behind the discussions concerning educational system reform within individual nation states, after 1945 there was a growing international network of experts who possessed national and regional influence. Their efforts broke new ground – they founded global organizations engaged in creating educational policy, and exerted a level of psychological pressure on national actors that should not be underestimated.

We will examine the process by which education policy – especially with regard to first and secondary schools – became internationalized through the example of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg between 1945 and 1970. This small Benelux state is an apt subject of investigation, primarily because of the degree of tension between active involvement in international networks and a fierce sense of national autonomy within the small Grand Duchy.¹ Thus, on the one hand, Luxembourg epitomizes the ideal of Europe as a home base for important international and European institutions; where, if not in the Grand Duchy, would educational policy be openly oriented to international standards? On the other hand, Luxembourg has succeeded in defying extra-national, global efforts at harmonization. Rather than giving in to mounting international pressure for the global expansion of higher education diploma programs, Luxembourg has long held tenaciously to its national particulari-

1 This tight connection between the local and the global in the national identity of the Luxembourgers has best been described by: Pit Péporté et al., *Inventing Luxembourg. Representations of the Past, Space and Language from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010); see also: Thomas Lenz and Anne Rohstock, 'The Making of the Luxembourger. History of Schooling and National Identity in the Grand Duchy', *Encounters on Education* 12 (2011): 61–76.

ties and its specific cultural heritage.² Indeed, Luxembourg was almost the last country in Europe to establish its own national university (in 2003) – the very last country to do so, the Principality of Liechtenstein, is regarded as lagging behind other nations not only in education policy, but also in other political and social areas.

The central thesis of this chapter is that while the internationalization of education policy in Luxembourg between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1970s certainly did take place with great dynamism, it remained in large part unconsummated. Internationalization was dynamically organized, particularly at a formal conceptual level: following the Second World War, there was increasing dialog between Luxembourg and organizations active at a supranational level, and a tight personal network was created linking the national and international levels. Institutional channels were also established for the transfer of ideas and policies between states.

These formal changes also transformed the nature of education policy discussions. Luxembourg's education policy not only dealt with the same questions that stood out as important elements in reform programs at an international level. Moreover, in a few instances, Luxembourg even gave priority to internationally discussed reforms in school policy over national solutions, and thereby risked breaking with its traditions as a nation state.

However, this apparent trend toward the internationalization of education policy remained largely incomplete, in part because it was quite deliberately 'nationalized' within domestic political discourse: even arguments and building blocks for reform that clearly originated from the international debate were adapted to a national framework of justification that invoked tradition, in the interests of political legitimacy. Another reason that such latent internationalization remained incomplete was that it found no real resonance in the nation's existing educational institutions. Hardly any of the politicians could have anticipated that these policy innovations, originally so wide-ranging and in conformance with the international trends of the times, would ultimately prove impossible to implement directly into the specifically Luxembourgian system of schools and scientific research. In short: The *de facto* internationalization of the Luxembourgian educational system had to be and was blurred by national rhetoric, the debates and discourses on the 'Luxembourgishness' of the reforms served as a layer of paint to cover up their international undercoat.

2 Anne Rohstock, 'Wider die Gleichmacherei! Luxemburgs langer Weg zur Universität 1848–2003', *Forum – für Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur in Luxemburg* 301 (2010): 43–6; Morgan Meyer, 'Creativity and its Contexts: the Emergence, Institutionalisation, and Professionalisation of Science and Culture in Luxembourg', *European Review of History* 16, no. 4 (August 2009): 453–76.

This thesis will be developed in three sections. The first part will attempt to briefly sketch the changed international educational policy environment that characterized the situation after the Second World War – as emblemized by the catchwords ‘systematization’ and ‘scientification’. This history was previously presented in detail in another chapter, and thus will only briefly be considered here.³ The second section explores the effects of international changes upon Luxembourgian school and science policy. Here, we will look at the most important channels of transnational exchange as well as reforms in school and science policies that took place between 1945 and 1970.

The final section discusses the theoretical and methodological implications of these findings. Using Luxembourg as an example, we will seek to test the validity of currently prevailing theorems in educational sociology, in particular the theorem of isomorphism in education systems as suggested by John Meyer et al., which claims that comprehensive standardization and harmonization of what had previously been specifically national education systems occurred following the end of the Second World War.⁴

Education as civil defence and economic growth factor

The Cold War era saw the birth of a movement to supernationalize education and science policy that emanated from the USA and has remained operative to this day. When the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into earth orbit in 1957, the United States saw this apparent demonstration of the technological superiority of the Eastern bloc as a call to arms that needed to be answered. In the wake of the Sputnik shock, which politicians quite deliberately portrayed as a national trauma, and which in fact stemmed from a much older underlying conflict,⁵ national education policy was turned into an issue of national security.⁶ Only a few months after the launch of the Russian space satellite, the American Congress passed the ‘National Defense Education Act’, and thus made clear that the education system in the USA, just like the

3 Anne Rohstock, ‘The History of Higher Education. Some Conceptual Remarks on the Future of a Research Field’, in *Education Systems in Historical, Cultural and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Tröhler and Ragnhild Barbu (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011), 91–104.

4 Francisco Ramirez and John W. Meyer, ‘The World Institutionalization of Education’, in *Discourse Formation in Comparative Education*, ed. Jürgen Schriewer (New York: Lang, 2000), 111–32, here 118 and 127.

5 Andrew Hartman, *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

6 Wayne J. Urban, *More Than Science and Sputnik: The National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

‘Atlas Weapon System’, should first and foremost serve as a weapon in the war against communism.⁷

This synchronization of aims in the domains of education, science, and defence was also expressed through an intensification of activities on the part of international organizations that did not have a formal mandate in the area of education policy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), founded in 1949, played an extraordinary role in this regard. Other organizations, founded with primarily economic objectives, also played a part in the “educational arms race” in the context of the Cold War, including the *Organization for European Economic Co-operation* (OEEC), founded in 1948, and its successor, launched in 1960, the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD).⁸ Created with funding from the Marshall plan, the multi billion-dollar American recovery program for post-WWII Europe, also anti-communist in motivation, the OECD was conceived from the outset to be an ideological counterweight against the Soviet Union.⁹

The OECD experts assigned a particularly important role to national systems of education and science. The proponents of human capital theory, developed at the Chicago School of Economics and adapted by the OECD, believed that education systems could be rationally planned and scientifically managed, not unlike economic systems, and would thereby become essential to saving the world from communism.¹⁰ In order to generate wider popularity for the new economic model of education, which, roughly stated, sought to promote more education for more people as a foundation for positive economic growth, the OECD deployed internationally comparative statistics and nation surveys, which it published on behalf of its member states. Even if the initial overarching objective of these studies had been to create a unified foundation for measurement, thus assuring improved comparability between OECD member states, this process also standardized the language of education, and at the same time created a comparative rating system for national educational systems.¹¹ As a result, competition increased within the Western world.

7 Daniel Tröhler, ‘Historiographische Herausforderungen der Bildungsgeschichte’ *Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 1 (2011): 9–22.

8 Marcelo Parreira Amaral, *The Influence of Transnational Organizations on National Education Systems* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006).

9 Petra Deger and Robert Hettlage, *Der europäische Raum: die Konstruktion europäischer Grenzen* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007).

10 Myung-Shin Kim, *Bildungsökonomie und Bildungsreform: Der Beitrag der OECD in den 60er und 70er Jahren*, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994).

11 OECD, *Méthodes et Besoins Statistiques de la Planification de L’enseignement* (Paris: OECD, 1967); OECD, *Classification des Systèmes d’Enseignement des Pays OCDE. Australie, Luxembourg, Suisse* (Paris: OECD, 1975).

The supranational organizations just mentioned proceeded to create a widely interconnected and hugely productive network of experts, very few of whom had ever been active in any pedagogical settings themselves, but instead, stemmed mostly from the disciplines of economics, mathematics, and psychology. With their highly technical, rational, and causal perspectives on knowledge, these experts, whose backgrounds were far removed from the world of education, utilized the new international ‘education agencies’ to propagate the notion that the education system could be managed in quite the same way as the defence system or the economic system.¹²

International network and the national reform program

Since the end of the Second World War, Luxembourg has been firmly integrated into the international community. This is particularly true for the realms of culture, education, and science. In addition to relevant bilateral agreements between Luxembourg and, respectively, Switzerland (1948), the USA (1948 and 1951), Belgium and the Netherlands (1953), the UK (1953 and 1956), West Germany and Italy (1958), and Austria (1959), the Grand Duchy has also signed numerous multilateral agreements regulating international exchange in these areas.¹³ During all of the post-war decades, delegates from Luxembourg engaged energetically in international congresses, conferences, and seminars devoted to education. At the most important gatherings, such as the Paris meeting in September 1956 that focused on the role of schools in the Transatlantic Community, high-level representatives from Luxembourg not only participated, but the country’s Education Minister, Pierre Frieden, personally presided over the conference.¹⁴

These numerous bilateral and multilateral activities were enhanced by membership on the part of Luxembourg in all the transnational and supranational organizations related to the sectors of schooling and higher education. Luxembourg was a founding member of NATO, the OECD, and UNESCO, and, as such, took part in the wide range of activities developed by these three organizations after 1945 in the areas of science, schooling, and education. With regard to NATO, we should especially note the NATO fellowship program, under whose auspices, in 1962 alone, 2,300 participants from 50

12 Anne Rohstock, ‘Some Things Never Change. The (Re-)Invention of Humboldt in Western Higher Education Systems’ in *Bildung and Growth*, ed. Pauli Siljander (forthcoming 2012).

13 UNESCO, *UNESCO Bureau of Relations with Member States: Profile: Luxembourg* (Paris: UNESCO, 1961), 13.

14 *Ibid.*, 8.

different nations spent two to six weeks attending the 27 NATO schools in Europe and North America.¹⁵

Moreover, Luxembourg played a prominent part at all of the important conferences on education and training organized by NATO. Thus, it was no less a figure than Luxembourg's Minister of Education, Pierre Frieden, who led a 1960 NATO conference in Paris with the title, 'Transatlantic Understanding in the Schools of NATO countries'. At this conference, a decision was made to establish an *Atlantic Information Centre for Teachers* and to create an *Atlantic Institute*. These two institutions were explicitly intended to expand the activities of the OECD and UNESCO in the area of education. Starting in 1961, these institutions offered numerous teacher seminars and summer schools, and were engaged in organizing teacher and student exchanges among NATO member states.¹⁶

Luxembourg was also involved in international development in the areas of education and science by virtue of its membership in the OEEC/OECD. For example, delegates from Luxembourg took part in the famous OEEC-organized 1959 seminar on 'New Thinking in School Mathematics' in Roy-aumont, which was regarded as the breakthrough moment for the 'New Math' movement in the USA and Europe, and had a significant impact on mathematics curricula, even in nations that had not sent their own delegates.¹⁷ During the ensuing period as well, Luxembourg – like many other European nations – sent key representatives to the OECD who regularly participated in all of its important conferences, seminars, and programs.

Besides its engagement with school policy, the OECD was also involved in the Grand Duchy's science policy. In the mid-1960s, the OECD published a national report on Luxembourg, in which the organization summarized the status of scientific research in the Grand Duchy and presented a general assessment of its capacities. At that time, Luxembourg could only point to a single institution at the university level, the national elite school the *Athenée*, affiliating a *cours supérieur*, a kind of single-track college cycle, which allowed the Luxembourgian student to complete his/her first accredited semester of university studies abroad.¹⁸ Because of the rudimentary development of its university and research structures, the report came to the not surprising conclusion that the Grand Duchy's national level of scientific research was

15 *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (May 1965).

16 *Atlantic studies/Études atlantiques* 4,1 (1967).

17 For example, Iceland. Cf. Bharath Sriraman, *International Perspectives on Social Justice in Mathematics Education* (Missoula, MT: University of Montana Press, 2008), 202; Bob Moon, *The "New Maths" Curriculum Controversy: An International Story* (London/New York: Falmer Press, 1986); *New Thinking in School Mathematics* (Roy-aumont Conference, 1959) (Paris: OEEC, 1959).

18 Rohstock, 'Wider die Gleichmacherei!'

significantly below that of other nations, and therefore recommended bundling previously scattered scientific initiatives into a yet to be established *Centre universitaire*.¹⁹

UNESCO represented another important international player in the sectors of education and science in the Grand Duchy. Luxembourg was one of the first nations to create a standing National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO in 1949. The Commission was affiliated with the Luxembourg Ministry of Education and had its own set of offices at the Ministry.²⁰ The Commission not only worked closely with high-level delegates, experts, and other national representatives of UNESCO, who made regular visits to the Grand Duchy. It also was called upon to actively cooperate with other international bodies, specifically the OECD and the Council of Europe.²¹

The first President of this Commission was a well-known Luxembourgian economist and historian, Albert Calmes. Many of its subsequent presidents also functioned as political advisers in their home countries. As a UNESCO member, Luxembourg went on to even launch significant activities on its own initiative: in 1965, 1969, and 1973, the Grand Duchy organized colloquia in Echternach, together with the ‘International Commission of Mathematics Education’, which – very much in keeping with the ‘New Math’ movement – dealt with reforms in school mathematics curricula.²²

Luxembourg also convened conferences among the Benelux states, which served as a venue for experts active in UNESCO to take steps for revising old textbooks and, under the aegis of the international organization, organized teacher training seminars, especially in the fields of mathematics and geography.²³ UNESCO also sent Luxembourgian members of the permanent Commission for several-month stays to Paris to study UNESCO working methods and published educational surveys of the Grand Duchy.²⁴ And finally,

19 OECD, *On the Organization of Scientific research. Country Report: Luxembourg* (Paris: OECD, July 1963).

20 ‘Arrêté Grand Ducal du 3.5.1949 portant constitution d’une Commission Nationale pour la Coopération avec l’Organisation des Nations-Unies pour l’Education, la Science et la Culture’, *Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* No. 22 (May 27 1949): 519–20.

21 UNESCO, *Bureau of Relations with Member States: Profile: Luxembourg* (Paris: UNESCO, 1961).

22 W. Servais, ‘Continental traditions and reforms’ *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology* 6,1 (1975): 37–58, here 46 and 47; id., *Les Répercussions de la Recherche Mathématique sur l’Enseignement* (Luxembourg: CIEM Séminaire Echternach, 1965).

23 Commission on the Teaching of Geography, *UNESCO Source book for geography teaching* (Paris: UNESCO, 1965).

24 UNESCO, *Bureau of Relations with Member States: Profile: Luxembourg* (Paris: UNESCO, 1961).

UNESCO played a significant role in the creation of the ‘International Centre for Documentation in Comparative Law’ at the *Centre universitaire* founded in the early 1970s.²⁵

Despite this evidence of internationalization processes, there are scarcely any explicit references to international influences on national debates about reform either in parliamentary debates in the Luxembourgian *Chambre de Députés* or in relevant official state documents. Luxembourg, like many other countries as well, was principally concerned with legitimizing its national reforms from a national point of view, and tailoring them according to the history and traditions of the nation. Nevertheless, starting in late 1950s, a slow, latent process took place that internationalized the political debate on reforms. This development can be inferred at a number of different points in the political discourse.

The new international paradigm of systematization and ‘scientification’ was first applied to the discussion about research and development in Luxembourg. Since the early 1960s, there had been a proposal to establish a scientific advisory commission reporting to the Minister of Art and Science, which would study the state of science and research in the nation, initiate reforms, and provide on-going consultation to the Ministry.²⁶ This was considered a necessity in an age when science and technology were developing at such an enormous rate; it was justified by the contention that the very future of the nation depended upon the management of progress in science and technology. The Commission began its work in 1960 and was divided in 1962 into a section on the natural sciences and a section on the humanities.²⁷ Along with its basic scientific and consulting duties, it had the explicit goals of stimulating the economy of the Grand Duchy, increasing the effectiveness of national research, and intensifying international cooperation.²⁸ Under the auspices of its consulting committee, Luxembourg subsequently increased the number of research grants, bestowed more national awards for extraordinary research achievements, and boosted expenditures for science and research.

25 UNESCO, *Reports of Member States: Presented to the Session of the General Conference* (Paris: UNESCO, 1960).

26 ‘Arrêté ministériel du 7 novembre 1960 portant institution d’une commission scientifique consultative’, *Mémorial* No. 63 (November 17 1960): 1442.

27 ‘Arrêté ministériel du 24.11.1960 concernant la composition de la Commission scientifique consultative’, *Mémorial* No. 66 (December 14 1960): 1507; ‘Règlement ministériel du 19 décembre 1962 ayant pour objet de remplacer l’article 3 de l’arrêté ministériel du 7 novembre 1960 portant institution d’une commission scientifique consultative’, *Mémorial* No. 71 (December 28 1962): 1186.

28 ‘Projet de loi, No. 93 (1052) ayant pour objet la création d’un Conseil luxembourgeois de la Recherche scientifique et d’un Centre d’Etude et de Documentation scientifique’ (Doc. J-1963-O-0093): 1968–75, Parliamentary Archives Luxembourg (PAL).

The creation of the Commission unambiguously linked the Grand Duchy to developments that were occurring internationally. Since the end of the Second World War, consulting and planning entities which had quite similar objectives and were specifically focused on education had been set up throughout Europe. These included, for instance, the Science Council established in 1957 in the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Advisory Council created in 1966 in the Netherlands.²⁹

Although the international notions of systematization and ‘scientification’ were apparent in the newly created Luxembourg consulting committee, Luxembourg’s conservatives made efforts to paint these innovations with a specifically national brush and to couple them to its own political positions and traditional Luxembourgian values (e.g. the important role of Catholicism and European humanism).

This was readily apparent, for example, at a 1965 OECD colloquium held in Luxembourg, when CSV Minister of Science Pierre Grégoire (member of the Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei, the Christian Social People’s Party), a national literary figure, refused to fully indulge in the scientific hyperbole proffered by Alexander King, the OECD Director for Scientific Affairs and Grégoire’s comrade-in-arms on the conference’s international podium. Under no circumstances, Grégoire told the more than 80 delegates gathered from all over the world, should scientific research pursue a purely rationalistic understanding of science, but instead, it must always include “humanistic, philosophical, and ethical dimensions.”³⁰ Thus, despite the open recognition given to the importance of the rationalization and ‘scientification’ of education and science systems being pursued internationally, Luxembourgian politicians used this type of rhetoric to help legitimize and achieve national acceptance for educational reforms.

Furthermore, in 1974 the so called *Centre universitaire* was founded where previously scattered scientific and research initiatives were bundled.³¹ Thus, although Luxembourg clearly followed the proposals made by the OECD report on the organization of scientific research published in 1963 which –

29 Justus Lentsch and Peter Weingart, *Scientific Advice to Policy Making: International Comparison* (Opladen and Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2009); William T. Golden, *Worldwide Science and Technology Advice to the Highest Levels of Governments* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1991).

30 Pierre Grégoire, ‘La politique scientifique à l’échelon gouvernemental’, in *Colloque du Luxembourg sur la Science et l’économie 31 Mai 1965* (Paris: OECD, 1965), without page reference.

31 *Le Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg* (Luxembourg: Service Information et Presse du Gouvernement, 1976).

among other things – had suggested the setup of such a *Centre*³², the chamber debates told a completely different story: There, the OECD report was not even mentioned. Instead the government stated that the establishment of the *Centre universitaire* was the corollary of another law adopted by the chamber in 1969, which for the first time in the history of the Grand Duchy recognized degrees acquired in foreign countries. Yet, even the law of 1969, which had a clear international concern, was justified nationally: It was appreciated for continuing the century old tradition of higher education in the Grand Duchy.³³

The debate about reform during the early 1960s took place not only in the realm of science, but also in schooling and education. During this period, there was a broad consensus extending across political parties that much more needed to be done for the nation's educational system. First, this related to financing: the unanimity with which the governing parties and the opposition supported an increase in the budget for education and the school system was primarily attributable to Luxembourg's poor ranking in UNESCO's statistics for international comparison, according to which Luxembourg, with a per-capita expenditure of 19 dollars for first and secondary schools, was nearly in last place, just ahead of Italy, Portugal, Turkey, and Greece.³⁴

Second, there were also concerns related to the curriculum reform. At the beginning of the 1960s, the Communists and Social Democrats in the opposition, in particular, were united in their demand that the national curricula needed to be “swept clean” of the “utterly useless stuff” that was being taught today. They had to be liberated from “all of that literature and grammar that's so hard for the children” in order to promote “scientific courses providing *Bildung* which every pupil needs for his or her later life”.³⁵ This constituted a paradigm shift: in the above quote, *Bildung* forfeits its original meaning as an intrinsically motivated form of the humanistic development of the individual, and instead, is now conceived of in utilitarian terms as a means for transmit-

32 “The most effective way to stimulate research in Luxembourg”, the report stated, “would probably be to set up a University Centre”. See OECD, *On the Organization of Scientific research. Country Report: Luxembourg* (Paris: OECD July 1963), 12.

33 “Cette loi, tout en abrogeant la collation nationale des grades, a maintenue les enseignements supérieurs existant dans le pays depuis plus d'un siècle, à savoir les anciens cours supérieurs, dénommés maintenant cours universitaire”. See ‘Projet de loi N° 1641 portant statut du centre universitaire de Luxembourg’ (Doc. J-1972-O-0057): 993–1023, here 993, PAL.

34 Luxembourg Parliament, ‘Projet de loi concernant le budget des recettes et des dépenses de l'Etat pour l'exercice 1962, No. 885. Adoption des sections 47 à 52 à l'exception des articles 694 et 721. Discussion du chapitre de l'éducation nationale’, *48me séance* (April 12 1962) : 1791–856, here 1835.

35 Statement made by a deputy of the Communist party of Luxembourg, Dominique Urbany, *ibid.*, 1840.

ting scientific knowledge. Moreover, the heretofore sacrosanct classical tradition is put to the test, especially as it applied to the Luxembourg *Gymnasium* (a form of secondary school for advanced students), which had been notable for the higher esteem accorded to Lycée professors schooled in Latin and Greek than to their colleagues in the natural sciences and business branches of the secondary education system.³⁶

The fact that this position was by no means the monopoly of the Social Democratic and Communist opposition is demonstrated by the reform project put forth by the coalition of the conservative party CSV and the liberal party DP (*Demokratesch Partei*) in 1961. Of course, unlike the Communists and the Social Democrats, the coalition did not justify these innovations as a break with Luxembourg traditions. In terms of structural changes, the reform package envisaged a reduction of the Latin curriculum from then prevailing seven years to only five. It is noteworthy that they primarily justified this reform with arguments that virtually turned somersaults: not only were today's eleven- and twelve-year-old boys simply too young to learn Latin grammar, but the politicians went on to claim that Latin was simply no longer a part of the generally recognized canon of knowledge.

Moreover, it was argued, only a very small proportion of students were truly capable of learning a dead language; so, for the great majority, teaching them Latin literally accomplished nothing at all.³⁷ In this way, the conservatives were making at least tacit reference to aspects of the international debate. However, on an explicit level, Luxembourg's politicians adapted their reforms to the context of specifically national experiences. Oddly enough, it was now the tradition of an abbreviated Latin curriculum in the Luxembourg girls' *Gymnasiums* (which until this time had simply been a gender-specific form of discrimination) that was now turned upside down to correspond with the new international dogma of utilitarianism. According to the CSV, the experience in the girls' *Gymnasiums* had shown that talented young people were capable of learning in four years what their all-male colleagues had struggled seven years to cram into their minds.

The storm of indignation they apparently anticipated in response to this reform is evident from the fact that the initiators of the reform law included – believe it or not – three separate justifications for shortening the Latin curriculum.³⁸ But even this was not enough: in tandem with curtailing the Latin curriculum, modern languages, namely English and Spanish, were to receive greater attention. In addition, in the opinion of the Luxembourg Liberal-Conservatives, the natural sciences deserved greater emphasis than they had previously enjoyed. Thus, the reform of the secondary school system

36 Ibid., here 1832.

37 Ibid., here particularly 1831.

38 Ibid., here particularly 823ff.

also envisaged the creation of a new section of “living language-sciences” at the *lycées*. With this combination of sciences and languages,³⁹ Luxembourg emphasized the exact same elements in their curriculum as the OECD had established in the 1960s: sciences and languages were among the principal subjects that OECD policy aimed to specifically promote.⁴⁰

Third, the internationalization of Luxembourg’s school policy debate can also be inferred from the structural school reforms proposed in the early 1960s. An early and extremely vigorous reform program dating from 1961, sponsored by the governing coalition of the conservative Christian Social People’s- and the liberal Democratic Party, proposed comprehensive structural reform of the entire Luxembourg school system from pre-school and primary school through the secondary school system and the *études supérieures*. The reform of Luxembourg’s kindergartens was closely modelled on similar discussions in UNESCO that had been attended since the 1950s by Gaston Schaber, later to become Director of the *Institut Pédagogique* in Walferdange.⁴¹

In the realm of primary school education, these reforms conformed to a whole series of topics in the international reform debate, but without making direct reference to them. For one thing, these reforms included prolongation of compulsory school attendance from seven to nine years.⁴² The politicians justified this measure primarily by invoking the ‘tradition’ of steadily increasing compulsory school attendance in the Luxembourg school system, especially since the end of the Second World War. Although these specifically Luxembourgish innovations were themselves based in part on international models⁴³ or had been implemented on a purely voluntary basis by only a few communities in the Grand Duchy,⁴⁴ the reforms were tied in this way to a

39 Ibid., 823ff.

40 George S. Papadopoulos, *Die Entwicklung des Bildungswesens von 1960 bis 1990. Der Beitrag der OECD* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

41 ‘Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs’, Doc. J-1961-O-0057, pp. 808–857, PAL; UNESCO, *Report of Group I, Problems of the Pre-School and Primary School Education of Children up to ten years old* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952).

42 ‘Loi du 5.8.1963 portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire’, *Mémorial* No. 47 (August 22 1963): 749–54.

43 The mandatory educational period was raised from six to seven years as early as 1945. Cf. ‘Arrêté grand-ducal du 25 mai 1945 modifiant et complétant certaines dispositions de la loi du 10 août 1912 sur l’organisation de l’enseignement primaire et de la loi du 3 juin 1939 sur le Statut disciplinaire du personnel enseignant des écoles primaires et écoles primaires supérieures’, *Mémorial* No. 27 (June 1 1945): 309–10.

44 Cf. ‘Projet de loi concernant le budget des recettes et des dépenses de l’Etat pour l’exercice 1959, No. 720. Continuation de la discussion des articles du budget des dépenses. Adoptions des articles 73–85, 610–617 et 821–962’, 18^{me} séance, May 12 1959, Doc. C-1959-U-018-0004, pp. 1078–1154, here p. 1085, PAL. This approach also had international parallels: Cf. Ulf Homann, *Die Diskussion der Schulpflichtzeit-*

specifically national ‘legacy’. Only marginal note was made of the ‘Sputnik shock’, and the lengthening of compulsory school attendance was justified instead on the basis of increased expectations from the schools by Luxembourg society, and the necessity to guide larger numbers of people to a higher level of general education.⁴⁵

In fact, the introduction of a ninth compulsory school year also fitted perfectly with global trends. Way back in the 1950s, UNESCO had already inaugurated a publication entitled, ‘Studies on Compulsory Education’.⁴⁶ On the first page of its very first issue in 1951, it featured an article titled ‘Raising the School-Leaving Age’.⁴⁷ In 1958, the Council of Europe once again took up the question of prolonging compulsory school attendance at an international congress in Sweden.⁴⁸ And only three years later, the OECD conference *Ability and Educational Opportunity*, which was highly influential throughout Europe, explored this subject once again.⁴⁹ Naturally, a delegate from Luxembourg attended this conference.⁵⁰ All the way from Scandinavia across the Soviet Union and into Western Europe, school policymakers extended compulsory school attendance during the first three post-war decades – most of them up to nine school years.⁵¹ Thus, the specifically national tenor of justification for prolonging compulsory schooling in Luxembourg was not at all in keeping with the general discussion of the topic internationally.

Verlängerung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1979. Eine annotierte Bibliographie (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, 1981), http://library.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/dl/Materialien/Materialien_018/pdf/Materialien_Bildungsforschung_MPIB_018.pdf (accessed November 11 2011).

- 45 ‘Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs’ (Doc. J-1961-O-0057): 808–857, here 809 and 811, PAL.
- 46 UNESCO, *Studies on compulsory education* (Paris: Unesco, 1951–2011).
- 47 Isaac Leon Kandel, *Raising the school-leaving age* (Paris: UNESCO, 1951).
- 48 Elisabeth Honig, *Die französischen Schulreformen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg im Spiegel der pädagogischen Fachpresse Frankreichs* (Düsseldorf: A. Henn 1964).
- 49 OECD, *Ability and Educational Opportunity: Report on the Conference Organized by the Office for Scientific and Technical Personnel in Collaboration with the Swedish Ministry of Education, 11–16 June 1961* (Paris: OECD, 1961).
- 50 In 1961, Luxembourg attended the “Conference on Ability and Educational Opportunity in a Modern Economy” in Kungälv, Sweden, and was represented by Alphonse Aré, Conseiller Pédagogique, Ministère de l’éducation nationale, see file STI(61)7, 5, OECD Archives Paris.
- 51 Elizabeth Sherman Swing, Jürgen Schriewer, and François Orivel, *Problems and Prospects in European Education* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers 2000), 106; for a contemporary comparison: Dino M. Carello, *Was wird mit der Schulpflichtverlängerung beabsichtigt? Eine pädagogische Kritik der Schulpflichtverlängerungspläne in England, Frankreich, Schweden und der UdSSR* (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 1963).

However, Luxembourg lacked any corresponding tradition related to the establishment of a separate middle school system, which would be set above the primary school system and include the equivalent of the lower cycle of the secondary school system. As a result, the structural reform proposed in the legislative package of 1961 was justified instead by invoking the need to promote the abilities of talented students.⁵² The same was true for the proposal to create special classes for learning-disabled students and to introduce complementary pre-vocational classes.⁵³ In their argumentation, the politicians claimed it was of critical importance to mobilize the reserves of intelligence and talent in Luxembourg by allowing students to select the type of school that was properly commensurate with their abilities.⁵⁴

The segregation of children according to ability into different classes and different kinds of schools was still widely sanctioned in many Western nations at that time (such as West Germany and Norway).⁵⁵ This process was consistent with the international state of knowledge in psychology, which presumed that learning was only possible when cognitive ability and teaching curricula were matched.⁵⁶ This would at the same time unburden both “normal” primary school classes and the tradition-rich Luxembourg Gymnasiums from an undue slowing of learning “momentum” and, entirely in keeping with globally ascendant human capital theory, lead more young people more rapidly into their working lives.⁵⁷ In this way, contemporary scientific discoveries and economic goals marched hand in hand in the school reform programs, and human capital theory and cognitive sciences were acting in concert.

Only the structural reform of the Gymnasiums was openly justified by the need for international adaptation. The customary seven years of *lycée* education, it was argued, should now be cut back to six. This would have one

52 ‘Projet de loi portant réforme de l’enseignement moyen, No. 920. Rapport de la commission spéciale. Discussion général’, 16^{me} séance, January 7 1964, (file Doc. C-1963-O-016-0005) : 405–422, here 407, PAL.

53 ‘Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs’ (file Doc. J-1961-O-0057) : 808–857, here 812 and 813, *ibid.*

54 Nicolas Braunshausen, ‘Le passé, garant de l’avenir’, *Bal du Centenaire*, undated (ca. 1960s).

55 For Germany: Gerdi Jonen, *Secondary Education in Germany* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, 1995). For Norway: Stanley J. Vitello and Dennis E. Mithaug, eds., *Inclusive Schooling: National and International Perspectives* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

56 Marc Depaepe and Kristof Dams, *Order in Progress: Everyday Educational Practice in Primary Schools, Belgium 1880–1970* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 223.

57 ‘Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs’ (Doc. J-1961-O-0057): 808–857, here 819–822, PAL.

major advantage, as it was unashamedly stated – it would result in the savings of a whole year. One group of students would be released earlier to begin their working lives, and another group would matriculate at the university at a younger age. This would be of importance because the average age of university entrance in Belgium, France, and Switzerland was already lower than in Luxembourg – namely, around 18 years.⁵⁸ In this context, the situation of one's own nation on an international playing field and the re-orientation toward international standards put Luxembourg's school policies under great pressure. As its ultimate consequence, this led – at least in terms of political will – to the voluntary harmonization of the age of university matriculation.

A final reform element in the 1961 project deserves attention: the conservative initiators of the laws proposed in 1961 envisaged setting up a psychological counselling service in all of the nation's secondary schools, which would place academic and occupational career decisions under the supervision of licensed psychologists, and thereby serve to rationalize this process. The psychological consultants could anticipate help from what was known as the school dossier, which was likewise projected in the new laws, and was intended to provide a kind of long-term picture of the student's 'intellectual profile' (*profil intellectuel*).

This intelligence profile would also be applied to other school branches on a trial basis.⁵⁹ Intelligence surveys of this kind, based on school data, were especially widespread in the USA. Even if no direct connection can be demonstrated, these policy innovations – communicated by way of Belgium – appear to have been inspired by transatlantic models. Luxembourg's neighbour in the northwest had been very tightly bound to the United States in the realms of science and education ever since the 1920s, and maintained a brisk level of exchange through Fulbright fellowships⁶⁰ and the Belgian American Educational Foundation⁶¹ that had ultimately led to transformations in scientific methods at an early date.⁶²

58 'Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l'éducation préscolaire et de l'enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs' (Doc. J-1961-O-0057): 808–857, here 822ff, *ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*, 826.

60 "During its first 10 years (1948–58), the Fulbright Act program sent 368 Belgians and Luxembourgers to the United States and 239 US citizens to Belgium." National Council on Measurement in Education, *The Yearbook of the National Council on Measurement in Education* (Ames, Iowa: The National Council on Measurement in Education, 1960).

61 See <http://www.baef.be/documents/about-us/history/the-first-quarter-century-1920-1945.xml?lang=en> (accessed November 11 2011)

62 Marc Depaepe, *Zum Wohl des Kindes? Pädologie, pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik in Europa und den USA 1890–1940* (Leuven/Weinheim: Universitaire Pers/Deutscher Studienverlag, 1993).

However, the Luxembourgian educational reform which aimed at the structural reform of the whole Luxembourgian education system as well as the curricular development and the improvement of scientific research failed in most of its parts during the 1960s and 1970s. For one thing, the State Council was able to arrange that the reform package would not be considered by the Chamber as a single entity, but instead divided by school levels.⁶³ Rather than presenting a coordinated reform program for the various branches and levels of the school system, the original reform package had now been divided into individual fragments – and this set off continuous waves of attacks from the opposition.⁶⁴

While most of the innovations in the primary school system were adopted in the Law of 1963,⁶⁵ the middle schools proposed in 1965 only existed till the end of the 1970s.⁶⁶ It was particularly the national elite of Gymnasium teachers, who were not called *professeurs* by coincidence, who joined with parents and students in refusing to fully accept the newly created school system. From the time they were introduced, the middle schools were referred to in general parlance as the “kleng Kolléisch” (mini Athenée), and thus, a small, trimmed-down version of the Athenée, and without much prestige.⁶⁷ In the realm of secondary education, it was primarily the teachers who formed an anti-reform front: they rebelled against cutbacks in the Latin curriculum and the introduction of additional faculty categories at the new branches of the Gymnasium. As the opposition viewed it, this simply contravened one of the pedagogical bastions of Luxembourg’s educational system. Even the director of the Athenée, and thus an accepted authority, had warned against such

63 ‘Projet de loi portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, No. 920, Adoptions des Articles 20 à 22 et renvoi du projet amendé au Conseil d’Etat’, 21^{me} Séance de Chambre de Députés, February 7 1963 (Doc. C-1962-O-021-0002): 536–550, PAL.

64 ‘Projet de loi portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, No. 920, Rapport de la commission spéciale, Discussion générale’, 17^{me} Séance der Chambre de Députés, January 30 1963 (Doc. C-1962-O-017-0003): 407–432, here 417, *ibid.*; ‘Projet de loi portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, No. 920, Seconde lecture, Suite et fin de la discussion générale, Lecture et vote des articles amendés’, 73^{me} Séance de Chambre de Députés, July 9 1963 (Doc. C-1962-O-073-0006) : 2928–2953, here 2929, *ibid.*

65 ‘Projet de loi portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, No. 920, Vote sur l’ensemble par appel nominal avec dispense du seconde vote’, 74^{me} Séance der Chambre de Députés, July 10 1963 (Doc. C-1962-O-074-0001): 2960, PAL; ‘Loi du 5.8.1963 portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire’, *Mémorial* No. 47 (August 22 1963): 749–54.

66 ‘Loi du 16.8.1965 portant création de l’enseignement moyen’, *Mémorial* No. 60 (September 18 1965): 1205–9.

67 Carlo Felten, ‘Schlaglichter auf die Reformen der 50er und 60er Jahre’, *Ré-création. Magazine culturel de l’APESS* 5 (1989): 164–74.

precipitous reform.⁶⁸ Also in terms of curricular development nothing much changed during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite an overblown national debate about the growing importance of science instruction and some concessions to the dawning Age of Science (teaching with audiovisual aids and the introduction of teaching technologies such as learning machines) the scientification of the curricula never revolutionized the Luxembourgian classrooms.⁶⁹

The same applies for intentions to reform the organization of scientific research in the Grand Duchy. Although efforts were made to create new formal structures these innovations hardly affected the Luxembourgian scientific community; in the humanities these processes did not even lead to a professionalization of the academe: For instance, historical research in the 1960s and 1970s was – first and foremost – conducted by secondary school teachers who spent their evenings and weekends studying sources in the National Archives.⁷⁰ Thus, in the end, key portions of the Luxembourgian reform projects of the post-war era never throughout the 1960s and 70s came into being or only survived for a brief time.

The case of Luxembourg and the neoinstitutionalism

The theoretical literature about the history of education and educational sociology generally treats the internationalization of education that took place after 1945 as being the progressive standardization of what had previously been idiosyncratic national systems. National particularities and unique features – according to this prevalent thesis – vanished under pressure from international agencies and actors to make room for a broadly unified structure of education. Advocates for this thesis primarily support their point of view based upon analyses by well-known theoreticians from the world of neoliberalism, who assert that the entire past 150 years have already led to the development of a unified world culture, whereby the globe has become an “international society” or “world polity”.⁷¹ Meyer et al. argue that the process of homogenizing and standardizing becomes faster through techno-

68 ‘Projet de loi, No. 57 (920) portant réforme de l’éducation préscolaire et de l’enseignement primaire, Exposé des motifs’ (Doc. J-1961-O-0057): 808–857, here 849, PAL.

69 See the dissertation project of Catherina Schreiber at the University of Luxembourg. She deals with curriculum development in the Grand Duchy since the 19th century.

70 Lenz and Rohstock, ‘Making of the Luxembourgier’.

71 John W. Meyer, ‘The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State’, *Studies of the Modern World-System*, ed. Albert J. Bergesen (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 109–37; John Boli and George Thomas, ‘World Culture in the World Polity: A Century of International Non-Governmental Organization’, *American Sociological Review* 62,2 (1997): 171–90.

logical means and organized international networks of communication: “The professionalization and scientification of education greatly speeds up worldwide communication and standardization, just as the latter clearly facilitates the former. These processes reciprocally influence and strengthen each other”. The results of these processes are described as being isomorphic, fostering the worldwide formal adjustment of national systems.⁷²

To explain these mimetic processes, the sociological theory of neoinstitutionalism typically describes the demarcation of an ‘organizational field’; in such a field, it is asserted, actors and institutions progressively adapt to each other for reasons of legitimacy and rationality. This process of the structural convergence of institutions is described as ‘isomorphism’, and is said to result from bureaucratic necessity and from competition for power and influence. Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell differentiate three pathways leading to isomorphic institutional changes:

1) *Coercive isomorphism*

Coercive isomorphism is homogeneity that occurs as a result of formal and informal pressures. It takes place through direct dependencies and associated exertions of power, or else through cultural and historical expectations that increase the pressure on a particular institution or organization to adapt.

2) *Mimetic isomorphism*

Mimetic isomorphism indicates imitative behaviour that occurs because adoption of a pattern previously successful for another institution promises similar success for the institution imitating this pattern. Mimetic isomorphism is primarily employed at a time when institutions and organizations have no clear idea about their own development or lack the resources to develop and test an independent pathway.

3) *Normative isomorphism*

Normative isomorphism is usually the expression of a process of professionalization and filtering on the part of institutions and organizations. Specific professional requirements are formulated for personnel (language skills, school and college diplomas, etc.), and these go on to serve as normative selection criteria. Since personnel are selected according to similar standards, the probability increases that members of an institution will share the same values, opinions, etc.

As demonstrated by the example of Luxembourg’s history of school and science policy in the 1950s and 60s, these theories are insufficiently differentiated and, in sum, too abstract, decontextualized, and ahistorical to be able to fully comprehend the complex fabric of conditions at any specific point in time in the processes of nationalization and internationalization. Although it can be shown that in Luxembourg, channels of dialog did become institu-

72 Ramirez and Meyer, ‘The World Institutionalization of Education’.

tionalized, reform programs were substantively adopted, and discussions were adapted from the international level, it is also clear that during the period of the 1960s, this did not lead to greater legitimacy for reform efforts. Indeed, how else can we explain the fact that when justifying reform initiatives, education policymakers in Luxembourg focused mainly on how reforms would protect the continuity of national culture and specific Luxembourgian traditions, rather than pointing abroad or looking to international education agencies as models for its policy reform efforts?

Having already demonstrated the inapplicability of coercive, mimetic, or normative isomorphism with regard to Luxembourg's education policies during the 1960s, it now makes sense to also reject the thesis of an incipient world culture that repudiated national path dependencies. In fact, it is obvious that national idiosyncrasies continued to have strong and legitimizing potency even during the technical and scientific advances of the 1960s, and the argument had not caught on yet for implementing education policy reforms because of similar changes happening at an international level.

Although the internationalization of education policy in the Grand Duchy accelerated during the time period under consideration, and, as a result, some tentative harmonization effects were consolidated at a formal conceptual policy level, this process remained fragmentary: for one thing, these changes were not accompanied by a new discursive and legitimizing formulation in the debate about education policy; for another, it turned out not to be remotely possible to implement the planned reforms in the areas of science or education. Thus, the postwar era up to the beginning of the 1970s and 80s clearly served as an incubation period, and set the stage for the internationalization of the education policy reform process, but without causing a genuine break with the long dominant national paradigm.⁷³

73 The international orientation of educational policy first intensified in the 1980s. At this point in time, the new agents of educational policy, such as the OECD, recognized that the failure of the comprehensive efforts at reform in the 1960s necessitated the re-orientation of their own educational policy stances. The historical analysis of this process in the 1980s and 1990s is the goal of a project being undertaken at Luxembourg University entitled "Schooling as Institutional Heritage in Cultural Settings (SIHICS)," which is being directed by Prof. Daniel Tröhler.