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The concept of "Governance Regimes": A helpful tool for international comparison in adult education?

1 Introduction

Various international school achievement studies carried out, e.g., by the OECD, point out that there are considerable deficits in national educational systems and discussions regarding how to influence the processes and effects of educational systems are more prominent than ever. The establishment of the principle of lifelong learning does not restrict this focus to the school system only.

The Educational Governance approach (see Altrichter/Brüsemeister/Wissinger 2007) is one of the recently developed perspectives in this field, focused on the school sector in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It did not, however, have any impact on the study of adult education.

Interest in the topic of governance and the regulation of the adult education sector has increased during the last decade in Germany. A number of publications have been presented, of which the compendium "Steuerung und Organisation in der Weiterbildung" (Governance and Organization in Adult Education) (Hartz/Schrader 2008) is of particular note. What is more, the German Association for the Education of Adults (DGfE-Sektion Erwachsenenbildung) dedicated its annual conference in 2010 to the topic "Governance – Regulation – Organisation" (Hof/Ludwig/Schäffer 2011). It therefore seems timely to explore the implications of Education Governance on adult education research, also in an international-comparative perspective, since there are hardly any studies comparing the regulation of the adult education sector.

The contribution starts out by analyzing the historic development of the regulation of the adult education sector (in Germany) as well as the dominant accompanying research perspectives. This part will also cover the more recent studies and findings within the debate. In a second step, a model will be presented that can serve as a basis to structure the plurality of adult education providers and as such serve as a basis for identifying organizations in different countries which could be compared in view of their regulation. The third chapter will then introduce and discuss the basic principles of the educational governance perspective, particularly focusing on the concept of governance regimes.

Finally, a draft of an international comparative research program will be
developed which outlines how the analysis of governance regimes can be carried out and what results can be expected from such an analysis.

2 Concepts of regulation and research in regulation of adult education

Taking a look at the regulation of adult education in Germany, it can be stated that its origins lie in the phase of educational reform in the late 1960s. This phase was dominated by an optimistic view regarding the state’s capacity to structure and regulate the educational system. Referring to the “Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen des Deutschen Bildungsrates”, one of the key programmatic documents in Germany of that time, the unity of the educational system was the core goal of the reform. As such, two dimensions were of importance.

On the one hand, the unity of school education, vocational training, university education and adult education was a fundamental guiding principle. The document stated deficient forms of cooperation and called for a closer coordination of school, tertiary and adult education provision. By interleaving the segments of the educational system, transitions between the segments were thought to be made easier. Thus, educational careers could be corrected in the sense of social justice.

On the other hand, the expansion and integration of the adult education sector as an autonomous part of the educational system was a key objective with the school system serving as the main reference model. This goal was based on the analysis that the developed organizational structure of adult education resulted in various confusing, non-coordinated, fragmentary, and partly contradicting activities (see Keim, Olbrich/Siebert 1973, 111). Part of the problem was thought to be identified in the fact that he manifold tasks adult education had to fulfill were carried out by providers of different social and ideological backgrounds.

The state was seen as the central actor in the expansion and integration of the adult education sector. Expansion and coordination of the adult education system were seen as a public task, the state was to take responsibility. Central media of regulation were power and money, i.e. next to legal provision, huge amounts of money were provided for building organizations and for co-funding already existing profit and non-profit adult education providers.

In the late 1970s, some authors, obviously carried by this optimism, proclaimed the successful integration of the organizational structure of adult education into the educational system as well as the structural convergence of adult education to the public school system (see Lenhart/Hamburger 1977).

However, when taking a closer look it has to be pointed out that the expansion of the adult education system according to the reference model came to a halt. One central reason for this can be seen in the budget crisis of the state in the mid 1970s which resulted in massive cuts of public spending for adult education. Nevertheless, the adult education sector expanded during the 1980s and 1990s, albeit distancing itself more and more from the planning vision of the 1970s and the original reference model of the public school system. The expansion took place in the field of new social movements and vocational training.

This phase of the 1990s can be understood as ideal-typical for a linear idea of governance. The state is seen as the central actor, legal and financial provisions were the central media, and building up a public system of adult education was the goal (see Schrader 2011, 38). Furthermore, also the research of regulation was guided by this perspective. Studies focused on the goals and media, especially the efficiency of the legal provision (see Kuhlenkamp 1983; Kuhlenkamp 2003; Kuhlenkamp 2007).

With the political change at the beginning of the 1980s, the adult education policy changed in a dramatic way as well. The market principle came to the fore. The so called Propositions for Adult Education („Thesen zur Weiterbildung“) made this very clear by stating as follows: „Zielvorstellung der nachfolgenden Thesen ist ein offener Weiterbildungsmarkt mit einem vielfältigen Angebot, das sich im Wettbewerb bewähren muß und rasch auf neue Anforderungen und eine veränderte Nachfrage reagiert. Gestaltungsfreiheit und Raum für vielfältige Initiativen sind dafür der beste Garant. Staatliche Planung und Lenkung oder ein staatlich koordiniertes Weiterbildungssystem, bei dem sich die einzelnen Angebote als genormte Bestandteile in einem vorgegebenen Rahmen vorstellen müssen, lehnt die Bundesregierung ab“ (Knoll 1988, 22). This market principle was prolonged through the 1990s, the legal provisions were not changed.

Regarding research, the perspective of the state as the central actor of regulation remained dominant. This can be seen in the so-called state-studies (see Nuissl/Schlutz 2001) which were carried out during the 1990s and which focused on the question of how far the state accepted its responsibility for public adult education. Quite often, the reports identified a deficit of both the capacity as well as the willingness of the state to support adult education (see Schrader 2008, 33).

This strand of research was continued during the 2000s. As examples, the evaluation of the efficiency of the adult education legislation in the state of Hesse (see Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund (sfs) 2005) or in Northrhine-Westfalia (see Landesinstitut für Qualifizierung 2004) can be pointed out as well as the evaluation of the efficiency of adult education funding in Northrhine Westfalia in 2011 (see Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE) 2011).

However, there are also new impulses in research on the regulation of adult education which go beyond the classical perspective of the state as the key actor and which can be classified along the different levels of the social system of adult education. On the macro-level, studies can be highlighted which focus on the regulative potential of inter- and supranational organizations. (see Jakobi 2009; Ioannidou 2010; Schemmann 2007). Findings show that there is a

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convergence of political programs in education between inter- and supranational organizations and the member states. This process of harmonization culminates in the political agenda of lifelong learning. What is more, instruments of regulation (hard and soft law) were identified. Next to the classical instrument of money, the importance of the medium knowledge was unveiled. One central vehicle for this medium is the elaborated structure of educational monitoring.

On the level of organizations, there was also an immense increase in insight. Studies particularly focused on the consequences of the introduction of quality management systems and showed how these systems increased the potential of self-regulation within organizations (see Hartz 2011). A second strand of this debate discusses and analyses how organizations of adult education develop into learning organizations and thus manage to adjust to changing expectations of the environment in a much quicker way (see Feld 2007; Dollhausen/Feld/Seitter 2010).

Next to the above mentioned findings, there are also conceptual contributions such as Schrader’s model of adult education as a multi-level system (see Schrader 2008). Taking the differentiation between interaction, organization, and system from system theory as a starting point, Schrader presents a model with five levels. At the centre, the level of teaching and learning processes can be found, characterized by the categories provision, usage and impact. The next levels are the organization followed by the direct environment of the organization. Finally the levels of national and international educational policy are to be found (see chart 1).

Chart 1: Multilevel-system Adult Education (Schrader 2011, 103)

Summing up, it can be stated that the research perspective on the regulation of adult education was extended considerably during the last years. In the German discourse it was liberated from the focus on the state as the central actor of regulation by considering other actors and different instruments of regulation as well as their impacts on the different levels of the social system adult education.

3 Structure of formal adult education organizations

Looking at adult education providers, it has become clear that there is no systematic structure within the field. One of the central organizational principles is rather that adult education is structured in a plural way. In this sense, adult education represents an antagonistic model to the school system. As a consequence, there is a huge variety of providers which is difficult to capture in a model. Even though several models have been presented especially in the German context (see Arnold 2006, 95ff.; Schrader 2010) they all lack a theoretical foundation and do not allow for a clear differentiation. The unsolved problems of structuring the field also exacerbate an international-comparative provider research, as can be seen with the project of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (see Matinal Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) 2006).

Recently, Schrader provided a model which draws on modernization theory and Neo-Institutionalism and offers the differentiation of four so-called contexts of reproduction, namely “communities”, “state”, “companies”, and “market” (see Schrader 2010).

Initially, Schrader asks the following question: Under which circumstances do organizations reproduce themselves thus securing their existence after they have been founded? Regardless of the reasons organizations are founded, as soon as they exist they cost money (see Luhmann 2000, 405). But money is not the only requirement for a continuing existence. The neo-institutional strand of research emphasizes that organizations are maneuvered in a double structure of technical and symbolic contexts and therefore not only need resources but legitimation as well (Meyer/Rowan 1977). How can organizations ensure that they are permanently granted both?

A general answer could be to join in their environmental institutions. Organizations are a trait of modern societies. Social modernization theories (e.g. Parsons 1977) emphasize the individual being liberated out of traditional commitments and stress their right to inclusion in law and economy of a free and equal society, a society based on democratic principles agreed upon by citizens and market participants. The state (or the public) is a general representative and besides having to secure the framework necessary to realize private interests also is responsible for securing (historically variable) collective goods (e.g. education). A complete privatization would threaten to neglect this (see Meyer 2005). Fundamentally, the falling apart of generalities and particularities, of
public and private, also characterizes the form and legitimation of the exchange of goods and services which in modern societies are predominantly, yet not exclusively, realized by organizations. This exchange (between state and society or within society) underlies a civil society of “free” subjects. It is not founded primarily on power, (traditional and charismatic) domination or commitment, but rather on arrangements. Under equal conditions, these arrangements are forms of contracts, under hierarchal conditions they are forms of orders. The contract applies to a voluntary and mutual declaration of intentions of two basically equal contracting parties. It is a way to layout personal and economic relations, a declaration of intentions that results from offers and requests. The (written or oral documented) order implies instructional authority. Due to this, the assigned person can be obliged to deliver the service. The members of modern society are (as well as organizations and states) principally free to engage and form contracts.

The exchange of services yet also depends – at least when it occurs in assistance with organizations – on an appropriate legitimation. With the term legitimation the difference to legality is underlined, which means the organizations have to ensure the worthiness and acknowledgement of their purpose. With state and society falling apart, two fundamental socially institutionalized legitimation possibilities persist: Organizations can appoint their contribution for the exchange of goods and services to public interests obliged to the common good or towards private and particular interests. Thereby, the basic forms of the exchange of services and its legitimation, which are essential for the reproduction of organizations in all areas of modern society, are named. With the help of this distinction, different institutional environments of adult education can be accessed. If the suggested dimensions (purchase of resources and legitimation) are linked with each other and the characteristics (contract versus order, public versus private interests) are set as an endpoint of continuous, independent scales, one receives a coordinate system containing four fields. This coordinate system identifies the operating space within which the reproduction of organizations can take place. They can be interpreted as institutional fields or contexts of reproduction in which different material and symbolic institutions are available that allow organizations to affiliate in order to secure their existence. The specific connection of institutional patterns of resource purchase, contracts or orders, as well as the procurement of legitimation by indicating their either public or private interest characterize the reproduction contexts of the communities (of shared values and interest), of the state, the firms, and the market. These contexts are arranged below each other but without a hierarchal relation. In the context of the communities, organizations reproduce themselves via contracts and by indicating their public interest, in the context of the state this reproduction occurs when orders are issued to fulfill public interests. If the orders are positioned in the context of firms, orders to fulfill private interests have priority. In the context of the market, purchase of resources by contracts and by appointing their private interests are foregrounded.

Chart 2: Contexts of Reproduction in Adult Education (Schrader 2011, 116)

Organizations of public interests which received contracts are located in the field of communities of shared interests and values. Associated to this field are, i.e., environmental or women’s organizations, political and religious communities, organizations that offer their adult education opportunities to the (potentially) interested broad public. In the context of communities, the second group is comprised of adult education organizations connected to business associations that are based on voluntary or also forced memberships. These guilds and associations that follow the interests of their particular occupational group address a select circle of participants. Organizations within this context secure their legitimation through the reference to public interests. They can be differentiated further in how strong they are state-run or how strongly and distinctly their corporative self-administration is developed.

The second reproduction context is formed by state or the public field. In this context, adult education centers are to be found as well as publicly and legally acknowledged providers of adult education organized around large
One of the ultimate goals of governance research is the analysis of governance regimes, i.e., to identify relevant governance mechanisms within a constellation of actors (see Lange/Schimank 2004, 23). On a middle level of abstraction, the shaping principles and patterns of coordination of action become apparent. What is more, governance research plots how the coordination of action is built and transformed by specific relationships between actors within a specific social system. Such governance regimes have to be selective when identifying the particularly important principles of coordination and they are contextualized, i.e. they cannot be transferred to other parts of society (see Altrichter/Heinrich/Soukup-Altrichter 2011, 41).

As an analytical concept for Governance-Regimes, Schimank, referring to the work of Clark, developed the so-called Governance-Equalizer. For the particular case of universities five dimensions were developed:

- Regulation of universities by the state,
- Academic self-organization of universities,
- Hierarchical self-organization of universities and
- Competition in and between universities” (Schimank, 238).

The separate dimensions are seen as faders which can be regulated up or down and when taken together give the overall picture of coordination of action.

5 Empirical Analysis of governance regimes in Adult education in a comparative perspective

An empirical analysis of governance regimes in adult education in an international comparative perspective could thus be sketched as follows:

1. In a first step representative organizations of the reproduction context “state” need to be identified in the respective countries. This reproduction context is chosen for the study since the governance equalizer which is developed in the context of university education can be adapted to this context. In this stage of the research project three to five case studies per country need to be carried out.

2. Following an analysis of legislation texts, self-descriptions of organizations and statutes by method of document analysis has to be carried out to identify central actors and to start tracing modes of coordination of action between them.

3. After that it is essential to interview the actors that were identified by the document analysis in order to double-check and justify the selection of actors and also trace the modes of coordination.

4. After that the actors that came up as relevant in the interviews need to be analyzed and integrated into the design.

5. Following the identified modes of coordination of action need to be assigned...
to the five dimensions of the Governance Equalizer. The dimensions will be operationalized in that way.

6. The development of a questionnaire covering the dimensions and the analysis of the data will follow in order to get an overview of the respective Governance regimes in the reproduction field “state” of the participating countries.

7. At the end the Regimes will be compared and explanations for similarities differences will be developed.

**Literature**


Bridging Adult Education between East and West: Critical Reflection and Examination of Western Perspectives on Eastern Reality

Introduction

This paper, applying an international and comparative perspective, examines issues and challenges in learning between Eastern and Western adult education teaching and research endeavors. Questions and thoughts are scrutinized to help create a different mindset as alternatives for learning from the “Other” in the globalized world equally, accurately, and more effectively. First, it introduces a context followed by a brief review of relevant literature illuminating the obstacles and barriers for an equal exchange—that is an exchange through which the West might endeavor to listen to and learn from intelligent life beyond its own borders (Milligan, Stanfill, Widyanto, & Zhang 2011). Second, it shares authors’ personal narratives that illustrate lived issues and challenges that invite us to critically ponder and understand. Finally, it concludes with suggestions that may facilitate further deliberations—philosophically, theoretically, and practically. The paper calls for a different mindset for effectively bridging educational understandings between East and West.

Contexts

In the globalized world, the need for learning from one another about the strengths and limitations of different theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of education, and adult education in particular, has become greater than ever. Many countries have encountered similar changes and challenges brought by globalization. Education has been seen as an effective instrument and given the responsibility by many countries for training people to meet the needs and demands of globalization in various arenas. Education leaders and policy makers of numerous countries realize that they must quickly acclimatize to such changes in order to maintain their competitive capability, with increasing alignment with the interests of the global market (OECD, 1996).

Seemingly, globalization has created a “world policy or world culture” (Tröhler, 2009), or has transformed the world’s culture into an increasingly standardized phenomenon. Studies show that countries tend not to respond to globalization or meet the needs of the competitive economy in the process (Cheung & Chan, 2010).

Culture is all the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions...