

International Standards and the Development of Accreditation Policies in Chilean and South African Higher Education

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International Standards from a Political Economy Perspective

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Introduction

Accreditation policies in higher education have been implemented in the US and many European countries for many years. Since the end of the 1990s, these forms of regulatory policies for the education sector are also developed in several countries of the South. These reforms are often highly contested, as historically established rights to define academic quality or the ways in which quality should be assessed, as well as guidelines for receiving government funding are called into question. Redistributing privileges, reshaping power structures and questioning university autonomy as well as access to resources is therefore at the heart of these decisions.

Chile and South Africa have both developed accreditation policies and have begun with their implementation in recent years. This led to - or was shaped by - fundamental changes of governance structures in the education sector. Thus, accreditation was a highly controversial process of in the phases of policy formulation and implementation. The expertise of international actors like the World Bank and national agencies or individual experts in the field of quality assurance were crucial in the development of these policies in Chile and South Africa. The diffusion of norms, ideas and standards of accreditation policies for higher education was therefore a key input for the creation of reforms in Chile and South Africa. Both countries implemented these accreditation policies as regulatory policies following a fundamental change of the political regime in the early 1990s (Post-Dictatorship, Post-Apartheid). A transformation and re-regulation of the higher education sector was therefore perceived to be crucial for the transformation of these societies towards democracy. However, while reference to international actors and their standards and recommended procedures is made, neither Chile nor South Africa are cases where reforms or standards underlying specific policies were imposed by external actors or where reform programmes were merely “copied”. The diffusion of standards, norms and other elements of accreditation policies was rather a process of adaptation and the result of consultation and co-operation between national government representatives or agencies and international (governmental as well as private) actors. At the same time, the diffusion and reception of international standards was fundamentally shaped by existing governance structures and practices.

In this paper, the issue of policy formulation and implementation in accreditation policies of higher education in Chile and South Africa will be analysed with reference to two aspects:

- What is the role of international actors and agencies promoting specific standards in the development and adaptation of accreditation policies for higher education in Chile and South Africa?
- How are these external / international policy-elements adapted to the specific contexts and how do these regulatory reforms re-shape or are shaped by the governance structures of the education sectors in Chile and South Africa?

These two aspects will be investigated by exploring different theoretical themes. First, with special reference to the education sector and accreditation, standards and processes of standardization and regulation will be explored. It will be shortly illustrated, what are key issues about the emergence and adaptation of standards, and in which ways the issue of accreditation policies is a key area of regulation and standardization. Second, the theoretical field of policy transfer will be presented with particular reference to the field of educational policies. Analysing the role of international standards or agencies in the formulation of national regulatory policies is a key issue of policy transfer research. However, this paper will not only illustrate the “top-down process” of influences exercised by international actors or standard setting organizations, it will illustrate the specific conditions of reception and adaptation of these standards in the two countries. For this reason, as a third element of the theoretical part of this paper, the issue of governance will shortly be presented. This gives an insight into a governance-perspective of the restructuring of the educational sector and the particular relevance of these changes with regard to the role of the state and of (international) private actors.

Finally, this paper will present some of the findings about the role of international standard setting organizations or agencies and the changes in governance-modi in Chile and South Africa. In order to do this, some findings from the explorative research about policy formulation and implementation processes for accreditation policies and the national conditions for the reception and adaptation of international norms and standards will be illustrated.¹

¹ The findings about the Chilean and South African cases presented here will be based on literature reviews as well as interviews conducted on an explorative research trip to Chile in October 2006 and to South Africa in February/March 2007. As the PhD research is ongoing and in an initial phase, the findings will in some instances be preliminary. Possible areas of future research will be highlighted.

Accreditation Policies and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Accreditation policies in higher education have been established in several countries around the world – North and South - in recent years.² It is a key regulatory measure for establishing new standards of quality in higher education and for the re-regulation of this sector (Bernasconi 2007; van Damme 2002).

Depending on the design of accreditation policies, accreditation policies not only regulate and implement standards for academic teaching and research, but may include the following aspects:

- Definition of standards concerning the content of study programmes (programme accreditation, curricula for MA, BA) and categories of academic institutions (institutional accreditation, e.g. universities)
- Development of conditionalities for receiving financial support from government
- Restructuring of governance and accountability mechanisms (oversight of quality assurance, curricula development etc.)

Thus, important features of accreditation policies are not only “contents” of accreditation policy, but also the institutionalization of these regulatory policies, thus, the ways in which the implementation of these policies is pursued, e.g. via setting up new (governmental or private) agencies, implementing new accountability mechanisms etc..

The rationales for accreditation presented by governments or governmental agencies are generally to address diverging levels of quality of education and to make sure providers offer high standard education (quality), to limit information asymmetries (create transparency) and to review the links between public funding and “performance” (efficiency). This often takes place in the context of fundamental restructurings of the education sector e.g. following privatization, liberalization, internationalization and expansion of the sector (“massification”) (Bernasconi 2007; Bundy 2006; van Damme 2002).³ Bernasconi (2007) calls accreditation a form of “delayed regulation”, as it serves to regulate formerly unregulated or seen to be insufficiently regulated expansions of the sector (especially after privatization) or addresses a perceived lack of regulation of public institutions, which have - for historical reasons - in

² In the US, accreditation agencies for higher education emerged much earlier, some of them as early as in the 19th century, as voluntary associations which “were employed to bring some sort of order to higher education” (Finkin 1994: 89). However, accreditation processes changed or did not exist or new agencies were established in several countries in the last ten to twenty years. This paper deals with the issues that arise with the establishment of these new regulatory policies of accreditation.

³ Thus, the design of accreditation policies is often linked to the general restructuring of the education sector, which in many countries is steered towards the implementation of New Public Management strategies and measures introducing commodification. These links will be further explored in the empirical research in Chile and South Africa.

many countries been insulated from pressures of regulation and quality control. Thus, issues of university autonomy and academic freedom are touched upon, while at the same time the fundamental questions of financing mechanisms for universities are under scrutiny. These reforms will necessarily involve diverging views of the actors active in the education sector like governmental agencies, universities / providers of higher education (public and private), accreditation agencies (agencies that implement accreditation on behalf of governments), experts in the field of education, students etc. Implementing accreditation and the different ways in which it can be done and by whom are therefore highly contested issues.

The links between national and international quality assurance and accreditation frameworks, standards or institutional settings are important for different reasons. On the one hand, because the system of quality assurance and accreditation was first developed in the US, UK and Australia (countries which are also leading “exporters” of education) and elements of these systems were then transferred to other settings (van Damme 2002: 9). On the other hand, reforms of the higher education sector like privatization and liberalization led to a differentiation and internationalization of higher education systems, which is furthered with the increase of cross-border higher education.⁴ These changes in national higher education structures lead to the creation of different market structures and new stakeholders in higher education sectors. The relevance of the globalization and internationalization of higher education is also reflected in the development of guidelines for quality control in cross-border education by the UNESCO and OECD, thus the activity of international organizations in developing international standards for this field. It is also visible in the international activities of agencies or networks like the Australian Universities Quality Forum (AUQA) in South Africa, or the international links within the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

These developments illustrate that existing structures of quality assurance, accreditation and regulation in this sectors are not only challenged due to changes on the national level, but also by developments taking place through processes of globalization. According to van Damme (2002), this challenges existing patterns of quality assurance and poses a need for enhanced collaboration between national accreditation agencies. He also illustrates the need to develop systems of meta-governance of existing national quality assurance and accreditation systems in order to implement “benchmarks” of quality standards and of international accreditation

⁴ Internationalization of higher education can be categorized as cross-border supply (e.g. distance learning), consumption abroad (students studying abroad) or commercial presence (establishing a university campus in other countries) according to the GATS-categories.

frameworks (thus an institutionalisation of internationally recognized quality assurance and accreditation agencies). This view clearly reflects the proposition of a deepened internationalisation of quality assurance, and therefore poses questions about ownership, accountability and legitimacy of these kinds of internationalised mechanisms of quality assurance.

Standardization, Regulation and the Re-Organization of the “Fountain of Privilege”⁵

From the many approaches and insights of the literature on standards and standardization, only some will be highlighted here to illustrate the link between standards/standards setting and the policy formulation processes of accreditation policies.

There are different aspects relevant here. Brunsson/ Jacobsson (2000: 133) illustrate that the development of standards is preceded by the identification and definition of a problem, and the assumption of standardizers (e.g. the government, governmental agencies), that following standards will provide a solution to the problem. A decisive question is which actors are able to participate in the definition of the problem as well as in the development of standards that are assumed to provide a solution. If a proposed problem is very popular or fashionable, thus, if the identified problem is broadly accepted among the actors in a policy field and in the public, this will enhance legitimation and lower resistance to reforms and standards proposed (ibid). Thus, standards are based on a specific set of ideas and /or knowledge which are/ is perceived to be legitimate and adequate. In the field of educational policy and accreditation, this can be illustrated by looking at the discourses about the lack of quality in education. If such a discourse is broadly acknowledged, implementing standards via accreditation policies and other quality assurance mechanisms will meet less resistance. An other strategy to enhance legitimation of such reforms, which is of particular interest here, is making reference to (international) expert knowledge and internationally recognized procedures (ibid. 136). International actors like the World Bank often promote specific standards or norms and can therefore be called “entrepreneurs of standards” - following the illustration of Finnemore/Sikkink about the role of “norm entrepreneurs” in the emergence of international norms (Finnemore/Sikkink 1998: 896ff).

This view also reflects a central insight of ideational approaches: that relevance and impact of ideas are not independent from actors and institutions that transmit and adopt them. It is rather the actors or institutions who facilitate the implementation of specific ideas or forms of expert knowledge, which also form the basis of standards. Thus, „[i]deas have a real power in the political world, (but) they do not acquire political force independently of the constellation of institutions and interests already present there“ (Hall 1989: 390). Policy transfer approaches offer insights about the questions regarding links between national and international actors and the diffusion and institutionalisation of ideas and policies in specific policy fields.

⁵ Bates 2001

However, resistance and contestation of standards is almost unavoidable, as “[c]onforming to standards means following the advice of others, relinquishing a certain degree of one’s freedom of choice and self-control to others, and often becoming more similar to others as well [...]” (Brunsson/ Jacobsson 2000: 134). Thus, university and academic autonomy as well as institutional diversity and identity are seen to be at stake here, which constitutes important motives for contestation of academic quality standards and accreditation procedures.

Ahrne/Brunsson/Garstein (2000) investigate the process of “standardizing through organization”. One of the central arguments here is that standardizers aim to acquire more control with the institutionalisation or formalization of standards by creating formal organizations. This illustrates the underlying motive for standardization and therefore also presents an other reason for the contestation of standards. At the same time, for this reason, processes of institutionalization or (changes in) specific institutional settings can be seen as a starting point for the analysis of how actors in a policy field (try to) influence standardization and accreditation procedures or processes of institutionalization. The analysis of the two case studies of accreditation in Chile and South Africa will also focus on these issues.⁶

Bates has coined the expression of the “state as a fountain of privilege” (2001). Deploying this image to the context of regulatory policies like accreditation sheds light on the idea that the patterns of how privileges are distributed to different groups and actors in society are re-shaped with the introduction of new regulatory policies and standards. Thus, looking at the way in which international standards gain relevance in specific national contexts means looking at how the fountain of privilege is re-organized.

⁶ The analysis could also focus on different ways of defining and measuring quality in the international context (e.g. at the World Bank, in international quality assurance agencies or European or Australian governmental agencies for quality assurance) and compare this to definitions and measures for quality in the national contexts of Chile and South Africa. However, data for such an analysis are not available here and therefore the focus will be on analysing the processes of “standardizing through institutionalization/organization”.

Policy Transfer: Policy Entrepreneurs, Diffusion and the Politics of Borrowing and Lending in Higher Education

Looking at international standards and their role in the development of national accreditation systems is an issue of policy transfer. Policy transfer literature deals with different aspects generally relevant here, furthermore, educational policies have been an important research area of comparative policy transfer studies. Like many other topics, investigations into policy transfer gained increasing relevance with the internationalization and globalisation of political processes and the actors involved.

Investigating policy transfer is often described with terms like learning or lesson drawing. First, it is important to distinguish between different forms of learning or policy transfer, thus different ways in which policies, ideas or standards are transferred. Ikenberry (1990) and Dolowitz/Marsh (1996) suggest a distinction between inducement or coercive ways of policy transfer (e.g. via policy-based loans) and processes of social learning through persuasion (voluntary adoption of policies). This aspect is closely linked to the questions *who* transfers policy and *what* is being transferred.

Ikenberry suggests that a spread of specific policy ideas leads to the emergence of an “international policy culture” (Ikenberry 1990: 89). But how does such an international policy culture, or “consensual knowledge” (ibid: 103-105) evolve? As in the standardisation literature, many researchers in the field of privatization and educational reforms stress the role of external, international actors like scientific experts, international organizations and their staff for the diffusion of policies (Colclough 1991; Fine/Rose 2003; Mundy 1998; Teichmann 2001; 2004). Thus, as mentioned in the field of standardization as well, policy entrepreneurs and individual experts as well as supra-national organizations are actors who engage in policy transfer (Dolowitz/Marsh 1996: 345-346). Recent studies especially in the field of privatization have also identified a specific type of domestic actors who facilitates the adoption of policies: technocrats. These actors are characterised as individuals who received a degree in economics outside their home countries and then gained influence in state apparatuses and bureaucratic levels of government after their return (Lindau 1996: 295). Ikenberry also argues along these lines, when he identifies the diffusion of theoretical or policy knowledge into professional communities, thus to specific domestic actors, as a crucial process for policy learning (ibid. 1990: 103-105). He describes social learning as a process of diffusion of policy-relevant knowledge and the creation of “consensual knowledge”, which lowers resistance to the reforms. These arguments also stress the need for legitimization of policy transfer and political reforms stemming from such transfers. Dolowitz/Marsh (1996)

further distinguish between different forms of transfer. They present forms of learning such as copying (adopting policies without changes), emulation (changes are being made to adapt policies to specific contexts) and hybridization (combining different elements of policies implemented elsewhere). These aspects of legitimation and forms of policy transfer also refer to the motives for policy transfer. Here, Dolowitz/Marsh (1996: 346-351) present possible reasons like dissatisfaction with the status quo, perceived policy failure, a need for legitimation of reforms, a dominant international consensus about policy problems and adequate solutions, coercion or uncertainty about possible solutions to solve a problem. They further highlight the need to consider the fact that “political actors’ definitions of policy problems are subjective and political” (ibid. 347) when analysing the motives for policy transfer.

Policy transfer is a key area of investigation in the field of education policy. Thus, several research perspectives provide a detailed analysis of policy transfer in education with reference to the issues mentioned above: forms and patterns of policy transfer, identification of actors involved in educational policy transfer, strategies for legitimation and of contestation of these reforms (Dale 2000; Steiner-Khamsi 2004; Meyer/Boli et al. 1997). Steiner-Khamsi suggests to focus on the “politics of policy transfer”, thus the agency of lending and borrowing and the question why a specific idea or discourse has been transferred, rather than merely on the content of reforms (ibid. 2000: 158). She offers further insights with respect to the issues of legitimation and reasons for policy transfer in the field of education, when she highlights the fact that policy transfer in education “is used to legitimate contested reforms” (2000: 156, 170) and that policy transfer might lead to a dynamic of “displacing reforms” when specific national contexts are not taken into account.

This also refers to an other central aspect of the debate about policy transfer in the field of education, the question of convergence, isomorphic change or variation of worldwide educational systems and contexts. The perspective of the world society or world culture approach (e.g. Meyer/Ramirez) proposes a convergence and similarity of educational systems, while other authors (e.g. Schriewer) focus on variations in educational systems and the ways in which specific national contexts shape educational reforms and international influences.⁷ These approaches will not be elaborated here in detail. However, the controversy about this offers an opportunity to present Bennetts (1991) insights about what convergence can mean. He offers different categories for an investigation of policy convergence (convergence of

⁷ For a further readings on these approaches and different perspectives see Meyer/Boli et al. 1997; Schriewer 2000; Hartmann 2006 and Parreira do Amaral 2006.

policy goals, policy content, policy instruments, policy outcomes and policy style) and illustrates different strategies (convergence through emulation, convergence through elite networking and policy communities, convergence through harmonization and convergence through penetration). This can be linked to the above mentioned forms of policy transfer (voluntary, coercive etc.) and the actors relevant for these processes of transfer. While in this paper it will not be investigated in detail, whether the different forms of convergence or policy transfer have taken place or been implemented in the cases of Chile and South Africa through the role of international actors and standards set by them, this might be a promising area for future research on this topic.

Governance Perspectives: the Role of Government and Private Actors

The governance concept is one of the key areas in the field of public policy analysis. Newman (2005) and Mayntz (2004) distinguish between the different understandings of this concept. This facilitates a look at the shortcomings of some of the approaches and the reasons for drawing on specific theoretical approaches of governance for the analysis of regulatory policies. The concept of governance is often used to illustrate new forms of coordination among different actors. Some authors use the term governance to describe non-hierarchical forms of political decision-making (networks, partnerships). The term governance also refers to settings where not only governmental but also private actors and civil society representatives participate in political decision-making processes. Some authors describe a shift “from government to governance” and propose a retreat and weakening of the state in this process. With the concept of global governance, these new forms of transnational governance, where state, civil society and private actors cooperate, are presented as a necessary and adequate political form of solving ‘global’ problems.⁸

However, as Newman (2005), Mayntz (2004) and others illustrate, many of the (global) governance perspectives have a ‘problem solving’-bias and miss out on crucial issues relevant for the analysis of political phenomena: power asymmetries, politics and the role of the state (“selectivity of governance approaches”, Mayntz 2004: 73-74; Newman 2005; see also Brand 2005). In contrast, these aspects of governance are explicitly taken into account in historical-materialist and post-structuralist or discourse-analytical perspectives on governance. These approaches explicitly refer to the restructuring of the capitalist economy, the transformation of statehood and to forms of governance (historical-materialist) and focus on changing patterns of the creation of social meanings (post-structuralist or discourse-analytical). This opens the governance-framework for an analysis of issues like power, accountability, legitimacy and the changing roles of private and public actors.

With reference to these aspects, Jessop`s concept of metagovernance provides an important insights into the changing but decisive role of governments in governance. According to the concept of metagovernance, “political authorities [...] provide the ground rules for governance and the regulatory order in and through which governance partners can pursue their aims; ensure comparability or coherence of different governance mechanisms and regimes, act as the primary organizer of the dialogue among policy communities; deploy a relative monopoly of organizational intelligence [...]” (Jessop 2004: 65). As Kelly illustrates,

⁸ See Brand (2005) for a critique of this approach and its underlying assumption of shared, global interests or globally and mutually defined problems.

metagovernance implies a “reconfiguration and modernization of state practices” (2006: 605) rather than the erosion of the state or its role. This image of metagovernance also fits well with Bates’ notion of the state as a fountain of privilege: the patterns and ways in which this fountain allocates privileges is being re-shaped in the course of regulatory reforms and new governance mechanisms.

In an internationalized and globalized context and with the question of policy transfer in mind, the concept of multi-level governance (MLG) can be a useful framework for an analysis of the diffusion of standards. Although the analytical value of the MLG concept is highly debated among scholars (Bach/Flinders 2004b), the perspective is valuable as the interactions between governments and non-governmental actors at different territorial levels are considered in this approach. Following Bach/Flinders, an analysis from a MLG-perspective seeks to explain “the dispersion of central government authority both vertically to actors located at other territorial levels, and horizontally, to non-state actors” (2004a: 4). This again highlights that shifts in governance structures will create changing conditions for the participation of societal actors in policy processes, and thus also creates new opportunities for private and international actors. However, as Flinders (2004) illustrates, the creation of arm-length public institutions also constitutes fundamental changes in governance-structures.

Thus, different aspects are relevant when looking at governance: which actors are involved (state, private, civil society) and what is their role in the governance of a specific policy field, how are decisions taken (hierarchy, cooperation/ partnerships) and on which levels are these new modes of governance implemented.

Accreditation Policies in Chilean and South African Higher Education

Selection of Cases and Research Design

This paper looks at the two case studies as so-called “critical cases”, which constitute “an ideal assessment of some observed or theorized principle” (Snow/Trom 2002: 157): the re-regulation of higher education via accreditation policies and the role of international agencies and standards in this process. This reflects a research strategy that aims to analyse the phenomenon of accreditation in its specific context. However, by applying a comparative perspective and following Locke / Thelen in their approach to comparative studies as “comparing apples and oranges”, the aim is to “capture analytically equivalent issues” (1998:9) while recognizing the different contexts of the two cases.⁹

The Chilean and South African case share a number of similarities regarding the context of restructuring of higher education and the development of accreditation policies in higher education. In both countries a fundamental regime change took place in the early 1990s, with Chile’s return to democracy in 1990 and the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Chile and South Africa initialised reforms for the re-regulation of their higher education systems like accreditation since the end of the 1990s, and both countries conceptualised these reforms with reference to international standards in this policy field (see table 1 at the end of this chapter for a comparative summary). The reforms aim to re-shape governance structures and regulations regarding academic quality, university autonomy, accountability as well as control and financing mechanisms.

⁹ The research is in an initial phase. Some explorative fieldwork (interviews and search for literature) has been conducted in 2006 (October 2006) in Chile and in 2007 (March/April 2007) in South Africa.

Diffusion of International Standards, Policy Transfer and Governance Issues

Chile

In Chile, a new Quality Assurance Act was established in October 2006, after pilot programmes had been run for several years. These pilot programmes were in many aspects based on expertise from the World Bank: At the end of the 1990s, Chile entered a co-operation with the Bank in order to set up accreditation programmes for the education sector. The World Bank presents the highly commodified and privatised education system in Chile as a successful case of reforms in higher education (Delannoy 2000; Holm-Nielson et al. 2004). Even though the Bank was not involved in the reforms of the Chilean higher education system in the 1980s, it was therefore seen to be well informed and well suited to be involved in the reforms of the system.

Before 1973, higher education in Chile was mainly publicly funded and governed. In the 1970s, two public and six private (run by the Catholic Church) universities existed. After the military gained government control following the violent coup in 1973, the education sector was seen as a central area of neoliberal reforms. These reforms led to a liberalisation and privatization (opening of the market for new universities) as well as commodification (introduction of tuition fees, competitive financing models, reduction of public funding) of higher education in the 1980s. Today, 60 universities offer higher education programmes in Chile (Brunner 1997; Mönckeberg 2006). Regulation of the sector was left to the market in many respects, as newly established private providers were granted autonomy after a few years of supervision by a licensing board. So-called traditional private and public universities in Chile were often not subject to such licensing procedures or had already gained autonomy. For this reason, Bernasconi calls accreditation processes in Chile a form of “delayed regulation” (ibid.2007).

However, by the mid 1990s a discourse about a need for re-regulation was brought up. It came up as a result of different incidents, which were then interpreted – given meaning and framed - by particular actors like the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), domestic experts in the field of education, students etc.. The key issue in the discourse for a need to establish accreditation of institutions and programme in the Chilean higher education sector was quality control or quality assurance. A central argument brought forward by governmental agencies

like the Mineduc were information asymmetries in the education sector as a whole¹⁰, thus intransparent market structures. Furthermore, a review of allocation mechanism for public funding was stated as a central goal of the reforms. Furthermore, it was stressed that not only private but also public universities should be accredited (Bernasconi 2007; Interview IV, V). Thus, the discourse of the Mineduc officially focused on defining the problem in a way that aimed at acceptance by most actors in a sector and by the public. In order to lower resistance to the reforms, there was little explicit reference made to the political effects of the commodification and liberalisation - the reforms of the military regime - or to a need for state regulation in the sector.

The policy transfer between World Bank and Chilean Ministry of Education can be labelled as a voluntary transfer or learning process, as the Chilean government entered the co-operation voluntarily and is also not dependent on the World Bank's financial support. It can be seen as a case of emulation or maybe also hybridization, as many of the elements of the World Bank's expertise were adapted, but also other international experiences were considered and taken on board. Other international policy communities were consulted in order to develop pilot programmes of accreditation (Interview IV). On the one hand, the Chilean government choose this partnership because of the expertise provided by the World Bank. Therefore, funding is mostly provided by Chile itself, which is also relevant in order to maintain autonomy with programme design and implementation. However, the Bank as an external and internationally recognized actor was crucial in order to legitimate the reforms in Chile and to lower resistance from some universities in the higher education sector. Thus, the cooperation with the World Bank as a policy entrepreneur¹¹ or entrepreneur of specific political standards for accreditation processes was set up in order to gain support for the reform initiative of the Mineduc. Furthermore, the Bank and the Mineduc shared an analysis of the problems in the Chilean education system: The Bank generally considered the privatised and liberalised Chilean education system as a success, but shared the critique about a lack of quality control (Interview IV).

Bernasconi presents the current accreditation system as a “compromise between highly divergent philosophies of regulation” (ibid. 2007): Accreditation is voluntary in Chile (except for undergraduate programmes in medicine and education) and is carried out by a public national accreditation commission for institutions, but by private accreditation agencies for

¹⁰ Before an accreditation programme was established in the higher education sector, re-regulation of the primary and secondary education sectors were initialised.

¹¹ There is extensive research on the role of the World Bank in furthering specific policies (e.g. privatization) in the education sectors of countries in the South (e.g. Mundy 1998; Heyneman 2002; Torres/Schugurensky 2002). This aspects will be further analysed with reference to accreditation policies in the course of the PhD research.

study programmes. Following Bernasconi, this compromise is not mainly due to a displacement of reforms because of the introduction of elements of international /external policies. He rather links this compromise to struggles among domestic forces: left-of-center bureaucrats who promoted accreditation via a national, public agency, and the conservative opposition who promoted market-based governance structures and private accreditation agencies. The struggles about the accreditation reforms identified here are therefore rather about the governance structures implemented in the education sector, than about the ways of adopting and shaping international policy standards to the domestic sector. Metagovernance in Chile therefore allows for a greater role of private actors as providers and accreditation agencies, which reflects a market-oriented legacy in the governance of the education sector.

South Africa

The Apartheid government in South Africa established a highly segregated public education system, which institutionalized the discrimination of black, coloured and Indian students over decades. This led to a fundamental fragmentation of the higher education system regarding public funding as well as teaching and research quality. The higher education sector was mainly public, as most universities were public and a state controlled governance mechanism was in place.¹² The governance structures, funding mechanisms and geographical fragmentation of higher education institutions (HEI) established under Apartheid present a legacy that fundamentally shapes current policy formulation processes in the sector. However, in contrast to the Chilean case, where the restructuring of the education system under the military dictatorship was not explicitly addressed, the formerly dominant ideology of Apartheid has been challenged and de-legitimised and the “public path” in education (public governance, public ownership of universities, public funding) continues to exist, although it is transformed.¹³

With the first democratic elections in 1994, the need for “redressing” and change of these institutions was a key issue in South Africa. The ANC government therefore enjoyed broad support and legitimacy, often called “liberation legitimacy” (Friedman/ Hlophe 2002: 69), which enabled the design of fundamental reforms by the end of the 1990s. However, between 1994 and the end of the 1990s, several private institutions entered the sector and the number

¹² There is a large number of private HEI in the South African tertiary education sector, but few offer university level courses and are therefore not included in this analysis.

¹³ Some authors identify a commodification of higher education in the course of these reforms, see van der Walt 2003.

of private providers in this sector therefore increased significantly, while there was no adequate regulatory system in place (CHE 2004: 48; 220; Interviews 1). This period is often called a time of “policy gap” or “policy failure” by governmental representatives and experts in the field of South African education policy (Interviews 1, 3).

With the restructuring of the public higher education system, the South African government initialised an accreditation process which applied to public as well as private HEI. The process of designing the accreditation system in South Africa was partly informed by expertise from the Commonwealth countries, which is well explained by the historical links between these countries. South Africa entered into a voluntary learning and policy transfer process by consulting international private as well as governmental agencies in the UK, Australia and India and by developing some ideas of *best practices* implemented elsewhere (Interview 8). The transfer of knowledge and about policy standards has been organized on the national level as well as organizational level. Australian professionals for quality assurance have been involved in capacity building in South African higher education institutions (Hawke/Scott 2003), and representatives of South African public agencies in the education sector are involved in international networks like INQAAHE. This can be identified as a form of convergence via policy communities and elite networking. Therefore, South Africa’s approach to policy transfer and the adoption of international standards can be categorized as hybridization.¹⁴

Some university representatives (public and private) questioned the accreditation process and the standards presented her, especially as some elements of the programmes were derived from external expertise. Thus, there was a discussion about who defines standards and where reform proposals come from. However, by now most public universities accept the need for accreditation and re-regulation, although many criticize the additional administrative burden and some question the success of the reforms (Interview 1, 3, 8). The refusal to give accreditation to several private providers led to the perception that the South African government had a “more punitive attitude” towards accreditation and regulation of the higher education sector and towards private HEI (van Damme 2002: 19). Several (international) private providers criticized the accreditation process and announced their withdrawal from the South African market in response to this (CHE 2004: 220).

The mode of governance in the South African education sector reflects a specific form of metagovernance which generally goes along with a different role for private and public

¹⁴ In further research it will be identified what kind of best practices this are, and if there are similarities between these approaches and the ones suggested by the World Bank in Chile.

actors in this field. In contrast to Chile, accreditation (institutional and programme accreditation) is mandatory for both public and private providers in South Africa. Also, “the state” implements accreditation: planning and funding is supervised by the Ministry of Education (MoE), while the Council of Higher Education (CHE), an independent board that reports to the parliament, takes care of accreditation regarding quality. Governmental agencies (MoE, CHE) often present two arguments for accreditation: the legacies of Apartheid that require a restructuring of governance and control mechanisms, and the need for regulation of private providers (CHE 2004: 48, 145-147; Interviews 5 and 8). The problem is therefore mainly presented and framed as an issue of “redressing”, but also rests on a different view about the role of the state in higher education and its governance. The surge and lack of regulation of private higher education providers at the end of the 1990s further legitimized the reforms. Thus, the discourse of government agencies clearly presents accreditation as a political issue, derives legitimation from this strategy via reference to political goals of redressing and makes it very difficult to challenge this view for its opponents.

Table 1:

Accreditation Policies in Higher Education:

Forms of Policy Transfer and (Re-) Organization of Governance Structures

	Chile	South Africa
Form of policy transfer / learning	Voluntary Social learning Emulation / hybridization	Voluntary Social learning hybridization
Domestic actors relevant	Bureaucracy Policy communities Individual experts	Bureaucracy Policy communities Individual experts
International actors involved: Whose standards were relevant?	World Bank International networks and experts working in the field of quality assurance	Agencies, networks, in the field of education, located in other Commonwealth countries International networks and experts working in the field of quality assurance
Design of accreditation system	Institutional accreditation: public national commission Programme accreditation: open to private agencies	Public national agency (independent board that reports to the parliament) for institutional and programme accreditation
Governance of higher education system	market led system	state controlled
Discourses for legitimating the reforms	“Lack of Quality”- Discourse	“Lack of Quality”- Discourse Discourse of “Re-Dressing” Apartheid Legacies Discourse about lack of regulation of private providers in higher education

Conclusion

This paper focused at two aspects: First, the role of international actors and agencies promoting specific standards in the development and adaptation of accreditation policies for higher education in Chile and South Africa. Second, it analysed the processes of adaptation and reception of external / international policy-elements and how these were shaped by national governance structures in the education sectors.

As illustrated, international standards were relevant for the design of accreditation policies in both countries. Domestic actors co-operated with international organizations and networks or foreign national agencies voluntarily in order to obtain ideas about what are standards for accreditation policies internationally or in other national settings. Particular elements of reforms (separate accreditation of programmes and institutions, setting up accreditation agencies etc.) were adopted in both cases. Furthermore, as van Damme (2002) illustrates, there is an international “consensus” among several actors related to the education sector, about a need for quality assurance in higher education. This is an other factor which facilitates the influence of organizations and agencies internationally active in standards setting in the field of education. Thus, the influence of internal standards on the commencement and design of accreditation reforms is undeniable.

However, the analysis of changing patterns of governance and historical legacies of governance approaches in Chile and South Africa illustrate the important role of domestic struggles about politics. In Chile and South Africa, very different forms of meta-governance are in place in the education sectors, and these shape the conditions of “reception” of international standards and the influence of agencies or organisations promoting these standards. Thus, while Chile and South Africa have similar policy goals and in parts similar policy instruments for establishing accreditation, they diverge in policy style due to different legacies and modi of (meta)governance.

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Lists of Interviews

Interviews in Chile, October 2006

Interview I:

Interview at Department of Faculty of Educational Sciences, Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile, 10th October 2006

Interview II:

Interview at Department of Department of Social Sciences, Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile, 12th October 2006

Interview III:

Interview with expert of Chilean education policy, Universidad Católica, Santiago, Chile, 19th Octubre 2006

Interview IV:

Interview with staff member of Mineduc (Chilean Ministry of Education, Dept. for Higher Education), Santiago, Chile, 19th Octubre 2006

Interview V:

Interview with member of Universidad Andrés Bello, Political Science Dept., Santiago, Chile. 23rd Octubre 2006

Interview VI:

Interview with expert on educational policies in Chile, member of Universidad Adolfo Ibanez, Santiago, Chile. 26th Octubre 2006

Interview VII:

Interview with research associate for education at a think tank in Santiago, Chile. 27th Octubre 2006.

Interviews in South Africa, March/April 2007

Interview 1:

Interview with representative of University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 23.3.07

Interview 2:

Interview with representative of DoE, Pretoria, 23.3.07

Interview 3:

Interview with representative of DoE, Pretoria, 23.3.07

Interview 4:

Interview with representative of National Research Foundation, Pretoria, 27.03.07

Interview 5:

Interview with representative of DoE, Pretoria, 27.03.07

Interview 6:

Interview with representative of Johannesburg University, Johannesburg, 2.04.07

Interview 7:

Interview with ex-staff member of University of Witwatersrand, researcher in the field of education, now DoE, , Pretoria, 3.04.07

Interview 8:

Interview with expert in accreditation, Pretoria, 3.04.07