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With Bologna in mind and the sword in the hand : the German Bachelor/Master Reform reconsidered

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s, many European countries have adapted their traditional one-cycle curriculum structure in higher education to the two-cycle structure employed in the Anglo-American world. In the large social science literature dealing with this reform phenomenon, the Bologna Process ? starting with the 1999 Declaration of Bologna ? is identified as the major force of change. Illustrated by the German case, this paper argues that the soft-governance mechanism ?Bologna? certainly constitutes an important driver and explanatory factor but cannot fully explain curriculum reform success. It is demonstrated that German state governments used classic tools of government ? hard governance via rules and bans ? to force higher education institutions to substitute traditional programmes with new Bachelor/Master programmes. This case study might stimulate further research investigating whether this ?governance by coercion?, which has been neglected in previous research, also played an important role in other Bologna countries in which similar curricular reforms occurred. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)