Chapter 1
Integration and Inequality in Educational Institutions: An Institutional Perspective

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1.1 Introduction

In modern societies educational institutions play a crucial role in the formation of state and society (Weymann 2010). Education has become an issue of increasing importance not only in public debates, but also in the social sciences, especially in fields related to social inequality. During the last 30 years we witnessed tendencies of re-commodification in Western welfare states as well as an increasing importance of education and human capital formation. In some European countries, but also in Japan, the PISA study fuelled a debate on the efficiency of educational institutions and on what pupils should learn at the secondary level. PISA was not the first—but in some countries the most publicly visible—international comparison of school and pupil performance. Built on the basis of the emergence of knowledge societies in the 1960s and their dynamic development since the 1990s, there exists now a common understanding of the value and importance of education. The PISA study provided a comprehensive data base which contributed to the understanding of the institutional environment of schools and learning. Moreover, PISA triggered fundamental policy reforms in countries such as Switzerland and Germany (Martens et al. 2010) because it showed that these countries did not perform as well as expected (Switzerland) or performed badly (Germany), and that they are also characterised by striking educational inequalities.

As Meyer (2001) argues, there already was a strong commitment to educational equality in democratic countries; now it is becoming more and more accepted almost all over the world. However, research on educational performance and status achievement showed that educational institutions do not generally help to dissolve

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social inequalities, especially when these inequalities are based on ascribed characteristics such as gender and ethnic background (Levels and Dronkers 2008; Woessmann et al. 2009; Teltemann and Windzio 2011). It is not yet clearly understood which processes at the institutional level correspond with different outcomes in educational achievement. Among others, relevant processes in educational institutions are patterns of teacher–pupil interaction, but also peer-relations in schools and classrooms (Hanushek et al. 2003), with special focus on inter-ethnic friendships and integration. Needless to say that the differences in performance levels between ethnic groups and social classes (Dronkers and Levels 2007) are not the only problem in today's educational institutions. But as diversity in social background and ethnic origin increases, we may expect diversity to have an impact on social interactions among pupils. In diverse settings, peer relations can provide social support and social integration by friendship formation, but they can also cause social discrimination, conflict and dispute, which can in turn affect motivation, school attachment and increase the risk of behavioural disorders. All of these factors have in common that they are closely related to the wider society outside of educational institutions. Schools are focus points in which the social problems of the wider society are concentrated. Thereby, schools themselves create or at least reinforce these social problems, such as discrimination and delinquency. On the other hand, they socialize young people and are supposed to be places where social problems can be efficiently handled.

Institutions exist in order to structure human behaviour in a desired way, and this holds for educational institutions in particular. What kind of behaviour is desired or not depends on dominant values and norms and, thus, on the wider society that forms the environment in which educational institutions are established and educational organisations operate.

Following different theoretical approaches, it will be argued in this chapter that educational institutions are a special case in society because it is common to consider them as an ideal place for the tackling of social problems. Moreover, even if education can be regarded as a closed system which operates only on the basis of its own code (see below), it can always be adapted to dominant values and ideologies. As a result, educational institutions will always be subject to permanent reform as long as new social problems are defined in periods of dynamic social change. However, if educational institutions are regarded as establishments where social problems can be solved and since they permanently adapt to dominant values and ideologies, their organisations tend to work inefficiently. At least, this is what we can expect according to current sociological theories that will be highlighted in this chapter.

1.2 The Multiplicity of Social Problems in Modern Educational Institutions

A basic characteristic of modern society is functional differentiation, which means that specific functions meet basic requirements for the continuance of society as a whole, and these functions are assigned to specialised subsystems. In Luhmann's

(2009) systems theory this specialisation corresponds with subsystem-specific binary codes which determine what is relevant for the respective subsystem and what is not. Since all elements of *social* systems are communicative units, the subsystem of e.g. science consists only of communication by applying the code "true/untrue", whereas the subsystem of economy applies the code "paying/not paying". Although it is not trivial to identify the code of the system of education, its basic scheme of communication refers to *selection of individuals into careers* (Luhmann 2005a): the subsystem operates by drawing distinctions between pupils and students, which is done by giving good and bad grades, by awarding or refusing certificates, by accepting them into a special *programme* or not and so forth. In contrast to the classical, normative view of education, the code does not have any preference about what people should learn, what they should know or how they should behave in a moral sense. A subsystem's code cannot be changed since the subsystem gains its essentiality from it. For instance, in a society where the selection into careers is governed by the code "paying/not paying", no specialised subsystem of education would be identifiable. As we certainly know from the sociology of education, a family's socio-economic background is not without influence on degrees and on the probability of selection into certain academic programmes. In this sense, the subsystems of education and economy are *structurally coupled* with each other. Nevertheless, the system of education attaches the values of its code ("selected/not selected", "good" or "bad" grade) according to its own logic. Some people can buy good private teachers, but they cannot buy good grades—otherwise, this would indicate a severe problem of de-differentiation.

Whereas the code remains fixed in each subsystem, *programmes* can be changed. During a communicative act, the system decides on the attachment of a code's value according to its *programme*. In order to make the system adaptable to changing requirements, or just to open it to changing ideologies, programmes often respond to changes in the concept of what is regarded as "good" education. Should pupils learn abstract and generalised skills that enable them to solve problems? Or should they acquire a maximum amount of factual knowledge? Should it be Humboldt or employability on labour markets, or both? Should pupils become civilised in the sense of Norbert Elias (1991)? Should they be trained in a certain ideology and should their loyalty be graded?

One of the many insights we can get from Luhmann's theory is that modern societies as a whole depend on an appropriate output that is produced by each subsystem. In general, the *social* aspect of human existence is communication, but modern societies need a very *specific form of communication*—which would be very unlikely to occur if there were no subsystem of education. There would not be any modern sciences, no economy or law without education—and vice versa. Modern societies are based on ("autopoietic" and self-referential) subsystems which co-evolved over time and became successively distinct from each other. These subsystems are shut off from their environments, but are highly interdependent at the same time.

We can learn from Luhmann that subsystems in complex modern societies show a high degree of separation from each other. At the level of the codes, the discriminatory

power of communication is very high—the code of scientific communication is different from that of political communication, and scientific truth cannot be established simply by legal definition. Below, however, it will be argued that the basic problem of the subsystem of education exists at the level of the *programme*: here, we find an overload with a multiplicity of tasks which the system is expected to accomplish simultaneously. This task overload is not a new phenomenon. It basically results from the fact that educational organisations, especially schools, are places where intervention according to a specific *programme* occurs in the early stages of the life-course, at a time when pupils and students are still in their formative years.[1] Even during the period of the "golden age nation state" (Hurrelmann et al. 2008), which was often also a golden age *welfare* state, educational institutions were not able to carry the burden of the multiplicity of tasks: in Germany, for instance, Georg Picht already declared the "educational disaster" in 1964 (Picht 1964; Der Spiegel 1964). After World War II, most western societies witnessed an enormous increase in wealth, and social barriers became more penetrable. Despite a considerable degree of reproduction in educational and economic inequalities, many children of working class origin took the opportunities of access to higher education, and the overall trend of an "escalator effect" (Beck 1986) suggested a smooth operation of the system as a whole.

Yet during the last 30 years the situation has changed. What is new in modern globalised societies is that all subsystems have to cope with the follow-on consequences of the end of the golden age *welfare* state. In addition to the "old" poverty risks, which are still high in the traditional German working class (Groh-Samberg 2004), there are the "new" social risks of post-industrial societies. First and foremost, exposure to these new risks depends on membership in social groups that are more or less vulnerable to these trends. Among others, these trends are the de-industrialisation, the increasing importance of education for success in labour markets and the marketisation of educational institutions. Though the question remains whether social inequality has actually increased in most western countries or not (Mau and Verwiebe 2010, p. 205), inequality in educational institutions has increasingly become an issue of scientific and public debate. Recall that democratic societies have been committed to educational equality for a long time (Meyer 2001): for countries such as Germany, Switzerland and Belgium, where the impact of socio-economic background and children's immigrant status on PISA 2000 tests-scores turned out to be comparatively high (Teltemann 2010; Stanat et al. 2003), there is now a collective agreement that educational institutions should solve the issue of inequality and the integration of immigrants.

In addition, there is a debate on the supposed rise in juvenile delinquency during the last 20 years (Junger-Tas et al. 2010). In Germany, official statistics indeed indicate an increase in violent behaviour, and the mass media reported extensively on several dramatic events. However, in contrast to the public view,

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[1] Here it becomes obvious how important ideologies are in the educational system because its *programme* is, by definition, based on normative concepts of what people should learn in the current society.

the so-called dark figure of self-report studies and some other more reliable data sources indicate rather a decline and definitely no dramatic increase (Baier and Windzio 2008).

Regardless of the objective state of these issues, they are declared problems in public communication. Once this communication follows a certain direction it defines whether measures have to be taken or not. Educational institutions are expected to deal with this multiplicity of social problems. They have to follow a very complex and multifaceted normative concept of how to socialise young individuals so that they fit into society. Since social intervention is directed towards the future, educational institutions are assumed to be places where social problems should be solved or at least addressed. In order to accomplish the task of socialisation, educational institutions now fulfil several tasks simultaneously: they train pupils' cognitive abilities, they function as places of social integration in general, they integrate and structurally assimilate immigrants, they maintain the option of social mobility, they select persons into careers and legitimise social inequality, they teach democracy and proper behaviour and they work to prevent delinquency.

1.3 New Social Problems, New Tasks: Reforming Reforms

As argued in the preceding section, educational institutions are expected to fulfil a multitude of tasks. Yet the definition of tasks and functions is by no means static but depends on the public and scientific debate in which new social problems are permanently identified. Since people's capacity for personal change is limited, social change is regarded as being brought about by new cohorts (Ryder 1965). It seems obvious that these new problems could be efficiently solved in educational institutions. Unlike most other institutions, schools provide easy access to young people in the formative years of their life-course. Consequently, in order to facilitate social intervention, educational institutions must be appropriately reformed.

For instance, in many European countries there is currently a debate on the integration of immigrants and the question of whether teaching the immigrants' native language at school has a facilitating or impeding effect on integration (Wieviorka 1998). Multiculturalists argue that the language of the country of origin is a resource and that teaching this language at school would strengthen immigrants' self-esteem, which in turn is a precondition for integration. Even though this issue is highly controversial (Esser 2009), the integration of immigrants is regarded as an important task of educational institutions and teaching pupils mother tongue is also suggested to policy makers with reference to normative reasons (Karakasoglu 2011). This is a good example of how the subsystem of education can apply nothing but its specific binary code, but a *programme* can always be adapted if this is regarded as necessary. The debate on the grading of courses that teach the language of immigrant pupils' countries of origin illustrates how subsystems can be flexibly adapted to a new requirement.

Another example is the effect of the PISA study. The educational reforms in Germany after the PISA-shock in 2000 were an ideal-type of reform activity in the wake of a new problem. It was not only German policy makers who were shocked at the result that 15-year-old German pupils ranked in the lower third of all tested countries, but other countries also responded to the PISA results by introducing education reforms. The PISA results triggered many reforms in Germany (Niemann 2010), but also in Switzerland (Bieber and Martens 2011; Bieber 2010) and in Spain.

However, reforms in educational institutions can be highly problematic, especially if these reforms affect basic organisational routines. We know from the sociology of organisation that fundamental changes in organisational routines can increase the risk of dysfunctions (Amburgey et al. 1993; Barnett and Carroll 1995; Larsen and Lomi 1999). Numerous studies in organisation science have highlighted that reforms can have detrimental effects. According to organisational-ecology theory and research (Hannan and Freeman 1989), newly founded organisations have the highest rates of failure and dissolution because the establishment and institutionalisation of routines in the minds of their members take some time. The longer an organisation exists, the lower becomes its overall dissolution rate. As a result, the short-term effect of reforms is often a "re-setting the clock" back to zero, that is, to a situation similar to the organisation's founding period, when severe problems arise due to underdeveloped routines. "Re-setting the clock" is especially dangerous when the organisation becomes older (Amburgey et al. 1993, p. 64). Despite the fact that public organisations such as schools do not necessarily dissolve when they rebuild their routines, it is very likely that the short-term effect of reforms often decreases efficiency. Of course, if positive long-term effects of reforms outweigh a temporary decrease in efficiency, reforms should be implemented. However, if reforms are permanent characteristics of educational institutions, and when routines are changed right after they have been established in the minds of the actors, they sustainably undermine the efficiency of the organisation. This is an important issue, especially in the subsystem of education: since the *programme* of the system can be changed according to current ideologies about the content of "good education", there is a danger of permanent reform if policy makers regard educational institutions as the primary foci for solving social problems.

The question of how educational institutions shape patters of inequality and social integration has been investigated from an explicitly institutional perspective (Woessmann et al. 2009; Angrist and Lavy 1999). Obviously, educational institutions are social artefacts. They are purposely created and evolve over time. In the field of education policy, most reforms are targeted at so-called *primary* effects of institutions on inequality and integration. These primary institutional effects result from the manipulation of parameters commonly regarded as basic determinants of academic performance, such as school autonomy, teachers' salaries and class size. In addition to these primary institutional effects, *secondary* institutional effects result from at least three sources: firstly, from issues that people bring *into the institution from the outside*, secondly from *unintended consequences* of the actions of *members* of the organisation, especially teachers and pupils, and finally from the

unintended consequences of these policies themselves. Hence *primary effects* refer to what can probably be purposely structured by actors, *secondary effects* are mostly unintended consequences, either of reforms or e.g. of social problems, networks and ideologies, which are prevalent in everyday life and are carried into the institution.

1.4 Organised Inefficiency in Educational Institutions: Garbage Cans, Organisational Myths and Ambiguous Criteria of Rationality

In the preceding section it has been argued that the definition of new social problems can be a heavy burden for educational institutions. Educational institutions include the vast majority of children, adolescents and young adults who are still in their formative years. Therefore, educational institutions are often regarded as foci where social problems could be handled efficiently, especially when it comes to issues of integration and inequality. On the one hand, the subsystem of education is self-contained and closed against its environment (which includes other subsystems), operates on the basis of decisions on selection into careers and facilitates a specific kind of communication. But on the other hand, programmes can be easily changed according to prevailing ideologies, so the criteria of selection can change. According to the arguments presented in the preceding sections this is probably the main reason of why there is a steady flow of reforms.

By implementing reforms, policy makers aim for *primary* institutional effects, meaning that they apply appropriate means and achieve their goals rather directly. However, these effects often also have unintended consequences, even if the intended effect occurs as well. Moreover, the implementation of reforms often suffers from "garbage can" characteristics of organisations which were prominently described by Cohen, March and Olsen (Cohen et al. 1972). In sharp contrast to Max Weber's model of bureaucracy (see Swedberg 2003, p. 92), Cohen et al. (1972) apply the term "organised anarchy": in their model, organisations exist by making decisions in order to solve problems, but rather than being rationally planned from the top of the hierarchy, actors attach their issues, individual desires and feelings to decision situations in which their concerns may be aired. Problems originate not only inside but also outside of the organisation: "They might arise over issues of lifestyle; family; frustrations of work; careers; group relations within the organization; distribution of status, jobs, and money; ideology; or current crises of mankind as interpreted by the mass media or the next-door neighbour. All of these require attention" (Cohen et al. 1972, p. 3). In order to illustrate their arguments, Cohen et al. (1972) use computer simulation models and apply them to different types of universities (Cohen et al. 1972, p. 13). Even though schools do not have the same level of "organised anarchy" as universities, schools consist at least of some "anarchic" elements due to the fact that their members' concerns

and requests are also influenced by the everyday life outside the organisation: teachers grade pupils not just according to pupils' achievements, but sometimes also according to their believes and ideologies about integration and inequality—be it either in favour or to the disadvantage of ethnic minorities and pupils from lower-class backgrounds. Pupils, in turn, carry their experiences into the school. As a result, the learning process can be affected by social problems which originated outside a given school, such as ethnic and social boundaries in the wider society, increasing rates of family dissolution or high poverty rates and high levels of social inequality. Unintended consequences of reforms and garbage can processes in organisations lead to *secondary* institutional effects on integration and inequality in educational institutions.

The overall process of problem solving in the garbage can model is rather inefficient. Many problems remain unsolved and resources are directed towards tasks which are not part of the organisation's technical core. But organisations are still capable of making decisions, even if they are burdened with conflicts and goal ambiguity (Cohen et al. 1972, p. 16). In any case, it is hard to imagine that reforms in garbage can organisations result only in primary institutional effects on integration and inequality. Precisely because programmes can easily be changed according to prevailing needs and ideologies and, in addition, because educational institutions and organisations are regarded as foci where social problems can be solved, reforms seem to be an integral part of educational institutions. But according to the garbage can model, a straightforward implementation of reforms seems to be rather an exception, and secondary effects are by no means unusual, because the basic operation of the organisation is permanently challenged by the externalities of processes occurring outside of it.

It is interesting to note that institutional theories of social differentiation, as well ecological theories, made us aware of the fact that task overload often impedes the performance of organisations within an institutional field. This is especially important with regard to the complex set of highly demanding tasks educational institutions have to deal with. This assumption can be justified by two arguments from the theory of institutions: the first approach is M. R. Lepsius' perspective on conflicts between institutions; the second is Meyer and Rowan's (1977) analysis of formal structure as a myth and ceremony.

Lepsius applies Max Weber's concept of social and religious *carrier groups* (Turner 1993, p. 59; Kalberg 2009, p. 119) to the institutionalisation of criteria of rationality in specific "validity contexts" (see Wendt 1998 for an overview), that is, to contexts of social activity where specific criteria of rationality are socially effective. According to Weber, the rationalisation of society depends on a process of differentiation of ideas, interests and objectives and the establishment of rules in specific activity contexts. No institutions would have emerged in modern societies without differentiation because each institution tries to steer people's behaviour in a specific direction. There cannot be only one institution for "everything".

Institutions are established in three steps: first, social and religious carrier groups have to define their guiding ideas as precisely as possible in order to transform them into basic behavioural principles. Following these principles is considered to be

"rational", even if these principles are in conflict with individual motives and needs. The first stage in the process of institution building is the emergence of specific *criteria of rationality*. Secondly, an *action context* must be separated from other contexts. A certain criteria of rationality can be valid only within a specific context, but not in all other contexts at the same time. Otherwise there would be no institutional differentiation and, in the end, no institutionalisation. From a specific context, in turn, other criteria should be excluded. A social norm can be relevant only if the social situation in which it claims to be valid is clearly defined and other norms are excluded. However, criteria of rationality can only prescribe action and determine it—in a probabilistic sense (Weber 1972, p. 17)—if it is supported by an appropriate *sanctioning mechanism* (Lepsius 1995a). If these conditions are met, an institution is established. Obviously, part of these conditions is also the legitimacy of the institution and the actor's trust (Lepsius 1997b).

Accordingly, successful institutionalisation means that a criterion of rationality can be established in an action context (which then becomes a *validity context*) and that it actually determines an actor's behaviour. But it is important to note that successful institutionalisation can create negative externalities which cannot be handled within the same validity context. One prominent example is the externalities of economic profitability. A crucial aspect of profitability is low labour cost, and firms reduce these costs by dismissing people or moving their production units to regions where labour costs are low. In modern capitalistic societies, a specialised institution, namely the *welfare* state, has been established in order to deal with these externalities. Here, the guiding ideas are solidarity and one of the most important carrier groups was the labour movement.

Lepsius applied his arguments to several processes of institution building. Among others, he described the emergence of modern capitalism and social policy (Lepsius 1995b), institutions in the EU (Lepsius 1994), institutional de-differentiation in socialist societies such as the former GDR (Lepsius 1995a, Lepsius 1996), but also the tension between science, teaching and other interests in modern universities (Lepsius 1995a, p. 395). He argues that universities are organisations which serve several institutions at the same time. During the 1960s and 1970s, some scientific disciplines were strongly influenced by political and normative issues—for instance by political Marxism. As Luhmann would argue (Luhmann 2009), in these disciplines the programmes of the subsystem of science introduced elements of a political ideology, but education still operated by using the code true/untrue and students were still graded and certified. De-differentiation in Luhmann's sense would mean that e.g. political or religious authorities would be able to forbid certain research or teaching content. For instance, if religious authorities defined what is true or untrue according to religious norms, the subsystem could hardly operate efficiently, although this would not automatically mean that scientific communication would not exist at all (Luhmann 2005b). For instance, it is currently debated whether stem-cell research should be allowed or not. In autumn 2011 the European Court outlawed patents on stem-cell techniques (Sample 2011), which will surely have an impact on the future level of financial resources available in this field.

The core argument in Lepsius' theory is that institutions often have to defend the validity of their own criteria of rationality within their validity contexts (Lepsius 1995a). As Lepsius wrote, in Weber's view history is rather a history of the "struggle of institutions" than a history of class struggles.[2] The operation of an institution will be impeded if it either cannot externalise contingencies or if it has to deal with contingencies created by other institutions. But what has this institutional theory to do with educational institutions? Among other things, today's educational institutions have to deal with two essential externalities: one is an economic externality, namely the need of foreign labour in many European countries after World War II; another externality is a perceived change in youth crime in modern societies.

In the 1950s it became obvious that the rapidly developing European economies needed a greater labour force than available in the domestic population. In some European countries the shortage in labour supply was compensated by the recruitment of guest workers (Castles 1986). Many of these guest workers, however, did not return to their home countries, but their families followed them and they settled down in the receiving countries. In this situation, specialised institutions should have been created to establish criteria for the guiding idea of the *integration of immigrants*. But in Germany, for instance, until the early 1990s, there was no clear integration policy at all (Luft 2007). From today's perspective it seems that institutions of primary education were defined as appropriate action contexts for dealing with the integration of immigrants. Indeed, education is still regarded as the most important mechanism of integration (Britz 2005). In countries with compulsory education, nearly all immigrant children and adolescents participate in schooling, so why not delegating the task of integration to schools? But when the results of the PISA study were published, at the latest, it became apparent that integration could not be brought about in schools alone. Rather, research has shown that—all other things being equal—a very high concentration of immigrants lowered the overall performance of a class (Stanat 2006).

The second externality is the public perception of youth crime. Since the early 1990s the public has become highly sensitised for issues of violence among children and adolescents in schools and for measures of crime prevention. Whether youth crime has actually increased or not is difficult to answer because official statistics, insurance data, as well as self-reports on offences and victimisation present different pictures (Baier and Windzio 2008). In any case, German education scientists argued that "… there is no better place for the prevention of violence than the school" (Melzer and Ehninger 2002).[3] In an earlier work, Holtappels and Tillmann (1999) presented five potential measures of crime prevention in schools. These are only two examples of a rather common view that

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[2] "Marx und Engels hätten auch schreiben können: Die Geschichte aller bisherigen Gesellschaft ist die Geschichte von Institutionenkämpfen" (Lepsius 1995a, p. 391).

[3] The German quote is: "In diesem Beitrag soll gezeigt werden, dass es kaum einen besseren Ort für Gewaltprävention gibt als die Schule, die pflichtgemäß von fast allen Kindern besucht wird" (Melzer and Ehninger 2002, p. 38).

schools are institutions of crime prevention or even of "corrections". According to the theory of institutions, the multiplicity of functions in educational institutions leads to a "syncretism" of guiding ideas (Lepsius 1997a, p. 59)—which means in Weber's sociology of religion that people serve different gods at the same time. Such a syncretism makes institutions inefficient since organisations cannot devote their resources to the main task—which is the formation of skills and competences. But can we expect intervention measures to be efficient?

In their groundbreaking paper, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that there is a tendency in modern societies to decouple an organisation's formal structure and its technical activities. The formal structure reflects myths institutionalised in the organisation's environment, and conformity to these myths ("isomorphism", p. 346) increases the legitimacy and thus the survival probability of the organisation. In order to gain legitimacy, organisations employ assessment criteria from the environment, which results in the drawback of being controlled by external forces. As Meyer and Rowan (1977, p. 354) argue, schools strategically redefine the nature of their output in order to meet the criteria of assessment. For instance, universities employ Nobel Prize winners. The activity of schools can be legitimated by good results in the PISA study (or similar comparative tests). This does not necessarily mean that organisations become inefficient by adopting these external criteria. However, if the survival of an organisation depends mainly on conformity with institutionalised rules, then conflicts between institutional isomorphism and efficiency become likely: "Organizations often face the dilemma that activities celebrating institutionalized rules, although they count as virtuous ceremonial expenditures, are pure costs from the point of view of efficiency" (Meyer and Rowan 1977, p. 355). According to Meyer and Rowan, organisations spent a lot of resources on adapting their formal structure to the requirements of the institutional environment. Hence institutions and their organisation are not only exposed to social problems, as was argued in the preceding section. In addition, the institutional environment imposes institutional rules which prescribe how to deal with these problems, often regardless of actual efficiency.

1.5 Conclusion

So how do educational institutions and organisations operate? All three theoretical arguments—the garbage can model, the theory of institutional differentiation and the neo-institutional thesis of isomorphism—point to the complexity of organisational processes and to the danger of inefficiency for organisations. This is a result of resources being absorbed by "ceremonial" activities, garbage can processes and externalities caused by other institutions. Just like any other subsystem, education operates on the basis of its own *code* and in doing so it is self-contained and closed against its environment and against other subsystems (Luhmann 2009). At the same time, it is open at the level of the *programme* and susceptible to prevailing ideologies. Strictly speaking, the problem of task overload is as old as institutionalised

education itself. However, since the public has defined "new social risks" and new problems in the post-industrial and globalised society, and regards educational institutions as appropriate places for solving these problems, it is not surprising that educational institutions sometimes do not work efficiently.

It is important to note that the pessimistic view in the theories presented in this chapter does not describe exclusively education, but applies to almost all kinds of institutions and organisations. Nevertheless, it should have become clear that, at the level of its *programme*, the system of education must remain adaptable to the changing needs of the overall society. In dynamic societies the flip side of this coin is that especially in periods of limited resources, educational institutions are regarded as laboratories for ideologies and normative conceptions of society and social change. In line with the theoretical arguments presented in this chapter, this can result in declining efficiency due to task overload. From an institutional perspective this would be regarded as a tendency towards de-differentiation of educational institutions.

Moreover, in modern societies all subsystems face a multitude of tasks and problems, which are to be solved by their institutionalised rationalities and by applying their intrinsic logics. The results are externalities to be handled in other subsystems. In light of Lepsius' reasoning, these externalities are particularly the long-range effects of the institutional conflict between the economy, which supplied its demand for labour force by attracting immigrant workers, and the educational system, which had to cope with the consequences. We can find varieties of this conflict in several western industrial countries, but other countries' educational institutions have to deal with integration as an additional task as well.

The conflict occurs not only in the institution of basic education, but also in the vocational training system. At least in Germany, the transition from secondary education to vocational training is attended by ethnic inequalities—independent of the grade and the parental socio-economic background. These transitions are the starting point for occupational careers, and delayed transitions often result in scaring effects (Schmelzer 2011). In a sense, this is an example that educational institutions do not only fail in providing equal opportunities for both native and immigrant adolescents, but that they even stimulate the emergence of ethnic stratification. Remarkably, social problems are not only dealt with, they are even produced by or at least facilitated in educational institutions.

It will also be shown in this book that, in addition to the challenges of the integration of immigrants, the task of crime prevention is another externality, in this case not only of concrete economic requirements, but also of new social risks and changes in family structures. For instance, violent behaviour and learning processes depend also on the social and ethnic composition of networks in school classes. Furthermore, violent behaviour increases the prestige of male adolescents, which could encourage them to behave even more violently.

The fundamental question of whether there is a general trend towards task overload in educational institutions, or an encroachment of externalities, or even de-differentiation, cannot be investigated in all contributions of the present volume. Nevertheless, each study provides empirical insights into the tasks and problems that educational institutions have to deal with. Most of these insights are not surprising in

light of the theoretical considerations given in this introduction: it will be analysed how educational institutions were changed in order to facilitate social integration, but now seem to generate ethnic inequalities as an unintended effect. Moreover, comprehensive *welfare* states can reduce the risks of educational poverty for immigrants. But another result points to highly stratified educational systems in which the effect of high ethnic diversity has a negative impact on the performance of native students. In addition, specific institutional characteristics affect high- and low-SES pupils in a different way. Of course, policy makers would hardly admit that they deliberately aimed to increase inequality. Therefore, the possibility of *secondary institutional effects* should always be taken into account. If educational systems are open to current ideas and ideologies about new social problems at the level of the *programme*, they are always at risk of a "twisted understanding" of the educational *programme*: this means that the system of education is not able to consistently pursue a meaningful *programme* that clearly defines the criteria on which students are graded and selected, but oscillates between different learning content and criteria for good grades and selection into careers. It will be shown for the case of Japan that the new issue of globalised labour markets raised the question of which competencies should be developed: those meeting traditional domestic requirements or competencies for the global labour market. Obviously, an undetermined oscillation between different programmes can result in task overload as well.

The volume consists of five parts. Thirteen studies analyse the effects of the wider institutional and social embeddedness on the formation of competences, skills and behavioural conduct: it starts with a theoretical and historical analysis of the basic functions of educational institutions in the first part (*Education and Society*)—social integration, skill formation and appropriately selecting individuals into functional careers; the focus of the second part (*Institutions and Educational Outcomes in a Comparative Perspective*) is on the macro level of the wider institutional embeddedness of educational institutions. It analyses the effects of education policy with regard to the choice opportunities of schools, features of the *welfare* state and the results of socially and ethnically selective immigration. With a special focus on social capital and networks, the third part (*Social Networks and Social Capital in Schools and Classrooms*) provides a detailed view of the processes taking place within schools and classes. Depending on the social and ethnic class composition, we will highlight pupils' learning progress as well as the access to support networks in classes. Social capital and ties to social networks are closely related to the socio-demographic composition of, but also to practices of social discrimination in classrooms. In this part it will also be investigated whether ethnic inequalities contribute to violence in schools, and how deviant behaviour develops in the social networks of school classes.

The fourth part focuses on *Institutionalised Transitions Into and Out of Vocational Training*. It will be analysed how institutional regulations affect the timing of the transition from school to vocational training systems in Germany. Furthermore, from an internationally comparative perspective, it will be investigated how institutional regulations that address the permeability between dual vocational training and higher education shape different trajectories of education and employment.

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