



## The Swiss Case: Securing Good Education and Equal Opportunities through Multi-Approaches of External Evaluation

Guri SKEDSMO & Stephan Gerhard HUBER

A central aim for the modernisation of school governance is to ensure educational quality. The modernisation generally includes a movement from input-oriented means of school governing towards output-oriented means. Key elements in this movement are the implementation of evaluation procedures, the use of standardised tests, performance standards, and school inspection, and they are accompanied by consequences in terms of holding key actors, such as principals and teachers, accountable for the results achieved and the quality of processes leading up to these results (Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2010; Brüsemeister & Eubel, 2008; Skedsmo, 2009; Von Kopp 2008). In many countries such as the Netherlands, England, and the US, these elements are often implemented side by side in an attempt to build more balanced accountability pressures and address problems with for example score inflation on performance tests and bureaucratisation resulting from school inspections. Other countries, e.g. Switzerland, Norway and Austria, have first focused on one element, but are currently introducing other elements.

This paper investigates key characteristics of different types of external evaluation in 18 out of 21 German speaking cantons in Switzerland. On the one hand, it explores the way the different arrangements of external evaluation and school inspection intend to improve teaching and learning processes. A typology which aims to capture the variation of evaluation arrangements in Switzerland is presented. On the other hand, the paper investigates how external evaluation procedures are perceived and used as part of quality improvement by the school leaders.

Analysis of key documents in the different cantons are used to develop the typology and for the analysis of exemplary cantons. The five exemplary cantons are selected according to the principles of maximum diversity (Yin, 2009). Criteria of selection are the organization of external evaluation, and the degree of implementation. Moreover, the analysis draws on data from interviews with 15 principals.

There is a great variation with respect to the degree of implementation of external evaluation, how external evaluation is organised in the cantons, the approaches and methods in use, and the extent to which the results are tied to accountabilities. Although the aims are similar, the different methods and processes indicate a variation in the rationale underlying the external evaluation models. At the same time, the emphasis on communication with schools and a high degree of transparency are typical commonalities across cantons.

### References

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