Centre-right Parties and Post-War Secondary Education

The massification of secondary schooling constitutes *the* key educational project of the first post-war period. However, the resulting educational structures differed in terms of streaming and standardisation. Despite their historical opposition, center-right parties contributed to shaping these reforms. They opposed standardisation because their distributive strategy rested on support from elites and middle classes. However, their stance on streaming varied. Centre-right parties supported streaming when they were linked to teachers and private providers who opposed comprehensive reforms, but supported de-streaming where such groups aligned with the left. The analysis suggests that common partisan distributive aims can materialize as *varied* public service reforms, due their intersection with the productive environment. This paper shows these outcomes by tracing reforms shaped by center-right parties in Bavaria, France, and Italy.

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Authors:

Anja Giudici, University of Oxford

Jane Gingrich, University of Oxford*

Tom Chevalier, CNRS, Sciences Po Rennes

Matthias Haslberger, University of Oxford

*Corresponding author

Contact information:

Jane Gingrich
Jane.gingrich@politics.ox.ac.uk
+44 07983272130
DPIR, Manor Road Building
Oxford OX13UQ
United Kingdom

Introduction

What explains the varying stances center-right parties took towards academic streaming in the post-war era?[1] While 19th century state builders expanded primary education[2] the task of massifying secondary education fell to mid-twentieth century reformers. In 1945, fewer than half of young people in advanced economies were enrolled in education beyond the age of 14. By 1985, the share was 78%, reaching 94% in 2000.[3] However, expanding secondary education to new pupils raised the question of *how* to extend it. Outside of the United States, most education systems streamed children of 11 or 12 into academic and non-academic paths. Post-war policymakers had to choose whether to expand access through these structures or introduce new common programs.

In the pre-war era, the politics of streaming largely lined up along left-right lines. Conservative parties were hostile to the extension of state support for education *and* favored narrower academic pathways, while liberal and social democratic parties supported expansion *and* comprehensive structures.[4] However, in the post-war era, center-right parties looking to build viable coalitions, had little choice but to move away from the exclusionary status quo - voters were demanding better opportunities for their children and employers were demanding skilled workers. Education reform loosely follows what Ziblatt labels the 'conservative dilemma' - the tradeoff center-right parties face between winning elections and serving a traditional base.[5]

We show in this paper that center-right parties resolved this dilemma in varying ways. Following Allmendinger[6] we distinguish between reforms reducing institutional *stratification* through de-streaming, and those increasing the *standardization* across streams to provide common opportunities. The center-right parties of Austria, Germany, most Swiss cantons, and the Netherlands, defended early streaming but invested substantial resources in the quality and regulation of non-academic streams, what we label as *standardized stratification.* By contrast,

their counter-parts in France and Italy, the Anglo countries (except Britain), and later Greece, reduced overt differences through de-streaming, while allowing other mechanisms of differentiation, what we label *unstandardized de-stratification*. Social democrats, by contrast, tended to favor both standardization and de-stratification.

We argue that understanding these varying choices requires theorizing post-war center-right coalition building. These parties generally looked to cement cross-class *distributive* coalitions that extended secondary education to new middle- and working-class voters while continuing some forms of differentiation that appealed to their traditional constituents. Whether they forged this coalition by reforming or replacing streaming, depended on their relationship to vested *productive* actors.

As the welfare state literature has long argued, parties entered the post-war period with different alignments to productive actors, such as teachers and churches.[7] De-streaming affected bread and butter issues for these providers: their employment opportunities, pay, and status.[8] Where center-right parties had strong links to productive 'losers' of de-streaming they tended to resist it. By contrast, where aligned groups stood to gain through de-streaming, or producers were linked to the left, the center-right pursued unstandardized de-stratification.

We develop this argument by examining education reforms enacted by three historically powerful center-right parties, the Bavarian CSU, the French Gaullists and the Italian Christian Democrats (DC). In each case, we see that the center-right looked to build stable cross-class distributive coalitions. However, in Bavaria this approach involved investing in the quality of the streamed system, in France the creation of a common middle school with internal elite pathways, and in Italy internally differentiated comprehensive structures. These differences in strategy followed from the right's productive alliances, with strong links between the CSU and both *Gymnasium* teachers and the Catholic Church in Bavaria, much weaker and antagonistic relations between the French Gaullists and teachers, and cross-pressured

alignments for the Italian DC. The online appendix further systematizes information on actors and reform outcomes for seventeen advanced democracies.

This paper both complements the historical welfare state literature in showing how coalitions of parties and productive actors shaped the development of modern educational systems, and offers an important theoretical contribution to the literature on institutional change. It argues that common partisan distributive aims can materialize as *highly varied* reforms, in part due to how they intersect with the productive environment. In the conclusion, we argue that these claims shed light on contemporary debates over decentralization, school autonomy, and testing.

2. Post-War Education Reform

Despite different constituencies, legacies, and defining ideologies, as Layton-Henry[9] argues, both mainstream Christian Democratic and conservative parties traditionally held less explicitly reformist stances towards social institutions – including education systems.[10] In the early post-war system, radical reform, however, was on the agenda.

Lower-secondary education (ages 12-16) was largely *stratified* and *unstandardized*, meaning that the children of the emerging middle and working classes often lacked onward opportunities.[11] Figure 1, which draws on extensive original data collection of policy reform (see Appendix 1) shows that in 1945, formal stratification through early streaming was nearly universal. Moreover, even in countries with strong regulatory control of the curriculum, the training of teachers varied, and schools – both public and private – did not offer reliable, standardized progression opportunities.

The status quo clearly failed to meet the aspirations of parents and employers. Meeting these demands, however, raised a choice for reformers: should they extend a comprehensive model and reduce stratification, or standardize the quality of the non-academic streams, or

both? Far from being universal reform antagonists, Figure 1 shows that sometimes the center-right chose to de-stream, while at other points it engaged in standardizing reforms.

We see three major paths of change. A first path involved de-streaming by introducing comprehensive lower-secondary schools while also limiting differences across schools, what we label *standardized de-stratification*. Standardization involved equalizing the training of teachers, restricting selection through within-school setting and optional subjects, and limiting pupils' scope to acquire more valuable certificates from selective schools. The left-led Nordic governments followed this path, with center-right parties playing a marginal role.

A second path involved moving to a system of *standardized stratification*. Center-right parties in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and parts of Switzerland resisted the left's demands for comprehensives, but invested in standardizing the quality of non-elite streams: equalizing teachers' training, implementing more demanding curricula, and increasing oversight. These moves created regularized qualifications, providing common onward opportunities for pupils within a given stream.

The third path, of *unstandardized de-stratification*, involved either layering comprehensive structures onto existing privileged curricular pathways, or introducing them alongside uneven teacher-training or private exit options. These reforms allowed implicit differentiation; the new common lower-secondary qualifications still provided varied signals to parents, future employers, and upper-secondary schools. We argue below that the center-right in France and Italy followed this approach, as well as Greece and English-speaking states (Appendix Table 1).

What explains this variation in center-right strategies? The existing educational literature largely conceptualizes the politics of streaming through one of three lenses.

Figure 1: Streaming Ages and Reforms (Sources in Appendix Table 1)

	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968	1973	1978	1983	1988	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013
Australia - NSW		11		1961- ↑ 15								15		
Austria					No Change - 10 throughout									
Belgium - Flanders			12			1971- ↑ 15 (pub)		12/15		1989- ↓12		12		
Canada - Ontario		14				1970 ↑16/18						18		
Denmark		11	1958 - ↑ 14		14	1972 - ↑ 16						16		
Finland		11			1968 - ↑ 16							16		
France		11	1959 - ↑ 13		13	1975 - ↑ 15						15		
Germany - Bavaria					No Change - 10 throughout									
Greece			12				1976 - ↑ 15					15		
Ireland			12							1989 - ↑ 15		15		
Italy		11		1963 - ↑14								14		
Japan					US ↑ age to 15 in 1945									
Netherlands					No Change - 12 throughout									
Norway		14		1959 - ↑ 16								16		
NZ	13	1944 ↑15										15		
Portugal		10			11		1975 ↑15					15		
Spain		10				1970 ↑ 13		13		1990 ↑ 16		16		↓ 15
Sweden		11		1962 ↑16								16		
Switzerland - Zurich					No Change - 12 throughout									
UK		11		1965 ↑ 16								16		
Legend	Left led coalition					Cross-party coalition					Right led coalition			

A first strand of sociological research views educational streaming as a form of social reproduction, explaining reform through the diffusion of values.[12] Furuta argues that the increasing diffusion of liberal norms of egalitarianism led to the global decline of early streaming.[13] Where streaming persisted, as in Germany, it did so because the legitimacy of these norms was weak in mid-20th century. In this framework, experts and bureaucrats are the central actors shaping education policy. Heidenheimer[14] and Baldi[15] argue that pedagogical experts abandoned the idea that children have discernible 'fixed abilities' at different times, cementing varying structures. Concretely, this perspective predicts a largely expert-led reform trajectory, which rests on increasingly consensual norms of equal opportunities.

Political economists, by contrast, largely theorize the politics of streaming through the lens of skill creation, linking early streaming to specialized vocational training.[16] Work on the

evolution of skill formation argues that 19th-century European institutions led to the development of firms built around more specialized production relying on high-quality specialized vocational (apprenticeship) training.[17] In this perspective, the educational stance of center-right actors is largely endogenous to the cross-class coalition institutionalized in labor market structures. It thus predicts that center-right parties should oppose de-tracking where employer organizations mobilize to protect specialized systems of skilling, with fewer partisan differences.[18]

A third perspective presents streaming as a form of distributive politics. In her foundational book on the politics of comprehensive education, Wiborg[19] argues that while liberal politicians set the groundwork for de-streaming, it was social democrats, pursuing the interests of their working-class constituents, who were its key protagonists. Parties on the right were less concerned with inequality, sometimes acting as antagonists or weak consenters. One exception are agrarian parties, who supported de-streaming to increase rural provision.

Busemeyer[20] provides an original synthesis of the skill and distributive claims. He argues that where vocational training was limited, center-right actors had little interest in educational expansion. Here, educational battles were largely distributive. In countries with more developed systems of vocational training, where left parties were able to mobilize broad cross-class coalitions, as in the Nordic countries, they also invested in general skills to promote social mobility. By contrast, where the center-right monopolized politics, it expanded vocational training but limited university access through streaming. Osterman,[21] using a novel quantitative dataset of de-streaming, shows that Christian Democratic dominance predicts more streaming, while left power predicts less.

Figure 1 shows that the center-right introduced or supported nearly half of the major de-streaming reforms in our sample. Following the above logics, variation in center-right stances should either correspond to differences in these parties' geographic or class

constituencies or different relationships to economic producers. However, as we show below, parties with similar ideology, voting bases, and relationships to employers sometimes pursued different strategies. Why did center-right parties in many Anglo and Southern European countries, as well as France, see de-streaming as attractive? Why were Continental center-right parties such strong defenders of *early* streaming, while compromising elsewhere? We argue that understanding this constellation of choices requires theorizing how parties' distributive goals intersect with alliances to interest groups.[22]

3. Center-Right Distributive and Productive Battles

Despite the differences across conservative, Christian democratic and other center-right right parties, in the post-war era, they all faced tensions in addressing the demands of voters and businesses pushing for educational expansion, and those of their historic constituencies – upper middle-class voters, elite teachers and church actors – promoting the status quo. The question for these parties was whom to compromise with, and how?

The previous section argued that post-war policy-makers followed three major paths: one of standardized-destratification, unstandardized-destratification, and standardized stratification. As readers familiar with varying welfare structures will note, these outcomes closely mirror Esping-Andersen's "Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism" – both in terms of institutions, and seemingly, their politics. The Scandinavian countries, led by social democratic parties, de-stratify and standardize, whereas the right splits, with some Christian Democrats promoting a stratified but standardized model, while the Anglo and Southern right do not.

The affinity between education and welfare policies, as Busemeyer argues, often reflects a similar strategic environment across sectors.[23] However, the pattern is not identical. For instance, the Conservative Party in the UK opposed de-tracking, whereas the Australian Liberal party implemented it in New South Wales (see Appendix 2). The German and Austrian

Christian democrats, and later the Spanish conservatives blocked and reversed comprehensive reforms, whereas the Italian, French, and later Greek center-right initiated or cooperated in such reforms. We argue that to understand these stances, we need to pay close attention to the way the center-right's electoral goals intersected with specific *educational producer* groups – which sometimes differed even within similar welfare regimes. Both church-state relations[24] and the structure of teacher organizations, shaped the center-right's tradeoffs. We make these arguments in two steps, beginning with the electoral side.

In the early post-war period, center-right parties had to assemble broad electoral coalitions. The Christian Democrats in continental Europe appealed to religious working-class voters, especially in rural regions. Most also had ongoing links to pre-war conservative voters, with these middle- and upper-class groups growing in importance.[25] The conservative parties of Northern Europe and the Anglo countries largely started out with a more socially elite base, but as they adopted a post-war "catch-all" strategy, they too needed to attract middle-and working-class voters, acting as "substitutes" to denominational Christian Democrats or rural-agrarian parties.[26] For both, creating a distributive coalition centered around addressing voters' (and businesses') demands for expansion, without alienating elite constituents, required a strategy that simultaneously expanded quality while maintaining privileged educational paths.

The *standardized stratification* model, which pairs investment in the non-academic stream(s) with ongoing selective schooling did precisely this. This model was not cost-free; expanding provision, training teachers, and monitoring quality along multiple lines was challenging, especially in electorally key rural areas. By contrast, the *unstandardized de-stratification* model had the advantage of directly providing middle class recipients new ostensibly equal schooling, while maintaining informal elite pathways.

Mani and Mukand[27] argue that governments often pursue visible easy-to-trace reforms when voters demand change, rather than hard-to-see quality reforms. De-streaming,

particularly through new comprehensive schools, provided a visible way to meet rising demands. By contrast, maintaining a streamed system required substantially upgrading the quality of lower and middle streams, something harder for voters to assess. Under conditions of diffuse electoral pressure, unstandardized de-stratification offered the center-right an 'easier' option, provided it kept enough differentiation to appease elite constituents.

But *crucially* de-streaming created concentrated costs for some educational producers. In most countries, the streamed system split producers in materially important ways. Teachers in academic-secondary streams generally had more training (university level) and often a separate legal or employment status (state-employed civil servants) to primary and non-academic lower secondary teachers. In almost all countries, unions representing academic secondary teachers opposed de-streaming, expressing concern over their employment prospects and professional status (see Appendix Table 3). Primary school teachers, by contrast, largely supported de-streaming, which equalized their status. Only in some countries did they fear comprehensive reforms might reduce avenues for employment (as we show in Italy).

As main provider of private education, churches constituted a second crucial productive actor. Pre-war state-church conflicts led to a highly varying role for religious actors in mass education provision,[28] which in turn, shaped denominational groups' linkages to particular streams. As Gordt argues, in some countries, churches maintained the ability to reach children through collaboration with the state-led system. Where churches retained such influence, however, they differed as to the degree to which they were linked to particular streams. The Protestant churches in Scandinavia and the Catholic Church in Austria and Italy did not risk losing influence if streams merged, they were linked to all streams. By contract, religious providers were more heavily linked to the non-academic track (*Volksschule*) in Western German states, and to academic secondary education in Finland. In these cases, regardless of the specific denomination, church actors mobilized against reforms (see Table 3 Appendix).

Where denominational actors were denied access to the state system, such as Australia or France, church provision was largely private. Catholic churches, who could rely on low-paid religious personnel, were often able to establish low-fee private schooling, whereas Protestant churches often focused on more lucrative elite education. These structures shaped denominational providers' opposition to de-tracking. De-tracking reform generally did not touch fee-paying elite schools, whose selectiveness became more attractive in a de-stratified state sector. However, standardized de-tracking limited the appeal of private schools in competition with the state, whereas, while less constraining, de-standardized reforms introducing comprehensives with varying curricular options came with high costs in terms of specialized teachers.[29]

As de-streaming entered the agenda, producers mobilized in varying ways. In most countries, upper-secondary teachers lined up against it, but in some they were not independently organized (Australia), took nuanced positions (Ireland) or even welcomed the exclusion of primary teachers from lower-secondary schools (Italy). Teachers who stood to lose from comprehensive reforms could sometimes draw on support from denominational providers vested in non-elite private schooling or specific streams, e.g., in Belgium, Finland, or Germany, whereas in other cases the churches were weak allies in resisting change.

Crucially however, the influence of both producers varied. Scholars of parties have long noted that interest groups sometimes have "alignments" to parties.[30] An alignment is a close link, either formal – through voting rights in the party – or informal – through the provision of resources, information, and mobilization. As Warner argues with respect to the Catholic Church, in choosing to align with a party, an interest group must balance the benefits of this close relationship with the costs of being linked to a single party.[31]

Religious and economic conflicts shaped the nature of post-war alignments. In countries with fierce early divides between church and state, such as France, teachers, as public

employees, resisted alignments to parties linked to the church.[32] By contrast, where such divides were weaker, as in Scandinavian countries, or the Catholic Church remained a dominant player, elite teachers had close connections to the center-right. In Austria, Germany, and Italy, gymnasia teachers, and other high level civil servants, were critical allies of Christian democratic parties, providing them with candidates, information, and resources. [33]

The same is true of religious actors. Churches usually aligned with the center-right, but in both Australia and Canada, where the center-right mobilized the protestant majority, Catholic voters (and their well-organized school systems) sought alignments with center-left or regional parties.

Where opposition from elite voters combined with these vested productive interests, it made the *unstandardized de-stratification* model less attractive. The opposition of secondary teachers or churches to de-streaming produced direct lobbying within parties, with these groups threatening to mobilize parents or churchgoers against reform. Where these groups were weakly aligned to the center-right (much of the Anglo world, France, and parts of Southern Europe), or they lacked strong organizations (Australia and New Zealand), the threat of industrial action or direct lobbying was less influential for the center-right.

Put differently, center-right parties, for reasons related to past educational conflict, entered the post-war period with varying links to productive actors, and these productive alignments shaped their subsequent reform tradeoffs. Where churches or unions were weakly aligned to the center-right, these parties were more likely to select reforms that reduced streaming but maintained some differentiation. Such changes appealed to new constituents while dampening opposition from the historic base. Where churches and unions were opposed *and* aligned to the center-right, center-right parties were more likely to pursue standardized stratification. Understanding the educational reform path of center-right parties thus requires looking at both their distributive and productive alliances.

4. Research Design

In order to investigate these claims, we conduct process tracing on cases with similar levels of center-right control: Bavaria (Germany), France, and Italy. In all three states, there were majority Catholic constituencies, with the center-right achieving electoral dominance in the 1945-80 period through cross-class appeals. As Christian democratic parties, the Bavarian CSU and the Italian DC explicitly sought to represent a denominational cross-class electorate. The French Gaullists, while not born out of denominational associationism, used denominational themes (e.g., private schooling) to appeal to the middle and working classes.[34]

At the same time, as parties with different historical roots, they had systematically different links to teachers and the Catholic Church. The church was linked to the DC in Italy and, to a lesser extent, the French Gaullists. However, in Italy the church had access to state-education more generally, while in France it was excluded from state schools and relied on a large private sector. In both cases, then, religious influence was not tied to specific tracks and church representatives were agnostic about de-streaming. By contrast, in Bavaria churches had vested interests in specific tracks (state-led Volksschule and private Gymnasia), and resisted reforms. The same is true of teachers, whose degree of organization was similar in the three constituencies (see Table 4 in Appendix). The two Christian democratic parties had strong connections to organized teachers. However, while the church and Italian DC had built up a presence amongst teachers in general, the CSU was connected to academic secondary teachers. The Gaullists, by contrast, had antagonistic relations with teachers.

To summarize, we select three parties that appealed to cross-class electorates and drew on the Catholic vote, but whose alignment to producers varied:

- **Bavarian CSU:** ↔ church (opposed); ↔ academic teachers (opposed); × primary teachers (supportive) → **opponent aligned**

- **French RPR/UDR/CDP:** ↔ church (neutral); × teachers (opposed specifics) → **no mobilized alignment**

- **Italian DC:** ↔ church (neutral); ↔ primary teachers (opposed); ↔ secondary teachers (supportive) → **cross aligned**

We show that these alignments shaped each party's tradeoff in reforming post-war education. The DC and the French conservatives agreed to de-streaming, whereas the CSU did not.

In order to evaluate our argument vis-à-vis alternatives, we assess the core implications of each argument through comparative and within-case process observations.[35] We examine a) whether parties legitimated (or rejected) reforms based on norms of social equality (as suggested by the social reproduction perspective) b) whether economic actors, and employers in particular, intervened to oppose comprehensives and c) whether parties embracing de-tracking were more linked to the distributive concerns of working-class and rural populations, against our alternative that d) alignment to productive actors with varying material interests shaped partisan approaches. To evaluate these claims, we rely on original source material and secondary literature. The former include debates in parliament, expert commissions, public statements by relevant and reporting by contemporary newspapers. A complete list of sources can be found in Appendix Table 4. The plausibility of this approach is reinforced by a larger comparison in Appendix Tables 1-3.

Bavaria

The German federal system grants the *Länder* sovereignty over education policy, making state governments the key actors for reforming education. In the pre-war system, the backbone of the Bavarian school system was the 8-year *Volksschule*.[36] Students aiming to

attend academic studies left the Volksschule after 4th grade (around age 10), while the great majority continued on in upper-primary schools of mixed quality. As elsewhere, the central question in the early post-war period was whether to maintain or reform this structure. The CSU, unlike the French Gaullists and Italian Christian Democrats, took a strong position for maintaining streaming, while substantially reforming its internal logic.

The CSU is a Christian conservative party, reliant on a cross-class coalition of religious and rural voters and elites. The CSU's early programs envisaged an economic order heavily influenced by Catholic social doctrine.[37] This approach distinguished the CSU from conservative parties in the Anglosphere, that catered more exclusively to economic elites from the beginning. Electorally, the CSU successfully mobilized upper-middle class voters (who sent their children to gymnasia) and the working classes, emerging as the strongest faction in every post-War election except 1950 and governing alone from 1966 until 2008.

This success however, required the CSU to meet a varied set of needs. The SPD, as the CSU's main rival for mobilizing the working class, pushed for comprehensive schools, the consolidation of rural schools, the abandonment of the confessional Volksschule, and academization of teacher-training. The CSU initially opposed these proposals, but eventually implemented all of them *except* comprehensive schools. We argue that this strategy allowed the CSU to respond to the changing needs of its constituents while protecting the interests of allied producer groups.

The CSU had strong links to both upper-secondary teachers and the Catholic Church. In Bavaria, as elsewhere in Germany, the teachers' unions were divided along professional lines: the BPV (*Bayerischer Philologenverband*) represented teachers in academic lower- and upper-secondary schools, and the BLLV (*Bayerischer Lehrerinnen und Lehrerverband*) primary and non-academic lower-secondary teachers. The BPV strongly opposed changes to streaming, looking to protect secondary teachers' higher prestige and salary, while expressing

a pedagogical defence of sorting students by ability.[38] Parents, organized in the LEV (*Landeselternvereinigung*), were close to the BPV.[39] The BLLV was more left-leaning and favored comprehensive schools, but did not have an existential interest at stake in the reform.

The churches, especially the Catholic Church, made their voices heard through a multitude of organizations. Because of their embeddedness in the population, they presented themselves as defenders of parents' rights, which were enshrined in the Bavarian Constitution and a fundamental tranche of CSU education policy.[40] Furthermore, both churches had an interest in maintaining tracking.[41] The formal involvement of the churches in confessional Volksschulen meant that they were vested in defending both public sector streaming and private Gymnasia. This role was sizeable enough to motivate a strong commitment to streaming.

Initially, both the state and providers faced the distinct challenge of re-establishing basic school provision in the face of wartime destruction and the influx of almost two million refugees by 1950, most of them Sudeten Germans.[42]

The Bavarian government sought to maintain a pragmatic focus on reconstruction.[43] However, until the Occupation Statute of 21 September 1949, it was heavily dependent on the US military government. The Americans questioned the existence of the Gymnasium, and in 1947 started a push for four-year comprehensive high schools,[44] precipitating the first (and closest) battle over tracking.

Early post-war CSU politicians vehemently opposed structural reforms to secondary education. The Bavarian side maintained that the Gymnasium was not a class school, highlighting its value in terms of humanist education. Alois Hundhammer, Minister of Education from 1946 to 1950, portrayed the *Humanistisches Gymnasium* as the place to inculcate an "aristocracy of the mind" which he saw not as a socially divisive force but as a supranational, unifying one – thus testifying to the party's fundamental disagreement on

educational structures designed to foster equality. Representatives of the Catholic Church made almost identical statements.[45]

Hundhammer assembled a coalition which included the BPV teachers, the University of Munich, the Academy of Science, the churches, and a number of emigrated professors, to lobby the Americans.[46] In 1948, with the incipient East-West conflict, the Americans increasingly distanced themselves from their previous reform-oriented policy with a shift 'from directive to persuasion'.[47] By the late 1940s, Bavarian political discourse presented the tracked school system in ideological terms, as the manifestation of a humanist tradition that stood in opposition to comprehensive schools in the Communist East.[48] With the role of the occupation authorities receding by 1949, the first battle over tracking was over.

The successful resistance to American school policy is inexorably linked to Alois Hundhammer's the personal tactics . However, we must see the CSU's restorative education policy in its post-war context. The party's position was linked to both a desire for policy autonomy vis-à-vis the Americans and entrenched support for the Gymnasium. At this stage, the BPV, the universities, and the churches were important allies in Hundhammer's resistance to reform – and defense of tradition. These groups helped mobilize broad segments of society, leading – rather than following – employers or voters in resisting the American initiatives.

However, the CSU did not reject all reform. By the late 1940s, Bavaria began to experience rapid economic and demographic expansion as well as urbanization. These shifts put pressure on the government to not just rebuild, but expand, education.

In response, in 1949, the CSU introduced the *Mittelschule* (later *Realschule*) for boys, as such schools had already proved popular for girls.[49] Initially, the Realschule was 3 years long, based on 7 years of Volksschule. Soon, it was extended to 4 years, after 6 years of Volksschule. The new school was popular with parents, and underwent a massive expansion: from 600 boys and 10,550 girls in 1949/50 to 15,979 boys and 27,666 girls in 1959/60.[50] Some

scholars consider the Realschule "the real school of the upwardly mobile".[51] Indeed, the new high-quality middle stream, in providing a road to advancement for ambitious rural and middle class families, was a first step towards *standardized stratification* as an alternative to de-stratification to meet new educational demands.

Viewed through the lens of economic skill formation, the Realschule, by providing the apprenticeship system with a growing stream of qualified entrants, bolstered the existing system of industrial relations. Employers broadly supported the stratified system, as long as standardization ensured a sufficient supply of skilled workers, without getting too involved in the political debate.[52] Equally, the CSU's working class and rural constituents largely supported the system, which guaranteed the existence of a nearby village school, albeit of dubious quality.

Initially, the CSU remained sceptical of expansion beyond these first steps. In 1951, Minister of Education Josef Schwalber warned against the massification of secondary education.[53] However, through the 1950s and 1960s, concerns from parents and industry about educational quality put pressure on the CSU to enact change. In response, the CSU's position shifted in two regards: it expended considerable effort to improve the quality of the non-academic streams, and it began to support the expansion of the Gymnasium.

The defining political struggle of the 1950s centered on the quality of education in the non-Gymnasium streams, and thus on standardization. The brief period of SPD-led government (1954-57) was an important catalyst for change,[54] putting teacher-training and Volksschule reform on the agenda.

Teachers for the Volksschule were initially trained at dedicated vocational institutes. This structure contributed to a severe teacher shortage, especially in the countryside. The SPD, FDP, and BLLV advocated a university education for Volksschule teachers, while the CSU, both churches, and the state universities initially opposed it.[55] The SPD-led coalition treated

teacher-training as a priority, but was unable to reach a deal with the churches before it broke up in 1957. In re-entering government, the CSU relented, introducing its own proposal that accommodated the push of the BLLV for university status, while safeguarding the rights of the churches,[56] later integrating teacher-training into the universities.

Closely linked was the issue of the consolidation of small rural schools. Through the 1950s and 1960s, many small rural schools of variable quality remained in place, in part because of the constitutional requirement to maintain denominational Catholic and Protestant Volksschulen. As late as 1959/60, only 29.8% of pupils attended a fully divided Volksschule.[57] Increasingly, politicians saw school centers as a way to improve rural school quality.[58] It took almost a decade to get the churches' approval to change the relevant treaties; however, in 1968 the CSU brokered a compromise, ultimately decreasing the number of Volksschulen from 7000 to 3000.[59] The CSU extended compulsory education to nine years in 1969, and institutionally separated the lower-secondary portion of the Volksschule, now called Hauptschule.[60]

Next to these quality-based reforms in the non-academic streams, the CSU also expanded access to the academic stream. The state added 36 Gymnasia between 1950 and 1964, and a further 48 from 1964 to 1971/72.[61]

Even as it invested in substantial education reform, the CSU continued to strongly defend streaming. In the mid-1960s, the comprehensive school question regained traction, following a shift in the national political climate. The SPD joined the CDU/CSU in the federal government in 1966, and in 1969 led federally. While some SPD-led *Länder* established comprehensive tracks as a fourth pillar, Bavaria resisted these moves.[62]

The CSU's strong links to upper-secondary teachers and the Catholic Church are central to explaining its intense opposition to abolition of the Gymnasium, in contrast to its pragmatism on questions of access and quality.

By the mid-1960 the CSU had cemented its hegemonic position in the Bavarian political landscape. This long reign facilitated the formation of close ties with high-level civil servants and their interest groups. The conservative-leaning secondary teachers in the BPV, in particular, enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with the CSU. This relationship provided the union with access to the political leadership and the party with access to educational expertise and influence over teachers.[63] The corporatist decision-making tradition in Germany and strong representation of civil servants in the parliamentary party further contributed to a high degree of responsiveness to teachers' concerns, with the CSU even adopting the BPV 's reasoning in its programs.[64] The Catholic Church, even as it focused its efforts on the rural and confessional Volksschulen and teacher-training, was also an influential lobbyist for the Gymnasium, by virtue of its position as the largest private provider upper-secondary education.[65]

The BPV and the churches did not fully determine the CSU's position, nonetheless, the CSU's alignment with these actors reinforced its stance. From an early stage, there was "a form of coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the governing party, and the BPV that was characteristic for Bavaria."[66] In the first streaming debate in the 1940s, the CSU mobilized its allies to impress on the American authorities that they were not just fighting the intransigent Hundhammer, but most of the cultural establishment. The churches and the upper-secondary teachers were two key members of this coalition.

When streaming came back on the agenda in the 1960s, the CSU and the BPV built on almost two decades of cooperation to push against de-stratification. The BPV mobilized not only teachers, but also middle- and upper-class parents, key electoral constituents of the CSU, in support of the Gymnasium. In this environment, abandoning its commitment to the Gymnasium would have likely been more electorally costly for the CSU than compromising on other issues. At the same time, the BPV's link with the parents' association LEV meant that

the CSU could "outsource" the drumming up of support for its preferred policy. Thus, the links with the BPV reinforced the CSU's intransigence on the Gymnasium question, which was a life-or-death question for its key ally in education policy.

The CSU's standardizing reforms of the 1950s and 1960s pre-empted potential proponents of comprehensives, making the non-academic streams more attractive. The expansion of the Gymnasium further created a growing constituency of beneficiaries of the differentiated system. These shifts help explain why renewed SPD agitation in favor of comprehensive schools was not successful: the expansion of the Realschule and Gymnasium reduced the potential for a distributive coalition in favor of de-tracking. In this way, the CSU was able to pursue its distributive goals based on a strategy of standardized stratification, protecting their allied producer groups' interests in the stratified school system.

France

The French pre-war education system, like that in Bavaria, divided children at a young age. At the end of primary school, students could follow one of three options: the *Secondaire* track until age 18; the *Primaire supérieur* until age 15; and vocational education (*enseignement technique*). The Primaire and Secondaire were not just levels of education, but two parallel systems – those entering the Secondaire often attended different primary schools. The Primaire was free and targeted low-income families, whereas the Secondaire was selective and largely served the elite, as did the large private school sector.

In the early 1940s, all three dominant parties (the Communist and Socialist parties and the Christian Democratic *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) were critical of this system. In 1944, they established the *Langevin-Wallon* commission to recommend structural reform. The commission published its famous *Plan* in 1947, calling for a comprehensive school (*école unique*) from 6 to 18 years old.[67]

The Langevin-Wallon proposal followed from the demands of the left-led wartime coalition. However, in the post-war era, the left and moderate right split on the question of private (mostly Catholic) school funding.[68] The 3rd Republic's "*laïcité*" principle stipulated that religious schools must be privately funded, restricting public subsidies to state schools. However, in post-war era, financially struggling religious schools began to lobby for state support. The Socialists opposed private schools, but on the right, the rising Gaullist movement, pushed for subsidization. This split ran through the MRP. Its religious constituency called for a revision of laïcité, while its republican stance pushed it towards preservation.[69] These conflicts reduced the scope for compromise on comprehensive schools.

Following the return of De Gaulle and the birth of the 5th Republic in 1958, the situation changed. The new majoritarian semi-presidential structure allowed the right-Gaullist parties to assume hegemonic position in government from 1958 to 1981. However, in contrast to the Bavarian CSU, the Gaullists did not use this power to entrench the streamed system, rather, from the 1960s, successive governments moved towards de-streaming, culminating in a comprehensive *collège unique* in 1975.

The Gaullists built a broad cross-class coalition between low-income rural voters, petty bourgeoisie, upper-middle class families, and Catholic voters.[70] Like the CSU, the Gaullists faced strong economic and electoral pressure to expand lower-secondary education, while maintaining some selectivity for their conservative base.

 Unlike the CSU, however, they were less vested in defending elite teachers. The *Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale* (FEN), represented all teachers, but with internal factions.[71] The vast majority of secondary (and primary) teachers were members of factions aligned with the left.[72] These differences shaped the Gaullist's reform strategies.

In the early years of the 5th Republic, the Gaullists made decisive moves to resolve the long-lasting battle over (Catholic) private school funding. The 1959 *Debré* law introduced

public subsidies for schools that agreed to respect state rules regarding teaching qualification and curricula. With the private school question largely "settled", the reform of lower secondary education returned to the agenda.

In contrast to the pre-war political landscape, most political parties accepted the need for educational expansion. Technocrats in the centralized system of economic planning, and employers, advocated increasing the skills of the population to address new economic needs.[73] In 1959, the Rueff-Armand committee, composed of civil servants and employers' representatives, argued to De Gaulle that France needed to massively invest in education to boost economic growth.[74]

The rising middle class was also agitating for change. Through the 1950s, enrolment in lower secondary education increased dramatically, from 25.6% in 1950 to 46.4% in 1960.[75] This steep increase in educational demand ran up against the rigidity of the stratified education system, creating frustration in parts of the electorate. This "educational explosion" (as Louis Cros called it in 1961) followed from increasingly long educational careers, as families "count on [education] to ensure social promotion, and they agree to this end to the sacrifices needed" (own translation).[76]

While the left had originally proposed the comprehensive model to expand equality, the right now began to contemplate it to meet these growing demands from planners, employers and voters. Initially, this contemplation cut through the Gaullist base. The center and the liberal wings of the party aligned themselves with the economic planners, advocating de-stratification.[77] However, the conservative wing remained in favor of early selection, particularly maintaining the Secondaire. Ultimately, the former triumphed, reforming in three steps from 1959 to 1975, but in ways that entrenched significant differentiating concessions.

First, the Berthoin reform of 1959 (implemented by 1967) postponed the end of compulsory education from age 14 to 16. These shifts transformed the Primaire's lower-

secondary tracks into *Collèges d'enseignement général* (CEG). The reform included the adoption of a two-year common curriculum, effectively creating a ladder between CEG and the Secondaire. However, this new two-year cycle largely maintained the previous two tracks.[78]

The 1963 Foucher-Capelle reform introduced the second step, establishing a new type of school, the *Collèges d'enseignement secondaire* (CES). These schools regrouped the different tracks, including the long academic track of the Secondaire. However, the reform maintained multiple parallel lower secondary tracks, as well as the dominance of the Secondaire logic in teaching. In other words, the Gaullists took steps towards a comprehensive school, but without a common curriculum, pedagogical unity, dedicated teachers, and at the expense of the Primaire. This compromise followed in part from advocacy from the conservative wing, led by Prime Minister Pompidou, who sought to preserve the Secondaire (which he was close to, first as a student and then as an elite "agrégé" teacher).[79]

The 1975 Haby reform enacted the third and final push toward comprehensives, introducing the collège unique. These moves assimilated the CES and the CEG, effectively ending tracking until age 15 by introducing an unstreamed four-year tronc commun at the lower secondary level.

Why did the center-right move to de-stratification in 1975? After the death of the Gaullist president Pompidou in 1974, Giscard d'Estaing came to office. Politically, Giscard d'Estaing relied more on the liberal than the conservative part of the center-right, then led by Chaban-Delmas. While Pompidou had advocated a "*retour à l'ordre*" following the May 1968 uprising, Giscard d'Estaing approached education with the avowed aim of reforming without "risk."[80] French voters were not demanding a particular reform path,[81] but the social unrest in the education system, with high levels of concern about school dropouts and inequalities, gave the liberal wing incentives for change.

In fact, during the parliamentary debate, Minister of Education René Haby declared that the main objective of the 1959 reform was "promoting equality of opportunities in education" since "as it is, the current system does not satisfy neither teachers, nor students nor parents".[82] However, despite this rhetoric, the right also highlighted how the reform respected natural inequalities of talents between pupils. UNR legislator and teacher Antoine Gissinger stated that it did not aim at "the disappearance of the elites that a country still needs to be led. If we set up a system that no longer allows personalities to be revealed, we would not have achieved our goal."[83]

The Haby reforms left open which teachers were supposed to teach in lower-secondary schools, fueling the unions' unanimous opposition. Despite regular dialogue with the government, both the SNI and the SNES mobilized against change, releasing a common declaration against it on December 4th, 1974. They did, however, advance different reasons for their opposition, based on their varying interests.[84] While some smaller groups, such as the elite *Société des agrégés* had political links to the right, the dominant producers in the FEN did not. When they tried to mobilize politically, rather than bowing to their opposition, the Gaullists worked around it. Legris[85] documents how the government directly lobbied voters to accept the reform, looking to "bypass the radical organizations which were particularly influential in the educational world after 1968" (own translation). Unlike in Bavaria, the weaker links between the right and producers meant that it was less vested in maintaining the streamed system.

Employers supported the move to externalize the costs of initial training onto the state.[86] They worried about skill shortages,[87] and supported de-stratification as means for educational expansion. Indeed, the main employers' organization *Conseil National du Patronat Français* was one of the only interest groups *not* against the Haby reform, leading others to argue that the shifts were pro-employer rather than pro-equality.[88]

Backlash from the conservative wing of the party had slowed earlier shifts towards comprehensives, but Giscard d'Estaing was able to mute conservative opponents through a series of differentiating concessions.[89] First, the new tronc commun maintained possibilities of specialization. Optional Latin courses, for instance, allowed a privileged pathway to the more elite classical upper-secondary programs. Moreover, within-schools streaming was widely used, especially since the reform did not fully suppress vocational tracks. Previous shifts had progressively integrated vocational education in schools. In 1959, alongside the CEG, De Gaulle had launched the CET (*collèges d'enseignement technique*) replacing the *centres d'apprentissage*. These centers recruited students after three years in lower secondary education.

The 1963 reform delayed such recruitment from two to three years, limiting selection to the age of 16. Teachers from these schools opposed this change,[90] meaning that, in practice, most CET kept recruiting students before the age of 16. With the Haby reform, the CET became LEP (*lycée d'enseignement professionnel*), which kept selection at the end of the second year of the common curriculum, two years early, allowing limited tracking within the common system. Vocational training, which largely appealed to working class left voters, remained low quality, suffering from under-investment relative to Germany.[91]

Second, the reforms modelled the collège unique on the Secondaire more than the Primaire. In contrast to the compromises the CSU made on teacher-training, the French center-right was less active in this area. The result was that the Secondaire teachers became the main teachers in the new schools, rather than training a new class of teachers to address the needs of a wider set of pupils.[92]

Third, support for private, largely Catholic schools, allowed ongoing exit options for parents. Enrolment in private secondary schools hovered around 20% in the 1970s[93] and was highly related to social class.[94] Private providers did not oppose the Haby reform, as it only

affected state schools, something the right stressed. If they had, the church's links to the right likely would have proven consequential. Indeed, when the left came into office in 1981, it proposed to integrate private schools into a large "public service of education," completing de-streaming in a standardized way that threatened church interests. The Catholic schools, with support from right-wing parties, launched a movement against the reform in 1984, mobilizing the largest gathering in Paris since the Gaulle's 1944 return.[95] This movement to defend the so-called "free school" eventually led the left government to withdraw the project, and to the resignation of both the Minister of Education, Alain Savary, and the Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy.

Thus comprehensive schools with internal differentiation allowed the right to appeal to their dual constituencies, expanding access to the masses while keeping internal elite paths. The center-right's lack of alignment to teachers meant that their opposition posed few constraints, allowing structural reforms that were largely off the table in Bavaria.

Italy

"Lower education is compulsory and free for at least eight years" the Italian Constitution proclaimed in 1948 (art. 34). The then education system, however, hardly matched this description. Fascist reforms had exacerbated the system's stratification and de-standardization. After five years of primary schooling, selective exams regulated access to the academic *scuola* media: schools staffed by graduate teachers that prepared the future elite via a classical-humanist education. Other pupils attended the *scuola d'avviamento*, which complemented primary-style instruction with pre-vocational education. Most children, however, did not attend either of these tracks. While the regime had raised the minimum leaving age to 14 in 1923, the avviamento's sporadic provision and high failure rates meant that most pupils left formal education after primary school. According to official statistics, in 1951/52, the lower-secondary attendance rate was 32% (girls 25%).[96]

The Christian-democratic DC dictated post-war education reform.[97] The DC regularly gathered from 35 to 40% of the vote, appointed all Ministers of Education save four (short-termed) up to the 1990s.[98] The DC was a Catholic party that appealed across classes and geographic constituencies, but included several ideological streams struggling for influence.[99]

The first post-war DC governments did not engage in major reforms. The existing system aligned with the key tenets of its approach to education: the protection of the church's influence on private and state-led education and protecting social stratification while also providing "workers with the opportunity to introduce their deserving children to further education, so that the best among them become the industrial leaders of tomorrow."[100]

While ideologically motivated, both principles also favored two of the DC's key allies, namely the church and teachers. The 1948 Constitution limited state-funding of private education, but DC Ministers used administrative regulations to funnel money to private schools – most of them Catholic – and limit state oversight.[101] Especially primary teachers welcomed the DC's effort to protect the stratified structure and reinforce the institutional integration of primary and non-academic lower-secondary education, for instance by merging these schools' administrative offices and curricula. Facing high unemployment rates, they pushed for the opportunity to teach at the lower-secondary level.[102] The DC further ensured teacher representation in policy-making via specialized didactics circles and the *Consiglio Nazionale Superiore di Pubblica Istruzione* (CNSPI), a teacher-elected advisory board to the national government. These efforts paid off. In the 1951 CNSPI elections, the DC-affine *Associazione Italiani Maestri Cattolici* AIMC gathered 76% of the primary teachers' vote. While Catholic associations dominated less at the secondary level, the DC-allied *Unione Cattolica Italiana Insegnanti Medi* UCIIM still held a relative majority (47.5% in 1954).[103]

The alignment and cooperation between the DC, the Catholic church, and Catholic lay organizations such as the AIMC and UCIIM are key to understanding the influence of

Catholicism on post-war Italian education.[104] These organizations' leaderships were closely connected. In 1944, the Pope himself equipped AIMC-president Maria Badaloni with a car, tasking her with establishing Catholic teacher organizations throughout southern Italy.[105] Both AIMC and the church sponsored Badaloni's campaign for parliament, where she represented the DC from 1953 to 1972 and acted as sub-secretary for education.

In the 1950s, pressure for change rose. With economic conditions improving, increasing demand for post-primary education outstripped the scarce supply of secondary-level schools. European integration further highlighted Italy's low educational attainment. Actors across the political spectrum agreed that not only further investments, but also structural reforms, were necessary.[106]

At this point, the DC had to choose between a continued support for tracking, as preferred by most of the party's ideological currents, or moving towards de-tracking. Only a minority of activists around Aldo Moro, who adhered more closely to the Catholic social doctrine, made an ideological case for de-tracking.[107] Allied providers, however, were split, initially limiting change.

Primary teachers in the AIMC first endorsed an 8-year comprehensive school taught by primary teachers. They argued that primary teachers' generalist pedagogical approach offered the most effective means to extend schooling to age 14. However, as they found no allies for this proposition, the AIMC shifted towards support for standardized tracking, hoping to protect the pre-vocational track that offered their members employment opportunities.[108]

The UCIIM moved in the opposite direction. In the early phase of the debate, it defended streaming.[109] This position reflected the preferences of secondary teachers on the ground, who, according to a survey fielded in 1962, opposed comprehensive schooling because they felt unprepared to teach less academically talented students and feared losing status.[110] Still, as an organization, in the mid 1950s the UCIIM moved towards supporting

comprehensive lower-secondary schooling with a differentiated curriculum taught by graduate teachers – i.e., its members. This change of heart was also a reaction to the AIMC's demands to expand the role of primary teachers in secondary education. Both organizations pressured the DC to turn out in their favor. As UCIIM leader Nosengo noted in his diary: "I make every effort to exert some influence on the Minister […] and this is out of duty".[111]

The church exerted less pressure. In contrast to France, the Italian church was less focused on private education, whereas, in contrast to Bavaria, it had no vested interest in a specific track. In response to 19th-century anticlerical restrictions on private schooling, the Italian clergy had focused on increasing their influence on state-led education. The establishment of Catholic teachers' organizations was part of this strategy and the church developed further avenues into public schooling with the 1929 Lateran Treaty.[112] This approach produced a large group of Catholic activists with high stakes in state schooling. They saw educational expansion, including through de-tracking, as a way to expand the church's reach. The *Federazione Istituti Dipendenti dall'Autorità Ecclesiastica*, representing private religious schools, also supported de-tracking, hoping non-specialized comprehensives would increase the attractiveness of its elite schools, while also expanding the reach of mass-oriented institutes.[113]

Italy's influential employer organization, *Confindustria*, a key DC ally, sent mixed signals. In the mid-1950s, its leadership endorsed de-tracking, with president de Micheli at the 1959 annual congress declaring it "better suited to the complexity of modern economic and social life".[114] In some instances, however, employers also supported government proposals for standardized tracking.[115]

Initially, the DC stayed true to its original program and sided with primary teachers. All proposals developed by its Ministers of Education in the 1950s included a separate pre-vocational track taught by primary teachers. However, none of these proposals reached the

parliamentary stage. Some fell victim to the rapid succession of governments. Others were derailed by the opposition of either primary or secondary teachers, the former of whom the DC considered more politically loyal, while the latter held more votes in the CNSPI.

In 1959, communist legislators submitted a proposal for a standardized comprehensive reform, pressuring the government to offer an alternative. Minister of Education Medici embarked on a last attempt to maintain tracking, with a proposal structured into four tracks, including a pre-vocational track taught mainly by primary teachers. The press, teacher organizations and representatives of rural regions, strongly criticized the proposal. In October 1959, the CNSPI added its opposing voice. The higher education section (35 representatives) joined the secondary section (17) in voting in favor of an internally differentiated lower-secondary school (40 in favor out of 56). Despite a Catholic majority in all sections, the 15 primary teacher representatives found themselves marginalized.[116]

In response to these failed attempts, the DC finally moved towards a support for de-tracking. The party shifted responsibility for education reform to centrist party activists, led by Aldo Moro, who relied on this personal links to the UCIIM to popularize de-tracking with the DC base.[117] The party provided secondary teachers space in party channels, with the official DC newspaper, *Il Popolo,* publishing several articles detailing their arguments about the need "to align our school with the profound social changes that are taking place".[118]

In January 1960, Minister of Education Medici submitted a new project to parliament (*Progetto di legge n. 904*), proposing a 3-year de-standardized comprehensive school in which, from year two, students chose between Latin, Scientific Observations, and Arts, with each subject-option providing access to different upper-secondary schools. Comprehensive schools would become the norm. However, the project included a loophole for primary teachers, allowing pre-vocational tracks where no comprehensives could be established.

It seems implausible that the DC's sudden change of heart was due to the consolidation of liberal norms. While Italy's comparatively low enrolment rates were often criticized from a liberal standpoint, de-tracking was not the only solution. DC representatives often praised Germany and Switzerland as paths towards educational "democratization" without de-tracking. Primary teachers explicitly referred to a 1959 Unesco report on the importance of extending general education to teenagers, to argue for the need to provide less academically talented students with "primary-oriented" tracks.[119] DC politicians also explicitly defended their de-standardized de-tracking project as a means to improve selection, not equality, claiming that schooling "must discriminate between those with genius and those without" and avoid "an erroneous, anti-natural, demagogic concept of social equality".[120]

DC Ministers' support for de-tracking also preceded the party's 1962 decision to collaborate with the left. In 1960, DC Minister of Education Bosco passed two regulations pre-empting the parliamentary decision on comprehensive schooling. He eliminated the entrance exam to the scuola media and established 700 experimental comprehensive schools.

In April 1961, with deliberations still ongoing, the government announced it would eliminate the provisional pre-vocational track from the project. The debate over this provision illustrates the way in which cross-pressured alignments (with primary and secondary teachers) shaped the DC's strategy. To soften the impact of the proposal, which pushed the project towards secondary teachers' preferences, DC representatives asked the UCIIM to use their professional channels to identify potential concessions and communicate the benefits of the new system to primary teachers.[121] Subsequently, DC senators moved to amend it in favour of primary teachers, by allowing future comprehensive schools to employ graduate primary teachers. These moves did pacify primary teachers, who did not to partake in far-right strikes against comprehensive schooling. As a result, the DC weaved a thread between the opposing interests of its aligned partners.

At this point, the public and parliamentary debate shifted entirely to curricular standardization – an issue the teacher unions were less vested in. DC politicians focused on Latin to differentiate their project from the left's demand for standardized comprehensive schools, emphasizing how Latin courses "attended by a limited number of chosen pupils"[122] protected the cherished tradition of the old elite-track.

In February 1962, the Italian Social Democrats PSI joined with DC to form a new government. The DC agreed to ally with the PSI on the condition that the latter supported comprehensive schooling.[123] The two parties continued to push for either more (PSI) or less (DC) standardization, but, finally, brokered a compromise.

The chamber passed the final piece of legislation on December 31, 1962. Several features distinguish the DC's scuola media from left-supported standardized models. First, the comprehensive phase was limited to eight years (to age 14). Second, until the 1980s, the scuola media's curriculum reproduced the old distinction between humanist and pre-vocational education. In grade three, students could choose between Latin, technical applications, and arts. Only pupils who passed the final Latin exam could access the *ginnasio-liceo* leading to the most prestigious university departments. The law also kept informal differentiation intact, allowing so-called "differential classes" for underperforming pupils. Third, the left had pushed for the introduction of full-time schools as means to equalize opportunities and limit the church's influence on education. Children who were not working would often spend their afternoons under church supervision. The scuola media law only established (on paper) voluntary afternoon courses for 10 weekly hours. Finally, while the law equalized teaching requirements, it did not develop specialized teacher-training. Despite now teaching an entire cohort, secondary teachers continued to have virtually no pedagogical training.[124]

Summarizing, in the post-war period, the DC found itself in a difficult position. Everyone called for reform, and their political opponents had a clear plan, but they were in the

cross-fire of competing interests. After failing to protect stratification, the option preferred by primary teachers, they used their links to secondary teachers to popularize comprehensives – but kept them as differentiated as possible to appeal to their traditional constituencies.

8. Conclusion

Far from taking a single position, the previous sections showed that the center-right took varied stances on streaming. We argue that center-right parties shared a common distributive strategy in reforming education, namely to create a coalition between the rising middle classes and rural voters and their traditional elite base, but had varied stances towards educational producers. Where the center-right was linked to elite teachers and church actors, as in Bavaria, it maintained the aspects of streaming that served the interests of these groups, while compromising in other areas to create more standardization that met middle class demands. In France, while upper-secondary teachers were influential in the state bureaucracy, they were not closely linked with the political right. As such, their opposition to de-streaming was less influential, allowing the center-right to introduce it to address mass demands for expansion while keeping a less standardized structure to maintain elite support. Finally, in Italy, the interest groups were divided, but uniformly aligned to the center right. Primary teachers worried about losing control, whereas secondary teachers (and the church) saw scope for expansion. The DC worked around these divisions, supporting a range of concessions.

These choices were deeply consequential. The structure of streaming, and its standardization, continues to powerfully shape young people's educational experiences. However, a critical insight of this paper, which has a reach beyond these historical debates, is that common party distributive strategies can lead to varied organizational reforms to the state depending on how parties are linked to vested producers. Whether center-right parties – or center-left parties – see a particular organizational reform as attractive, depends on their

alignment to producer groups. Where organizational reforms undermine producer groups such as teachers and churches, they are unattractive to parties linked to these groups, and may be attractive to those that are not.

While much work on educational interest groups, such as that of Moe and Wiborg[125], portrays vested interests as powerful blocking actors, we suggest that their influence intersects with the distributive aims of parties. These claims help shed light on contemporary educational debates – from high-stakes testing, to school autonomy, to vouchers. Here we also see similar parties take varying stances. In Scandinavia, for instance, the right has promoted centralized testing, grading and accountability, whereas in the United States, conservatives have increasingly rejected the expansion of federal authority in these areas. These differences in part follow from very different interest group alignments in these cases, which shape the relative tradeoffs of these reforms on the ground.

Far from suggesting that partisan politics do not matter, this paper argues we need to understand parties as using education reform both to appeal broadly to voters and to deliver to vested constituents working or organizing the sector.

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