

# Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0014-4983(16)30133-4  
DOI: [10.1016/j.eeh.2017.08.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2017.08.002)  
Reference: YEXEH 1226

To appear in: *Explorations in Economic History*

Received date: 16 September 2016  
Revised date: 2 August 2017  
Accepted date: 2 August 2017

Please cite this article as: Francesco Cinnirella , Ruth Schueler , Nation Building: The Role of Central Spending in Education, *Explorations in Economic History* (2017), doi: [10.1016/j.eeh.2017.08.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2017.08.002)



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# Nation Building: The Role of Central Spending in Education\*

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August 2017

## Abstract

It is generally argued that, in the context of Imperial Germany, public primary education was used to form “loyal citizens” and to build a nation. In this paper we analyze to what extent state spending on primary education affected participation at general elections and votes for pro-nationalist parties. We combine census data on the composition of school funding with federal election data at the level of 199 constituencies in five-year intervals from 1886 to 1911. Panel estimates of models with constituency and time-fixed effects show that an increase in the share of central spending is positively related to the vote share for pro-nationalist parties. Results on voter turnout are weaker and less clear cut. Estimates of models with lagged state spending by category of expenditure are consistent with the role of indoctrination of public primary education.

**Keywords:** Nation building, primary education, indoctrination, Prussian economic history

**JEL Classification:** N33, N43, H72, I28

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\* We are grateful to Davide Cantoni, Giovanni Federico, Sibylle Lehmann-Hasemeyer, Judith Saurer, Ludger Woessmann, Noam Yuchtman, and participants at the Economic History Workshop in Siena, FRESH meeting in Barcelona, internal seminars at the Ifo Institute, and at the University of Munich for their comments and suggestions.

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