

Global Strategies in Regional Cooperation: The European Bologna Process

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Structure

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2. Where do we stand?
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1. Introductory Remarks

“For more than a decade Bologna has been the policy theme [and a comprehensive higher education reform process, I would add] around which efforts to introduce a greater degree of coherence into the European higher education systems and to reform and modernise these systems have been organised.”

(Scott 2012: 14)

Bologna has become a brand for the modernisation of higher education systems in Europe and beyond.

The European level has emerged as a full blown policy arena



What is the Bologna Process?



1999: Bologna Declaration signed by 29 European countries (currently 47 signatory states)



Main goals:

1. Common framework of degrees through implementation of diploma supplements
2. Introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate level (Bachelor/Master)
3. ECTS-compatible credit system
4. Cooperation in quality assurance

- ❏ (5) Elimination of obstacles to free mobility
- ❏ (6) Ensuring attractiveness and global competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area
- ❏ Goals to be achieved by 2010.
- ❏ Currently: European higher education modernisation strategy until 2020.
- ❏ Ministers of signatory countries meet every two years to discuss progress and determine further action.

2. Where do we stand?

(a) The three-cycle structure

- 85 % or more students studying in the two-cycle structure
- Curricular changes lagging behind, in parts bureaucratic implementation, in parts resistance from students and professors
- Third cycle more varied (students vs. junior research and teaching staff), but more systematic training, emphasis on process
- Third cycle becoming a matter of institutional management and is still linked to chairholder system

(b) Student Mobility

Necessity to make a twofold distinction:

- Credit versus degree mobility
- Student mobility within Europe and from outside Europe

Europe is destination for 1.5 million international students (i.e. 50% of the global market share)

Major trend towards (Master) degree mobility (80% increase over last 10 years)

Mobility rates between 37% (Germany) and 6% (Italy); UK: estimated 2 percent.

Uneven development but Bologna not important for intra-European mobility

(c) Attractiveness

UK the biggest „importer“ country

Increase in market share for countries without tuition fees

Increase in „free movers“ (esp. self-paying students from China)

Increase in English taught degree programmes in non-English speaking countries

(d) Quality

Broad range of practices and procedures

Difficult to compare countries

Three waves of development (Sursock 2012):

- Mid-1990s establishment of external QA agencies
- Around beginning of the 2000s institutional QA processes
- Around 2009 new focus on metrics, launch of European Multi-Rank Project

Three questions (and a research agenda):

- Are increased accountability pressures overriding quality improvement?

- Are QA mechanisms still about quality or have they become bureaucratic routines?
- What are the implications of the bifurcation of QA mechanisms into one set for teaching and learning and another set for research?

The few elements mentioned do tell a story:

Some convergence at the macro level, still considerable heterogeneity at the meso and the micro level.

Bologna reforms influenced by local adaptation and distortion, national reform agendas, and resistance from stakeholder groups.

3. Where do we go?

(a) Tension between cooperation and competition

- Rationales for further internationalisation more economically driven
- Links between internationalisation policies and HE policies have been strengthened
- Competition is increasing at national and institutional level (Huisman, v.d. Wende 2005)

Competition: Growing isomorphism or growing diversity?

Formation of strategic partnerships reduces zones of mutual trust.

(b) An EHEA of „two speeds“?


More Bologna signatory countries with less developed and less stable higher education systems

Late joiners lag behind in implementation and don't receive effective support.

Varying levels of national commitment to Bologna reforms

Necessity to increase efforts to achieve better cohesiveness and compatibility

(c) Managing the dynamics of the reform process

 Bologna Process: intergovernmental structure with considerable stakeholder involvement leading to high level of complexity

 Intervening factors:

- Attachment of national reform agendas
- European structures more bureaucratic (need for policy discussions and focus on strategic goals)

Need to find ways to keep up political momentum and interest of political leadership.

Need to promote goals among students and academics.

(d) Diversity versus Isomorphism

Growing convergence was hoped for and feared in equal parts.

Rankings have triggered isomorphic movement (esp. if attached to funding decisions).

Agenda of widening access and participation, issues of equity and the social dimension have suffered.

Will profiles other than „elite“ or „top-ranked“ be rewarding?

Can there be a diversity of institutional missions if only a single one is rewarded with reputation and funding?

4. Conclusions: A New Social Contract?

European Commission has become one of the most important policy actors in higher education and has established the European level as a (new) HE policy arena.

Scott (2012: 14): More systematic approach to link existing and newly emerging synergies and create a space for open dialogue.

Marginson (2009): Bologna reforms have enhanced the potential for European contributions to the „global public good“.

However, extending the concept of ‚public good‘ to the EHEA while at the same time being contextualised in a global market might be difficult.

Blass (2012: 1069): „In the future universities will need to contribute to the global public good in order to justify their position on the world stage, while contributing to the local private good in order to sustain their existence financially. By achieving the former they will attract students to achieve the latter.“

This argument could be the beginning of a new social contract, with higher education producing both high quality and high relevance.

 **Thank you for your attention!**