

# The bologna process and the transformation of european higher education

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The Bologna Process inserts his/her s The Bologna Process must be viewed as a transformational process with the aim of building Europe as a knowledge-based economy that supports other spheres such as economics and politics. In other words, educational reform has been focused on the unifying of variations in cultures, teaching strategies and control that dominates most universities and institutions across Europe. The process aims at three goals: quality assurance, the introduction of an educational system with the bachelor, master and doctorate levels, and acknowledgment of qualifications and duration of study (Dodds & Katz, 2009). The Bologna Process aims to break the history of non-standardized educational practices in European institutions. As the case suggests, academic governance has been different across institutions. For instance, the Oxford University created in the 12th Century operates as a self-governed institution, whereas, instructors determined the syllabus of University of Paris (Dodds & Katz, 2009). The social and economic turbulence amongst European states (such as separatist movements in Spain and Scotland) add to the educational disparity amongst the states (Dodds & Katz, 2009). Some institutions have remained under government control, whereas, others remain decentralized. The duration of study for each degree (bachelor, master, doctoral) also varies making comparison of educational results difficult. The Bologna Process, therefore, addresses these issues in an attempt to provide a unanimous, coherent and integrated educational structure (including policies pertaining to course credits, assessment indicators etc.) across Pan-European countries. These borderless and converged educational standards shall enable in greater labor mobility across Pan-European nations while at

the same time increasing employment prospects for citizens for supporting an economy characterized by an ageing population (Dodds & Katz, 2009). However, this process is not narrowly focused on national educational standards but on aligning European educational standards with global standards. The Bologna Process, therefore, is positioned to cater to the academic needs of Pan-European nations by enhancing the international competitiveness of national universities. This process has been actively initiated by European education ministers by creating consultative and follow-up groups. Reforms set forth by Eastern European governments as early as 1999 have transformed universities dominated by Communist influence to ones aligned with democratic principles whereby European students travel around the world to keep themselves updated with latest knowledge (Dodds & Katz, 2009). This process reflects the efforts of individual governments of pan-European states to introduce voluntary reforms in their territories. However, this process emphasizes convergence rather than standardization. Therefore, national curricula shall not be done away with as per this process. The Bologna Process will focus on two levels of reforms. The first shall pertain to the organization of academic programs which includes greater emphasis on student workload as opposed to faculty service hours. The second level focuses on alterations in pedagogy through student-centric policies and principles that encourage the professional growth of students comparable to world standards. Clearly, the Bologna process will support the academic initiatives in U. S by creating greater harmony between the European and American curricula and quality of higher education. In other words, it shall act as a bridge between European and

American educational standards, thereby, reducing the “ national” focus that previously a part of European institutions. In most educational institutions in the U. S there is emphasis on the grade point average (GPA) and credit hours as opposed to “ learning outcomes” (Adelman, 2009). Rarely is there an attempt to account for the knowledge, skills or capacities learnt during the process. This is something that has been incorporated in the Bologna initiative. This is, in fact, one of the criticisms of this initiative that it produces graduates who lack critical thinking abilities as they are confined to master a narrow range of subjects (Grove, 2012). In other words, education has become result-oriented which is something that the Bologna initiative shares in common with American institutions. However, this process encounters various challenges which require novel solutions in order to sustain the flexibility of European institutions. One of the biggest issues is that the Bolognese system is very inward-focused and is losing contact with the rest of the world in terms of higher education. To this end it is proposed that the convergence of education should be two-way which means that European universities and institutions must incorporate significant level of international involvement in areas such as the curricula, faculty, conferences, workshops, competitions and other platforms to open up these institutions to the realities of outside world. Secondly, it is proposed that the question of “ who is responsible to whom and for what?” must be answered clearly. Although there has been a great deal of government involvement in European higher education, the Bologna Process is not mainly controlled by government (although it is a prominent part of it). The process’s control at present is ad hoc in the sense that 46 ministers report to 46 governments

and parliaments without any direct chain of command or coherent structure for reporting. It is proposed that a hierarchy be established that represents the accountability and responsibility of all those involved in the process. An institutionalized leadership comprising of a Board of Directors, chairman and opposition must be established along democratic principles for a big educational reform such as this. Lastly, the new reforms particularly the three-cycle degree reform has resulted in changing qualifications that conflicts with the previous degrees of various universities that followed the German system. To this end, it is proposed that there be unanimous decision regarding the reevaluation amongst professional bodies along with the implementation of a minimum and maximum completion time for each degree rather than a fixed duration that do not reflect the time taken by brightest students rather than average students. References Adelman, C. (2009). *The Bologna Process for U. S. Eyes: Re-learning Higher Education in the Age of Convergence*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy. Dodds, T., & Katz, R. N. (2009). *The Bologna Process and the Transformation of European Higher Education*. Colorado: Educause. Grove, J. (2012, May 6). Bologna not to taste of German critics . Retrieved from Times Higher Education: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/419845.article>