



# The 'Bologna Process'

## Political and Conceptual Underpinnings

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1. European Higher Education Policy
2. Bologna Process – Philosophy
3. Bologna Process – Implementation
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# 1. European Higher Education Policy



## European higher education policy

- Responsibility of member states (Maastricht Treaty)
- Role of EC: promotion of mobility, e.g. exchange programs (ERASMUS) – but national barriers
- Concerns of EC:
  - Competitiveness of European workforce
  - European dimension of higher education
- No “big bang”; gradual shift to the European level; delicate balance of power; ‘spillovers’; important role of European Court (non-discrimination policy)



# Changing Patterns of Internationalization

- Cooperative: altruistic promotion of mutual benefits
  - Bilateral agreements on exchange programs
  - Aid to developing countries
- Competitive: drive for maximization of individual benefits
  - Academic competition (students, academics, research income) moves from national to supranational level
  - Commercial interest, e.g. full fee paying foreign students



## European Dimension

- European integration: economic success story, but no (little) European identity; national mentalities prevailing
- Technocratic forms of integration reached their limits, cultural complement required (mutual understanding of language and culture)
- Quest for political/social integration: the European welfare state cannot be maintained on national basis



## 2. Bologna Process – Philosophy



## Bologna: Political Background

- Sorbonne Declaration (1998) - F, GER, UK, I; small countries upset
- Bologna Declaration (1999): 29 Ministers signed voluntary; at present 46 countries
- No treaty, but more than a notice of intent: follow up meetings, monitoring (Bologna industry)
- Growing interest in “external dimension” (other regions of the world)



## Bologna: Cornerstones

- Two-tier system: in Europe traditionally only graduate studies (1st degree: equivalent to Master); Bologna intends to harmonize the “study architecture” on the basis of the Anglo-Saxon model: Bachelor 1st degree (usually 3 years)
- ECTS: modularization (credits) and arrangements for transfer within and among European countries
- Diploma Supplement: description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies; intention: improve international ‘transparency’



## Corresponding National Reforms

- Broader context of Bologna: governments want higher education to be economically more relevant
- Conflicts:
  - Governance (from state agency to public enterprise)
  - Tuitions fees,
  - Centers of excellence (elite universities)
  - Quality control
- Mobility and competition is supposed to facilitate these reforms



## Copenhagen Process

- Equivalent to Bologna in the field of vocational education & training
- Copenhagen Declaration 2002; biennial review (Maastricht 2004, Helsinki 2006, Bordeaux 2008)
- European Qualifications Framework: describes 'learning outcomes' compares levels of qualifications (8 levels); goal: greater mobility
- European Accumulation and Transfer Credit System for VET



### 3. Bologna Process – Implementation



## Bologna: Institutional Framework

- Intergovernmental process – biennial follow-up ministerial summits (Prague 2001, Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005, London 2007, Leuven 2009).
- Involvement of EU, Industry, Unions
- European University Association publishes biennial ‘Trend Reports’
- ‘Open method of coordination’ – voluntary cooperation, soft mechanisms, name & shame



## Problems of Implementation

- Resistance of academics: Bologna = shift to student consumerism, to water down academic standards
- Implementation of Bachelor (at a formal level) is proceeding; often superficially
  - No proper understanding of undergraduate culture
  - Bachelor is regarded as “intermediate” degree; in some countries 95% of Bachelors continue with Master course
- Different interpretations of ‘credit’ – entitlement?



## CHEPS Delphi Study (2005)

- Consensus on BA/MA structure (3+2 structure)
  - 90% probable + desirable
- Strong functional stratification
  - 85% probable, 55% desirable
- Only a few “clusters of excellence”
  - 75% probable, 35% desirable
- ECTS – credits used in “supermarket mode”
  - 55% probable and desirable



## IAU Study (2006)

- International Association of Universities: survey on internationalization strategies
- Europe was identified as the most favoured region for internationalization activities
- “The Bologna Process and the European Union outreach programs are two pull factors making Europe very attractive for future cooperation.”



## 4. Lessons for North-America?



## Initial Scepticism

- North Americans are bewildered by the highly centralised character of the project
- A “higher education area” (allowing academic mobility) already exists in North America; it was not designed top down, but it emerged bottom up



## Increasing Interest

- China considers adopting a Bologna-like program
- US, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries have responded to the Bologna Process
- AUCC Statement and Background Document in June 2008
  - Europe as competitor
  - three-year “Bachelor Bolognese”: implications for graduate admission
  - study abroad opportunities for Canadian students



## Lessons for Colleges

- As they are expanding they might consider looking at global shifts and trends



Many thanks for your attention